

Ready, Fire, Aim: The College Campus Gun Fight

Presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education,
November 14 – 17, 2012, Las Vegas, Nevada

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Abstract

Twenty-three State legislatures in 2011 considered bills to permit the carrying of firearms at their public institutions of higher education, and some public colleges in at least six states now allow weapons on college grounds or in college buildings. The lawful possession of guns on campus is a recent and limited phenomenon, but decisions by the Supreme Court, State courts and legislatures, and institutional trustees suggest that many colleges and universities may soon have to decide whether, and under what conditions, firearms will be permitted. This paper summarizes the current situation, analyzes the arguments both for and against weapons on campus, and presents recent data about gun ownership and violent campus crime including murder and manslaughter. It concludes with a discussion of why bitter pro-gun and anti-gun arguments are likely to persist in the future even in the absence of empirical data to support either position.

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One side views guns as essential to personal freedom, while the other side insists they are instruments for mayhem and violence.... Every gun control proposal is an occasion for pitched battles, with the stakes portrayed as nothing less than the future of life, liberty and justice. (Winkler, 2011b)

Any discussion twenty years ago of the possibility of permitting guns on college campuses would likely have provoked as much laughter as shock. Yet by 2002 guns could be carried on at least one campus, and by 2009 the number had increased to 12 (LaPoint, 2009-2010). As of June 2011 there were 25 institutions in four states that allowed guns on campus ("Colleges and universities," n.d.), and by 2012 it was reported that guns were permitted on all, or in parts of, 200 public institutions in six states (Soderstrom, 2012).¹

That number appears certain to increase; in 2011 alone, bills to permit guns on campus were introduced in 23 state legislatures ("Summary of legislative," 2012). Although most of these bills failed, some were carried over to the next legislative term. Their proponents tend to be persistent and bills similar to these can be expected to be re-introduced in future years. Guns may be coming soon to a campus near you – perhaps your own. How are guns on campus related to the question of guns in American society more generally, what position about guns on campus should citizens and academics take, and why?

The question of whether guns should be permitted on college and university campuses in the United States reflects the tension between two competing perspectives. America has both a robust gun culture and an equally robust (if less well known) gun-control culture. The gun culture is as American as apple pie, and there may be as many as 300 million civilian guns in the U.S. - about one for every person (Winkler, 2011a). No other country in the world has even close to this number of guns in private hands ("Annexe 4," 2007). The gun-control culture also has a long history in the U.S., starting even before the nation's founding and continuing to the present. One of America's iconic events, the gunfight at the OK Corral, was provoked by gun control in 1881 when the Earps and Doc Holliday tried to force the Clantons and the McLaurys to obey a Tombstone municipal ordinance banning the carrying of guns in town.

The issue of whether guns should be allowed on college campuses is presently a subject of vigorous debate and controversy. The argument has been influenced by the appearance of newspaper headlines such as these:

16 April 2007 - AT LEAST 33 KILLED IN VA. TECH MASSACRE. The deadliest shooting rampage in U.S. history; the gunman, a student, commits suicide.

14 February 2008 – 5 SHOT DEAD, INCLUDING GUNMAN, AT NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY. Student shoots 22 people, kills 4 and self in lecture hall.

11 February 2009 – FOUR DEAD IN UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA SHOOTING. Flunking student kills three professors, self.

12 February 2010 – PROFESSOR IS HELD AS THREE ARE KILLED AT ALABAMA UNIVERSITY. Professor denied tenure kills three colleagues and wounds three more at faculty meeting.

10 May 2011 – 3 DEAD AFTER SHOOTING AT SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY. Husband kills wife and another student, then himself, in campus parking garage.

Headlines such as these have led some to say that "claims of increased crime against college students have successfully converged to define on-campus student victimization as

violent and as a widespread social problem in need of institutionalization and governmental intervention” (Fisher, Sloan & Lu, 1998). Indeed, news reports give the impression that the American college campus is an increasingly dangerous place in which neither students nor faculty appear safe. In response, two competing policy narratives have developed. One is that campus violence would best be prevented by increasing the number of armed individuals on campus (I will call this position ‘MoreGuns’); the other is that campus violence would most effectively be reduced by a total ban on weapons on campus (I will call this position ‘BanGuns’).

This paper will begin with the arguments supporting each narrative. It will then look at the present situation from a national and a university perspective, and present a primer on national and university gun policies and how decisions made at three governance levels – federal, state and institution - influence the guns-on-campus debate. Finally, it will compare data on violent campus crime with violent crime in society more generally to determine if there is presently a crisis in higher education that requires immediate attention, and suggest why the controversy is likely to continue even in the absence of any data to support the contentions of either side.

Campus Gun Policies: The Surrogates and their Narratives

Assessments in the MoreGuns and BanGuns policy camps range on the one hand from reassurances that “we have little to fear from citizens with legal CCW [concealed carry weapon] permits carrying guns on campuses and in our classrooms” (Fennell, 2009, p. 100), to warnings that permitting concealed weapons on campus will inexorably lead to increased dangers and risks of violence, successful suicides, gun thefts and accidental shootings (Siebel, 2008). The pictures they paint of the future are starkly different: “Gun-rights advocates argue that easing gun restrictions could enhance both individual and collective security on campus and may deter violence. In contrast, the vast majority of college administrators, law enforcement personnel and students maintain that allowing concealed weapons on campus will pose increased risks for students and faculty, will not deter future attacks and will lead to confusion during emergency situations” (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2008, p. 1). Who are the parties at interest, and what are their arguments?

The MoreGuns Constituency

Formal groups in favor of encouraging firearms on campus may be relatively small in number, but large in influence. They include the powerful National Rifle Association, the legislatures and governors of several states, on-line communities such as ConcealedCampus.com., and several gun rights organizations.

The basic philosophical premise for MoreGuns is that self defense is an inherent right and a constitutional entitlement that should not be compromised just because someone happens to be on a college campus. College students and faculty should be able to carry weapons for their own protection, particularly since history has shown that colleges can’t protect them from potential assailants. Criminals would be less likely to use guns or commit violent crimes if they have reason to believe that the targeted citizens, or others around them, might also be armed and able to defend themselves. This argument particularly applies to college campuses because they provide open environments with invisible boundaries and little or no secure prevention measures (“Top 5 reasons,” 2011).

Thousands of violent crimes occur on campuses each year (“Crime on college,” 2009). MoreGuns claims that many of these crimes could have been avoided if weapons for defense were more easily available. Guns are often used for defensive purposes; a reasonable national estimate is that there are probably close to 108,000 defensive uses a year (National Institute of

Justice, 1997). Although not common, there were at least 12 documented cases of students using guns in self defense between 2005 and 2008 ("Crime on college," 2009). Since guns have deterred some crimes, and there have been no reports of shoot-outs on campuses that permit weapons, the net effects of permitting guns would be positive. Moreover, there are no real risks in allowing more guns on campus since only licensed, legally-armed citizens would be permitted to carry.

MoreGuns believes that campus gun regulations would present burdens for law-abiding citizens, but would not keep guns away from criminals who don't apply for permits. The alternative of establishing 'gun-free' zones doesn't work; stickers on campus saying "no guns allowed" just announce to criminals the absence of defensive weapons. Only wide-spread gun ownership is a deterrent to, and defense against, criminals because it is difficult if not impossible to keep guns away from high-risk individuals who might threaten the rights of others. As a spokesperson for lifting restrictions on concealed carry on college campuses has said, "gun-free zones are defense-free zones. Announcing your campus is gun-free is a reckless invitation to psychopaths. We're trying to show we have to put an end to such dangerous and irresponsible mandates" (Soderstrom, 2012).

The BanGuns Constituency

Groups opposed to permitting guns on campus are usually larger in number, but smaller in political influence, than those in favor. They include the Boards of Trustees of most postsecondary institutions, law enforcement groups (International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, 2008), campus police chiefs, several student affairs groups such as the Association for Student Conduct Administration ("Statement against concealed," 2011), public advocacy organizations such as the Brady Center to Reduce Gun Violence, on-line communities such as KeepGunsOffCampus.org and StudentsforGunFreeSchools.org, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities which cited as among the opponents to guns on campus "most college administrators, law enforcement personnel, students, gun-control advocates and editorial boards" (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2008, p. 5).

The two philosophical bases for these groups are academic freedom and academic autonomy. In terms of academic freedom to speak without fear of reprisal, it has been said that "colleges and universities are safe sanctuaries for learning and...would be endangered by the presence of concealed handguns." Concealed handguns would detract from a healthy learning environment; open discussions on critical issues may arouse passions and inhibit dialogue for fear of retaliation ("Why our campuses," n.d.). Allowing students to have firearms will "likely breed fear and paranoia among fellow students since no one will know whether the other person can simply retrieve or pull a gun out if a dispute arises. Such fear and paranoia is antithetical to creating the kind of climate where free and open academic debate and learning thrive" (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2007, p. 14).

Academic autonomy means that each institution should have the responsibility of determining policies that would best promote both learning and campus security. Allowing students and faculty to carry guns, contrary to the wishes of institutional trustees, could make campus security a matter determined by untrained individuals who have no legal responsibility for it (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2007).

BanGuns claims that the presence of more guns would create additional risks for students, perhaps turning campuses into "armed camps – 'gun-filled zones'" (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2007, p. 4). Limiting campus weapons to those with firearms permits

would not solve the problem since concealed carry permit holders are not always “law-abiding” citizens (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2007). The belief that “[there is] lack of criminality among law-abiding citizens who carry concealed weapons....” (Donohue, 2003, p. 331) is belied by the data. For example, there is evidence that in 2009 alone there were five cases of mass shootings (three or more deaths) by permit holders (“Mass shootings by,” 2009), and between May 2007 and April 2012, 402 people were killed by permit holders (“Concealed carry killers,” 2012).

Furthermore, permit holders are not required to have law enforcement training. Even trained police officers hit their targets only 20 to 30% of the time; why should untrained concealed weapon permit holders be any more accurate, particularly in panic situations, in crowded classrooms and with unclear lines of fire (“Why our campuses,” n.d.)²? What’s more, guns are easily stolen; one study estimates that close to 1% of all gun-owning households in the general population had a gun stolen in 1994 (National Institute of Justice, 1997). Theft rates might be even higher in the less structured environment of college residence halls.

Finally, having guns on campus in the hands of students or faculty untrained to deal with crises could escalate an explosive situation; even trained police, arriving at a scene of active gunfire, might not be able to identify who was the shooter and who the target (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2008). In any case, having more guns on campus would not deter the rare campus shooting because the suicidal or mentally unbalanced people who often perpetrate such crimes are not likely to think rationally about the consequences of their actions (“The case against guns on campus,” n.d.).

Viewing the National Scene

Several studies give somewhat differing answers to the question of how many guns are owned by civilians in the U.S.³ Actual numbers are impossible to know since much of these data are based on surveys, and on the willingness of participants to tell the truth. However, it is probably safe to say that the number of guns in civilian hands in the U.S. is close to the size of the nation’s population (Winkler, 2011a). In 2001, about 36% of American households had at least one gun, and 22% had a handgun (National Opinion Research Center, 2001). By 2011, the number of guns in the U.S. increased as gun owners purchased multiple weapons, while the number of households with guns also increased from 41% in 2010 to 47% in 2011, the highest number seen in two decades. Approximately 34% of all adults self-report that they personally own a gun (Saad, 2012). However, because data are collected and analyzed in different and often incompatible formats by different groups and for different purposes, there is at present no single source of statistics on gun ownership considered to be comprehensive, timely and accurate (Congressional Research Service, 2011, p. 4).

The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 was one recent attempt at gun control. The act requires background checks of prospective customers before licensed dealers can sell handguns to them. In 2009, the National Instant Background Check System (NICS) processed 10.7 million such checks and denied 150,000 of them, a denial rate of 1.7 % (Congressional Research Service, 2011). Even though all federally-licensed gun dealers are now required to conduct a computer-based background check to confirm that potential gun buyers are not felons or otherwise prohibited from gun possession, the check may have limited value. For example, the check does not include all records concerning mental health – a defect that allowed a student with a history of mental disorder to legally purchase two guns and kill thirty-two people and wound twenty-five at Virginia Tech University in 2007. Federal law prohibits licensed gun dealers from selling a gun to anyone under 21 years of age, but allows

citizens over 18 to possess one. However, 40% of all gun purchases are made through private sales at gun shows that require no background check at all. As a consequence, almost anyone in the U.S. who wants a gun can easily acquire it – including people who candidly admit that they probably would not pass a background check (Winkler, 2011a, p. 74).

Does either the MoreGuns or the BanGuns position improve public safety? Two major national studies have examined the relationship between gun ownership and degree of criminal activity and have reached diametrically opposed conclusions. One study found that “allowing citizens without criminal records or histories of significant mental illness to carry concealed handguns deters violent crimes.... If the rest of the country had adopted right-to-carry concealed handgun provisions in 1992, at least 1,414 murders and over 4,177 rapes would have been avoided” (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 64). The second study found that “statistical evidence that these [concealed carry] laws have reduced crime is limited, sporadic, and extraordinarily fragile. Minor changes of specifications can generate wide shifts in the estimated effects of these laws” (Ayres & Donohue III, 2003, p. 1201). This study suggested that making it easier to get a firearms permit is associated with higher levels of crime (p. 1285). It is difficult to say which of these analyses is the most valid. Both relied on similar data, but used somewhat different methodologies, time periods, and bases for aggregating data.

Whether MoreGuns or BanGuns is the answer, advocates on both sides of the issue agree that the U.S. has a problem; the rate of gun deaths in the U.S. from homicides or suicides is the highest among developed countries (National Opinion Research Center, 2001). The bad news is that there were 5.0 murder victims in the U.S. per 100,000 population in 1997, including 3.3 victims per 100,000 population who were killed by firearms. The good news is that this was down from 6.6 in 1993. The number of non-lethal violent crimes involving guns also declined from 428,670 in 2000 to 326,090 in 2009, a drop from 2.4 to 1.4 incidents per 100,000 population (Congressional Research Service, 2011, pp. 6, 8) reflecting a general reduction in crime in the U.S..

These data indicate that, although it may not be evident to the average citizen, the U.S. is getting safer. According to the FBI, U.S. violent crime rates fell for the third consecutive year in 2009, while property crimes fell for the seventh year (“Crime rates fall in the first half of 2009,” 2009; “FBI releases 2009 crime statistics,” 2010). Preliminary FBI reports show a further decrease in 2011 (“Preliminary annual uniform crime report, January - December 2011,” 2011). While some MoreGuns advocates suggest a cause and effect relationship (more guns = less crime), other explanations are also possible. For example, gun ownership may have increased as some citizens rushed to buy before the implementation of what has proven to be unwarranted concerns that the Obama administration would try to curtail gun ownership. The decline in violent crime may also have been due to recession-related declines in out-of-home activities, to “smart policing” policies that focused more resources on troubled areas, and to extending unemployment benefits that may have avoided having people engage in desperate activities (Jonsson, 2009).

Viewing the Campus Scene

Violence on college campuses is not a new phenomenon. A study jointly conducted by the Secret Service, the Office of Education, and the FBI (Drysdale, Modzeleski & Simons, 2010) analyzed 272 incidents of targeted violence on college campuses that occurred between the years 1900 and 2008.⁴ Of these, 40 were in the decade of the 1980s, 79 in the 1990s, and 83 between 2000 and 2008. While MoreGuns advocates may argue that these numbers show an increase in violence over time, these data also have been affected by an increase in college enrollment, and

by the growth of media coverage and digital reporting. Guns were used in 54% (148) of the reported cases; 34% of the violent incidents were directed against someone who was in an intimate relationship with the assailant, 14% occurred as retaliation for some specific action, and 10% were a consequence of refusing the advances of the assailant. In other words, almost 60% of potentially fatal violent incidents were instigated against someone previously known to the assailant. Only 14% were caused by “psychotic actions”, a “need to kill”, or a need by the assailant to attract attention. The chances of being the random victim of a potentially fatal attack by a stranger or unknown person on a college campus have been, and remain, exceptionally small, even though socially constructed narratives about these incidents can loom large in the public’s mind.

By any measure, the act of a single mentally disturbed student at Virginia Tech in 2007 was a watershed event in the guns-on-campus debate. A report of the event stated “the events at Virginia Tech – only the most recent in a series of horrific tragedies over the past several years – have forced colleges and universities to reflect upon their responsibilities and retool their efforts to promote campus safety in what has been perhaps the most intensive, open, and strategic manner ever attempted” (Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008, p. 7). In a national survey conducted as part of this report, 87% of responding campuses said they had reviewed their security and safety policies and procedures, and 19% indicated that they were having discussions about permitting guns on campus. These reviews led to major improvements in campus relationships with local law enforcement, to the establishment or strengthening of emergency notification and broadcast alert systems, and to improved processes for identifying and responding to students who displayed behavior that was disturbing, threatening or otherwise troubling. The report noted that “horrific events of significant scale with ubiquitous and relentless nation-wide media coverage...exert a powerful impact on the psyche and basic instincts of students, parents and policymakers, and the general public, leading to the understandable questioning of the relative safety of a specific campus or of educational facilities in general.” It acknowledged that “no amount of money, technology, and human resources can guarantee members of a university community that they will never fall victim to crime.” But at the same time it said that while no campus can guarantee 100% safety, each campus should make itself “as safe as possible given the realities of the external environment and the inability to control the actions of all people at all times” (p. 6).

Because it affected the entire national system of higher education, what the press called the Virginia Tech Massacre was clearly a “focusing event” that changed the narrative of, and participants in, the guns on campus debate (Birkland, 1998). The shooting shared the characteristics of other focusing events: it began with a sudden, unanticipated and highly visible incident, mobilized event-driven groups, provided an advocacy opportunity for existing interest groups and, because it led to negative assessments, suggested the need for policy reform and gave an advantage to pro-change groups. One of its consequences was to unleash a torrent of proposed State legislation that, if enacted, would permit more guns on campus in the belief that an armed community would serve as a deterrent to violent crime.

Three Policy Levels

There are three hierarchical levels of governance – federal, state and institutional board of trustees - at which decisions can be made to permit or restrict the presence of guns on college campuses. Like a set of graduated Russian dolls, each level is embedded in the constraints posed by the level above it.

Federal

The controlling language that serves as the foundation for discussing guns on campus is found in the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution, which in its entirety reads: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” Over time, these 27 words (and, importantly, their three controversial commas) have been interpreted to have two possible meanings. One (States Rights) was that the amendment protected the ability of States to maintain armed militias; the other (Individual Rights) was that the amendment confirmed the right of citizens to own firearms for their own protection.

As a consequence of a series of lower federal court decisions, a legal consensus had developed over time in the U.S. that supported the States Rights approach. Then, in 2008, the Supreme Court of the United States acted for the first time to clarify what it believed the Founders had in mind when they adopted the Second Amendment in 1791. With their ruling, the U.S. finally had an authoritative (if somewhat ambiguous) statement about when, and under what conditions, private citizens could possess and carry guns.

The case, District of Columbia v. Heller (District of Columbia, 2008) considered the constitutionality of a law passed in 1976 that, among other things, banned citizens of the District from owning handguns. The District of Columbia argued that this restriction was necessary to curb increases in gun deaths that had earned it the unwelcome reputation of being ‘the murder capital of America’. Heller wanted the District to give him a license to register a handgun, but the District refused. Heller argued that banning weapons made it impossible for them to be used in his home for self defense. In a split 5-4 decision the Supreme Court found in Heller’s favor, and its opinion now affects gun policies throughout the nation.⁵

The Court held that the Second Amendment protects an individual’s right to possess a firearm that is “in common use for the time” for traditional lawful purposes such as self-defense. The Court went on to say “like most rights, the Second Amendment right is not unlimited. It is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever and for whatever purpose: for example, concealed weapons prohibitions have been upheld under the Amendment or state analogues.” The Court also said that prohibitions against gun ownership by felons, the mentally ill, aliens, minors and others falling into specified categories were permissible. In other words, licensing laws and reasonable restrictions that limit possession and are uniformly applied are permissible, but total handgun bans, or other requirements that make it impossible for citizens to use arms for self protection, violate the Second Amendment and therefore are unconstitutional.

The Court said that its opinion “should not be taken to cast doubt on...laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools or government buildings....” The Court did not further define the meaning of “sensitive places,” or clarify the meaning of “schools and government buildings,” leaving their definitions (at least for now) to State and local agencies that must administer the law.

With this ruling the Court found the Individual Rights interpretation trumped the States Rights interpretation, and gave citizens a constitutional right to possess firearms for their own protection. In McDonald v. City of Chicago two years later in 2010, the Court held that the rights given by the Second Amendment, as defined in Heller, were equally applicable, via the Fourteenth Amendment, to state and local laws as well (Winkler, 2011a, p. 189). The two cases themselves did not directly consider the issue of guns on the college campus, but they established the legal framework within which both past and future gun laws by the States, or policies by campus trustees, would now be judged.

The Heller decision could be interpreted as a victory by both MoreGuns and BanGuns advocates. MoreGuns groups were now assured that the carrying of a weapon for protection was a constitutional right at federal, state and local levels, and that any total ban on weapons was illegal. BanGuns advocates could note that States retained the right to set reasonable restrictions and licensing laws for gun possession, and could even ban weapons in “sensitive places”. Exactly what that would mean for individual States was fuzzy enough so that clarification is likely to occupy the attention of courts, legislators, and college leaders for years, if not decades.

State

Every State has a constitution that enumerates the rights of its citizens, and forty-three of the fifty state constitutions “contain language that clearly and unambiguously” (Winkler, 2011a, p. 33) allows individuals to own guns. Not only could they own guns, but in many States they could carry them openly (open-carry) in permitted places as long as the weapon was clearly visible (p. 244); only six states and the District of Columbia prohibit the open carrying of handguns everywhere (“Open carry in the United States,” n.d.).⁶

An issue even more contentious than open carry, however, was whether, and where, citizens were entitled to carry concealed weapons. State laws usually stipulate that carrying a concealed weapon requires a permit; the exceptions are Alaska, Arizona and Vermont where concealed weapons may be carried without a permit (“Concealed carry killers,” 2012). At present, 49 states (all but Illinois) now allow concealed carry. How a person acquires a permit for this purpose, however, depends on whether one lives in a “shall issue” or a “may issue” State.

A “shall issue” State is one in which the issuing authority, such as a sheriff or police chief, must issue a concealed carry permit to any person meeting a basic set of requirements (for example, residency, submitting fingerprints, being over a certain age, not having felony record, and the like). A “may issue” State, on the other hand, gives the issuing authority discretion to determine whether an applicant has a good reason for seeking to carry a concealed handgun (Grossman & Lee, 2008). Some, but not all, states also require as a condition for being issued a concealed carry permit participation in gun-safety activities that may range from a short classroom exercise, to actual firearms training.⁷

Recent growth in the number of permissive concealed-carry laws has increased permit holders from 5 million in 2008 to 7 million in 2011. Concealed carry is increasingly a part of U.S. culture; it has even led clothing companies to design concealed-carry or “covert fashion” styles of pants and shirts that hide weapons but permit easy access to them (Richtel, 2012).

States that permit concealed carry may have different regulations about the places in which weapons are permitted. For example, State laws may permit the carrying of concealed weapons on the street, but not in court-houses or legislative offices. Many States prohibit the carrying of concealed weapons in schools, and some have either specific prohibitions against guns on college campuses, or delegate to the trustees of public institutions the right to determine what institutional policies shall be. Laws in some States (particularly those that completely bar handguns from college campuses) may not at present be fully consistent with Heller, and bringing them into compliance can be expected to be on the future agendas of many State legislatures and judiciaries.

State gun laws for the most part have been directed at public colleges and universities, but there is concern that in the future they may be directed towards private institutions as well. As one association of institutions noted,

Private colleges also have private property rights. Legislation introduced in some states would strip these colleges of their rights to regulate guns on their campuses. State

legislation either barring or mandating an allowance for concealed weapons on private college campuses could be construed as an intrusion on private property rights (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2008, p. 6).

Whether proposed legislation of this kind would pass legal muster is at present an unanswered question that might eventually require consideration by the Supreme Court.

Differences among the constitutions, laws and regulations of the fifty states have created a hodge-podge of policies that affect the legality of carrying guns on campus. Some states and institutions bar firearms altogether; others permit them anywhere on campus, anywhere on campus except buildings, or in automobiles in parking lots but not elsewhere. While most – but not all - colleges and universities currently have policies that prohibit guns on campus, ongoing changes in State laws may make retaining some of these policies problematic. The different situations in several states that do or may permit concealed firearms on campus as of the spring of 2012 give a flavor of the diversity of approaches that have been taken

Colorado. In March 2012 the Supreme Court of the State of Colorado found that campus firearm bans by the University of Colorado Board of Regents were illegal because State laws did not include colleges and universities in its listing of areas in which handguns could be excluded. As a result, carrying firearms is now permissible anywhere on campus, except residence halls and ticketed events, including classrooms. In August, 2012, two public campuses indicated that they would establish special residence halls for students with gun permits ("University sets aside," 2012).

Michigan. Permit holders may carry concealed guns anywhere in the State, except in "gun-free" areas stipulated by the legislature. These areas include, among others, sports arenas, schools, churches and synagogues (unless permitted by presiding officer), or a dormitory or classroom of a community college, college or university, but concealed weapons are permitted on college campuses and in parking areas. This law doesn't apply to Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, or Wayne State University because of their unique constitutional status (Shammas, 2009).

Mississippi. A law passed in 2011 allows permit holders who undergo specified firearms training to carry concealed weapons anywhere on a college campus, but it is not clear how this new law will be implemented since it conflicts with another Mississippi law that forbids guns in junior college, community college, college or university facilities.

Oregon. In 2011, the Oregon Court of Appeals overturned the Oregon University System's ban on weapons on campus, finding that only the legislature can regulate firearms. Permit holders can now carry concealed weapons on public campuses, although the state board of higher education approved in 2012 a policy banning concealed weapons from classrooms, dormitories, other buildings, and events.

Utah. The Utah Supreme Court found that public institutions could not ban concealed weapons because to do so would be inconsistent with the Utah constitution. As a result, permit holders can carry concealed weapons on anywhere on public college campuses, including classrooms.

Virginia. The open carrying of guns is permitted on public college campuses, with or without a permit, but institutions can prohibit open carry in buildings and dormitories. Concealed carry is not permitted in campuses.

Wisconsin. A law passed in 2011 made it legal to carry concealed weapons anywhere in the state, including public college campuses. However, it gave colleges the right to prohibit guns

on campuses for special events, and in buildings in which signs prohibiting weapons are posted at all entrances.

Trustees

Almost all institutions have policies concerning guns on campus and, while such policies may be delegated to campus administrators, their final approval ultimately rests with the board of trustees. Indeed, the Governing Board of Virginia Tech University was required to vote in 2012 to ban guns in all university buildings and major campus events, because the previous ban was judged to be only a statement of university policy that had not been formally adopted by the Board ("Virginia Tech's Board shores up campus gun ban," 2012).

College trustees or their administrative surrogates must develop firearm policies that are consistent both with Federal Constitutional provisions that give citizens the right to possess handguns for their own protection, and with the constitutions and laws of their individual states. Federal provisions apply to all public institutions, but state constitutions and laws differ considerably. For example, although the data may change quickly as legislatures come and go, according to one recent analysis "twenty-four states completely prohibit concealed weapons on college campuses, even for those who have a concealed handgun license" (Meloy, 2011, p. 12). This might appear to limit trustee discretion in establishing policies about weapons, but much depends on whether current state laws are found to meet Federal Constitutional muster, whether state legislation has designated institutions of higher education as "sensitive" places, and whether college facilities, for example, are considered to be "school or public buildings." Another 15 states allow universities discretion to permit concealed weapons in campus, as long as they act consistently with Federal and State requirements. Still other States may prohibit institutions from banning weapons on campus. What public university trustees can do may not be clearly known until individual cases have moved through the state court system.

Campuses and the General Population: Current Comparative Data

Data describing the actual incidence of crime on campus might help clarify the issues over which the MoreGuns/BanGuns camps are contending, and suggest whether or not higher education is faced with a critical situation requiring immediate action. Such data are available because The Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 authorizes the Department of Education annually to collect and analyze incidents of crime on every U.S. college campus (*Incidence of crime*, 2001). This law, now known as the Clery Act, requires each institution to report and to disclose, among other things, the number of alleged campus incidents reported to the campus police, or to local police agencies, of criminal activity in seven different categories⁸. These data can be downloaded from the Internet, although users have to manipulate them so they can be useful to particular institutional groups.⁹ Three specific analyses are presented below. The first describes the incidence of specific types of campus crime in 2010, the second compares the rate of violent criminal behavior on campuses with the rate in the general population, and the third compares campus and general population data related to the two violent crimes of murder and manslaughter.

Campus crime in 2010

Clery reports include nine categories of crime that can be divided into two groups that reflect violent crime and non-violent crime, respectively. The categories of crime, and their prevalence on college campuses in 2010, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

Annual Clery data provide a snapshot of crime on campus. Although only 2010 data are shown in Table 1, the number and distribution of crimes have remained reasonably steady over the past several years. The data indicate that campus murder and manslaughter constitute only 0.05% of all campus crimes, that 79.16% of campus crimes are non-violent in nature, and that burglary (a non-violent category) constitutes about two-thirds of all campus crime. Forcible sexual offenses (9.00%) and aggravated assault (7.18%) are the most frequent violent campus crimes.

Although Clery Act data are the only national source for the number of reported campus crimes, they may be misleading. They have been criticized because institutions may differ in their interpretations of the self-reporting requirements, and may fail to report some offenses in order to protect their reputations. In addition students themselves may be reluctant to report crimes, and campus counseling centers may withhold information based on confidentiality requirements (Lombardi & Jones, 2009). Inadequate reporting is most likely to be seen for sex offenses.¹⁰

Campus and U.S. Population Violent Crime Rates

Of the categories of crime included in Clery data, five (murder, manslaughter, forcible sexual offenses, robbery, aggravated assault) are considered to reflect violent behavior, and it is the summed total of these categories that are reported here. The F.B.I. uses these same categories of crime in its reports of criminal activity in the U.S., making it possible to compare campus violent crime rates with rates in the general population. In order to make the comparison, campus violent crime rates are reported per 100,000 FTE students, while general U.S. rates are reported per 100,000 U.S. population. These comparisons, for the years 1997 to 2010 are shown in Table 2.

(Table 2 about here)

The data in Table 2 show that campus rates of violent crime have been only between 10.8 and 12.8 percent of the general population rates in every year during this 14-year period. In other words, violent crime rates per 100,000 of U.S. population for the period 1997-2010 have been between eight and nine times higher than the violent crime rates per 100,000 FTE seen on campus. This is true despite that fact that a large majority of college students are at the ages most prone to engage in violence, while a significant portion of the U.S. population groups include the young and the elderly that are least likely to engage in violence. The exceptionally low level of campus violent crime may be due in part to the self-selective nature of those who choose to go to college, as well as to the anti-violence ethos of most U.S. collegiate institutions.¹¹

Even a casual look at the data in Table 2 reveals two trends that may be a surprise to some observers. First, the violent crime rate per 100,000 in the general population is not increasing, but is in fact has been steadily decreasing. Second the violent campus crime rate per 100,000 FTE students has also been steadily declining, from 68.6 in 1997 to 47.3 in 2010, at a rate similar to the rate of decline seen in the general population.

Murder and Manslaughter

The number on which the public is most likely to fixate as a measure of campus crime is the rate of murder and manslaughter in colleges and universities, compared to the nation as a whole. Murder rates are often considered to be the most reliable measure of criminal activity, because murder is the crime least likely to go unreported. These data, shown in Table 3, indicate

that from 1997 to 2010 the annual murder/manslaughter rate for the U.S. ranged from 6.8 to 4.8 per 100,000 persons. During the same period, murder and homicide rates on college campuses ranged from a high of 0.37 per 100,000 FTE students (in 2007, the year of the Virginia Tech shootings) to a low of 0.06 per 100,000 FTE students. Aside from 2007, when the murder and manslaughter rate in colleges and universities was 6.6% of the rate in the general population, college and university rates ranged between 1.1% and 3.5% of the rates in the general population.

Why the Campus Gunfight Will Continue Unabated

Although colleges and universities exhibit exceptionally low crime rates by general population standards, the fight between MoreGuns and BanGuns is likely to continue unabated for the foreseeable future for several reasons: guns on campus is a wicked problem, the arguments of both groups are based on motivated reasoning, both positions are self-validating, and the polar positions they advocate are oversimplified.

Wicked Problems

‘Wicked problems’ are so called because they are ill-defined, and rely on elusive political judgments to reach a temporary resolution (Rittel & Webber, 1973). A wicked problem has a number of defining characteristics, many of which are applicable to the MoreGuns/BanGuns debate. For example, the problem cannot be specifically defined, there is no rule that can tell you when a wicked problem has been solved and no further work is needed on it, potential solutions to wicked problems are neither true nor false, there is no immediate or ultimate test of a proposed solution to a wicked problem because each one has long-term consequences that raise still further questions, and every wicked problem is a symptom of other problems.

In simple language, we can’t permanently solve wicked problems because they are too hard. Wicked problems are not solvable using traditional management or problem solving practices, and the guns on campus issue can never be satisfactorily resolved until the underlying ideologies are confronted and reconciled.

Motivational Reasoning

MoreGuns and BanGuns groups persist in their advocacy because of motivated reasoning in which each group processes information in ways that promote goals that are “extrinsic to the decisionmaking task at hand” (Kahan, 2011, p. 7). MoreGuns processes data and arguments through the lens of legal values; BanGuns does the same through the lens of academic values. When subject to motivated reasoning, “individuals can be unwittingly disabled from making dispassionate, open-minded, and fair judgments” (Kahan, 2011, p. 7). People clearly see motivated reasoning in the behavior of their adversaries, but not in themselves. Motivated reasoning leads actors to seek out information that supports their position, to discount information that does not, and to increase the certainty with which they hold their views. Motivated reasoning is strengthened when people belong to like-minded groups that reinforce their own values, thus making deviating from those values more difficult. Belonging to different cultural communities (Kahan, 2003) makes it possible for two groups ostensibly to support the same goal (making campus safer) while at the same time their biased motivations mean that they cannot agree on facts and judgments – “the magnitude of various risks, the efficacy of policies for mitigating them, and the like, - evidence of which they are unconsciously impelled to fit to their group commitments” (Kahan, 2011, p. 7). As a consequence, policy views are not based on the assessment of empirical evidence; rather, empirical evidence is selectively collected and interpreted by both sides to support their a priori commitments to a policy view.

Self-validating. The gun-on-campus debate is one that cannot be resolved by referring to data because both the MoreGuns and BanGuns views are self-validating. The ideological arguments for both positions are reinforced by interpretations of events: if a student is killed by a gun it can be argued that this would not have happened if other people who were present also had guns, as easily as it can be argued that this would not have taken place if the campus had banned guns. A low violent crime rate can be seen as evidence to support more guns on campus, as well as evidence to support restricting them. In fact, all data (or lack of data), of whatever kind, can be seen as supporting one's preconceived ideology. The fact that the rate of violent campus crime is decreasing at about the same rate as violent crime in the general population suggests that violence on campus is related more to the general social environment than it is to guns per se.

Oversimplification

Presenting only two positions in the MoreGuns/BanGuns debate oversimplifies, and therefore distorts, both arguments. The most extreme advocates in favor of gun control will not be satisfied until all handguns (with the possible exception of those carried by law-enforcement officers) are completely banned in the U.S. The most extreme advocates opposed to gun control believe that all citizens, regardless of previous felonies, mental health conditions or age, have the right to carry handguns for their own protection. Seen in this way, the alternatives are stark, and opportunities for agreement or compromise do not appear possible.

But the reality is that positions can be more subtle than stark, and even 'obvious' alternatives can become multi-dimensional and therefore negotiable when they are seen in depth. Even the nature of the problem itself can change upon closer inspection. For example, a content analysis of media coverage, congressional debate and legislation following the 1999 killings of 13 and the suicides of two student perpetrators at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado showed that at least 11 competing narratives had been created, each framing the situation differently (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004). The same proliferation occurred after the Virginia Tech killings for which blame was causally related, aside from the usual MoreGuns/BanGuns arguments, to deficient university/local police relations, faulty intra-campus communications systems, overly-long response time by the university, loose gun purchase laws, insufficient attention to disturbed students, and deficiencies in provisions for background checks of gun purchasers. Different narratives lead to different proposed solutions, and the simple dichotomy of MoreGuns/BanGuns may play a role in some, but not all.

Among other causes of simplification, in addition to problem definition, are ignoring campus dynamics, failing to recognize the difficulty in monitoring policy compliance, being unable accurately to assess threats, and being victimized by Black Swans.

Campus dynamics. The simplistic MoreGuns/BanGuns dichotomy emphasizes external sources of weapons but pays scant attention to internal campus dynamics. The ability legally to possess a gun on campus provides only one metric with which to assess gun ownership among college students, and other evidence suggests that legal possession is only part of the story. Survey data collected during the 1994-1995 academic year indicated that 7.0% of the respondents had carried a gun, knife or other weapon during the previous 30 days (Meilman, Leichter & Presley, 1998). A survey of students in four-year colleges, conducted in 1997, reported that 3.5% of the respondents had a working firearm with them at college (Miller, Hemenway & Wechsler, 1999).

These data are important because students with access to guns differ from other students in several ways. In particular, "students who report having guns at college disproportionately engage in behaviors that put themselves and others at risk for injury" (Miller, Hemenway &

Wechsler, 2002, p. 64). These students, compared to students who had not carried weapons, were more likely to consume alcohol, engage in binge drinking, use drugs, experience suicidal thoughts or attempts, drive under the influence, and have impaired academic performance (Presley & Meilman, 1997). Both MoreGuns and BanGuns ignore the possibility that weapons will be present on campus regardless of whatever policies may be established, and that students who have guns are more likely than others to be disruptive.

Monitoring compliance. If an institution decides to follow the BanGuns approach it must then confront the issue of compliance. As campus-based research has shown, some students will carry weapons even if they are prohibited, and non-students on campus may do so as well. Particularly as states move from “may issue” to “must issue” status, citizens who usually carry because they have permits may either forget to remove their weapons when they enter a campus where they are banned, or choose to ignore the campus prohibition. How can a campus determine if guns are illegally present when the definition of concealed carry is that a weapon is not visible to observers? Off-campus attempts to identify concealed illegal weapons have proven quite problematic in jurisdictions, such as New York City, where ‘stop and frisk’ provisions to make this determination have led to claims of racial profiling.¹²

Threat assessment. Some studies have proposed that the most effective way of reducing campus violence may be through conducting threat assessments to evaluate persons of concern on campus, and intervening before they can act out their intentions against others. Although this concept has been used in school settings, it may be of less value in colleges because of the larger number of buildings, uncontrolled access, irregular student schedules, and the numerous developmental and environmental changes that can introduce higher levels of stress (Drysedale et al., 2010).

The problem of intervention is that campus murder and manslaughter are rare events not predictable beforehand, even though in hindsight knowledgeable observers are likely to say ‘it was inevitable and only a matter of time’. A good part of the unpredictability is that these incidents often involve an assailant with a mental disorder. Every experienced dean knows that many students and faculty on college campuses have mental disorders. However, the number of such persons is large enough to make attending to each one both impractical and cost-ineffective, and the number of the mentally disturbed associated with violent events is vanishingly small.

Although increased campus programs to identify students with mental health problems may be marginally useful, they are unlikely to reduce the number of troubled students with access to handguns. This is in part because few college counselors appear willing to discuss firearms issues with students (Price, Mrdenovich, Thompson & Dake, 2009), and the mental health criteria for refusing to issue a gun license requires that the applicant be “adjudicated mental defective” by a court, board, or some other lawful authority - a process that campus counselors are usually unable to meet. Without this adjudication (or even with it, as happened at Virginia Tech) a student’s (or faculty member’s) mental condition will not be entered into the NICS data base (Congressional Research Service, 2011).

Black Swans. Very infrequently, as in the case of Virginia Tech, a focusing scenario lies so far outside regular expectations, and carries such an extreme impact, that it can be considered a Black Swan (Taleb, 2007).¹³ We are all vulnerable to Black Swans because we project the campus future based on the campus past. As in the case of Virginia Tech, Black Swans may also inspire major reforms in policy and practice to prevent the problem from occurring in the future. These reforms can be costly, but may not have a major impact on the next Black Swan which, by definition, is currently neither knowable nor predictable. “The Black Swans we imagine, discuss

and worry about do not resemble those likely to be Black Swans. We worry about the wrong “improbable events.... people expect it to recur when in fact the odds of that happening have arguably been lowered” (Taleb, 2007, pp. 77, 78). If the problem is how to make campuses safer, we tend as usual to think of what has already happened, rather than what might happen. But just as bad cases make bad law, so policies created in response to prominent but unique Black Swan events may have little overall effect on making campuses safer.

There is no way of predicting what the next traumatic campus event will be, except that it is likely to be different from the last traumatic event. Indeed, the next Black Swan on a U.S. campus may not be related to guns at all, and might instead involve nerve gas released in a crowded lecture, poisoned food in a dining hall, or campus invasion by brain-eating zombies.¹⁴

Conclusion

Any fair assessment of violent crimes on college campuses suggests a mixed picture. On the one hand, the campus is not an Ivory Tower free of criminal activity. In a random sample of the victimization of college students, “37% of the students had experienced at least one type of victimization since the beginning of the 1993-94 academic year. Nearly one-fourth (23.7%) had been victimized at least once on campus during this reference period...” (Fisher et al., 1998). On the other hand, even those specifically concerned with campus crime acknowledge that “college campuses do not appear to be ‘hot-spots’ for predatory offenses, as portrayed by the media, that they are not ‘armed camps’ in which heinous crimes are a regular occurrence” (Fisher et al., 1998).

The reality is that America’s colleges and universities are unusually safe places. The 2001 report to Congress on crime in postsecondary institutions stated that “in nearly every category of crime for which [Clery Act] data were collected, campuses showed a lower incidence of crime than comparable data for the nation as a whole” (*Incidence of crime*, 2001, p. 13). The chance of being an on-campus victim of murder or manslaughter in 2010 was about one in 875,000. This is about the same chance that the average U.S. citizen faces of being struck by lightning. The MoreGuns scenario in which untrained citizens use guns to bring down a campus killer is a testosterone fantasy;¹⁵ equally unrealistic is the BanGuns notion that proscribing guns would reduce campus violence.

So are we faced with a crisis - a widespread social problem in need of institutionalization and governmental intervention? Crises are social constructions, whose existence depends on the ideology of the reporter. Whether the unacceptable risks of campus life can be reduced through either MoreGuns or BanGuns is, in Berliner and Biddle’s (1995) memorable phrase, a “manufactured crisis.” There is at present no evidence to support either position, and both appear related more to attempts to claim political dominance rather than to concerns for campus security.

A research study on guns at college concluded that “our data do not show whether guns at college confer a net benefit, impose a net cost, or have an indifferent effect on college communities or on individual gun owners (Miller et al., 2002, p. 64). A decade later, this same statement is true. Moreover, given the infrequency of gun violence on campus, it is difficult to think of what kinds of data in the future, collected under what conditions, could enable researchers to propose a defensible argument for either of these positions.¹⁶ Data-free hypotheticals are not necessarily wrong; it just that there is at present no substantiating evidence to support them. Both MoreGuns and Ban Guns are solutions in search of a problem to which they might be attached (Cohen & March, 1986).

Prospects for the Future

We know very little about how either gun violence or the presence of guns on campus affect student attitudes and behaviors (LaPoint, 2009-2010). While the current campus gun battle is unlikely to be resolved by data in the short term, scholars may still help to sharpen the discussion by filling in some of the wide gaps in our knowledge about guns and violence on campus. What have been the responses of faculty, students and administration to dramatic gun-related events? How might various groups in a campus community respond to the knowledge that some of its members were carrying concealed weapons? What effect might this knowledge have on relationships among students, or between students and faculty? Would either banning or encouraging guns on campus lead people to feel more threatened or more secure? If campuses were to declare that concealed weapons may be carried, how many students and faculty would be likely to carry them (in addition to those who may already carry them despite institutional bans)?

Scholars might also inform the debate by maintaining, updating and disseminating the annual Clery data in more usable formats, by preparing and updating an authoritative and current list of institutions that have adopted a gun policy, and by tracking violent incidents occurring on matched institutions with differing firearms policies. Data such as these are unlikely by themselves to change hearts and minds, but may prove useful in the future if the BanGuns and MoreGuns groups decide to move past unilateral pronouncements and consider sensible compromises that might end the gun fight. Each group has been looking for the unrealistic 100% solution; settling for the 80% solution might enable both of them to achieve many of their objectives. Like most compromises, this one would have to have something for everyone and will not completely satisfy anyone. Most important, it will have to move past the simple MoreGuns/BanGuns dichotomy. If the parties can find common ground they may be able to re-align their resources to jointly take on the most pressing campus violence problems, which are not the lethal issues of murder or manslaughter, but the much more frequent problems of non-lethal aggravated assault and forcible sex offenses.

If the present cultural conflict has any redeeming social value, it may be that the adoption by some of the States of the MoreGuns position, while others maintain a BanGuns policy, may establish a quasi-experiment of sorts in which the consequences of both position can be compared. Of course, since the present conflict between groups is basically unrelated to data, future data may still not have much bearing on their positions.

The data may suggest that campus violence is correlated either with MoreGuns or with BanGuns, or that it is unrelated to either. However, one thing is certain: in the final analysis, policy makers are more likely to be swayed by good stories than by good data, and one improbable hypothetical may be worth a thousand statistical tables.¹⁷ Even though it has been said that “no scholars now claim that legalizing concealed weapons causes a major increase in crime“ (Glenn, 2003, p. A18) and “research has come out with, in essence, a net-zero correlation between gun sales and crime rates” (Jonsson, 2009), advocates for one side or the other focus public attention on the same rare event – for example, a mass killing or a citizen using a weapon to prevent a violent crime – and interpret it in a way that supports their preconceived and incompatible beliefs. In the campus gun issue, positions taken are proxies for ideologies.

The rational sequence on the firing range is ready (have a plan), aim (make adjustments), fire (take action). But the interpretive sequence in the college campus gunfight is ready (have an ideology), fire (attack using the ideology), and then aim (construct a narrative that relates the incident to the ideology). Firing before you carefully aim has several potential benefits: it minimizes procrastination, and it permits adjustments in aim to be made in the future once the

feedback from the initial firing has been processed. Either the rational or the interpretive sequence can make sense, but only when taking action is related to the goal and when feedback is available, and neither of these requirements is now being met. If the real goal is to reduce campus violence, neither MoreGuns nor BanGuns ever evaluate the result of their activities against the ostensible goal of reducing campus violence. Instead, they justify their actions using examples, not of what has happened, but of what might happen if their positions do not prevail.

The future of guns on campus will be a legal as much as a social policy issue. Given Heller, it appears unlikely that absolute campus bans on firearms, at least at public institutions, can continue to exist. The firearms question then becomes not whether, but rather what kinds, carried by whom, where, under what circumstances, and with what restrictions regarding the purchasing of guns and the issuing of permits. A discussion at the annual meeting of the National Association of College and University Attorneys asked what kinds of gun restrictions can institutions develop if they wish to restrict weapons in light of the Supreme Court rulings, as well as State-level statutes or constitutions that permit concealed carry? The answer given was that they should prepare arguments that identify their institutions as “sensitive places”, avoid policies that stipulate an absolute gun ban, and create policies that apply to places where people congregate (Keller, 2011). Colleges or universities that can develop sensible statements defining why they should be considered as “sensitive places” that justify special policies permitting firearms under certain conditions but not others might, at least temporarily, meet the demands of both MoreGuns and BanGuns.

We would all like to believe that making the campus safer is a matter of developing better policies and procedures, and that we could accomplish this if we had the will to do so. But the truth may be that campuses are at present attending to the problem and expending the maximum resources available to them. If this is so, we may already be at a threshold level of violence that must be accepted because attempts to lower it still further may negatively influence the social benefits for which these institutions exist. Taking the Panglossian position that this is the best of all possible worlds leads us to consider the unhappy prospect that institutions themselves can do little more than they already have to reduce campus violence without compromising other essential purposes. The guns-on-campus genie is already out of the bottle (or the barrel). The country is filled with guns, guns exist on college campuses, and while there doesn't appear to be much that can be done to eradicate them it may be that, under most circumstances, institutions can live with them.

Perhaps the most realistic position at present is the one taken by a scholar who said about a recently proposed state gun law:

Gun advocates insist that [the law] will make campuses safer by discouraging mass killers and giving students the ability to fight back. Gun control proponents warn the law will lead to more lethal violence. Both sides are probably wrong.... As a professor, I'd feel safer if guns were not permitted on campus.... But there is little evidence to support my gut feeling (Winkler, 2011b).

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¹ The status of campus gun laws in various states as of March 2012 is given by the National Conference of State Legislatures as follows ("Guns on campus: Overview," 2012): In the United States, 49 out of 50 states have concealed carry weapons laws. Currently, there are 22 states that ban carrying a concealed weapon on a college

campus. The 22 states are: Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi (as of 2011 session, concealed carry allowed for those who have taken a voluntary firearms safety course but being disputed), Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming. In 25 states the decision to ban or allow concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually. The 25 states are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.... In addition, some individual colleges and universities have decided to allow concealed carry weapons.

² As an example, in August 2012 two trained and experienced New York City policeman confronted a shooter in a crowded downtown area. They fired 16 bullets from a distance of less than ten feet, seven of which (44%) hit and killed the shooter; nine shots wounded nine bystanders (Goldstein & Ruderman, 2012). Civilian permit holders, untrained for crisis situations, and shooting from more than ten feet away, would probably not have done as well.

³ One analysis in 1994 estimated a total of about 200 million guns in private hands, and indicated that proportionately fewer households owned guns in 1994 than in the 1960s and 1970s (National Institute of Justice, 1997). Another analysis, in 2004, provided a range of between 218 and 282 million guns, owned by 26 per cent of American adults, with the average owner possessing five weapons and 38% of all households owning at least one fire arm (Hepburn, Miller, Azrael & Hemenway, 2007). A more recent study suggested that in 2007 there were approximately 294 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States, of which 106 million were handguns (Congressional Research Service, 2011).

⁴ This report (Drysdale et al., 2010) relied on open source data collected using a number of contemporary data bases. The authors acknowledge that for a number of technical reasons it is both incomplete and biased towards more recent events. It is being noted here, despite its limitations, because the prominence of the three agencies that conducted it is likely to lead to it being cited in the future by participants in the guns on campus controversy.

⁵ For an engaging and detailed analysis of Heller, see Gunfight: The battle over the right to bear arms in America (Winkler, 2011a).

⁶ A map identifying where and under what conditions open carry is permitted can be found at <http://www.opencarry.org/opencarry.html>.

⁷ The number of “shall issue” states grew tremendously between 1960, when there were just two, to 34 in 2003 (Grossman & Lee, 2008, p. 199). As of 2004, 36 States were “shall issue” (up from nine in 1986) (Lott & Mustard, 1997), 9 were “may issue”, four did not permit concealed weapons, and one permitted concealed weapons but required no permit (Grossman & Lee, 2008). The movement among the states from “may issue” to “must issue” (and never the reverse) was unrelated to whether the governor was a Democrat or a Republican, or to the absolute level of crime rates. This trend is likely to continue, since States will find it increasingly difficult to justify discretion in the granting of permits after Heller. It is unclear the extent to which requiring permits for concealed carry would have a major effect on the general public, since many people who carry guns (31% in 2001) carry concealed weapons without having a permit to do so (National Opinion Research Center, 2001).

⁸ The Clery Act requires campus reporting of criminal activity of several kinds, reported separately for each of four places: on-campus, residence halls, non-campus buildings or property, and public property. This paper is based solely on violent behavior that takes place on campus. Clery Act data for the years 2006 to the present are available for download at <http://ope.ed.gov/security/>.

⁹ The data for the three tables in this paper are drawn from 3,286 of the 4,599 degree-granting institutions in 2010-2011 as shown in Table 279, *Digest of Educational Statistics*, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011, as being not-for-profit and offering either two- or four-year degrees. These data exclude the 1,313 private for-profit institutions. Data for all three tables are drawn from the following sources: 2010 Clery data downloaded from <http://ope.ed.gov/security/GetDownloadFile.aspx>, adjusted to remove all non-degree granting institutions, and all for-profit institutions. Data for U.S. population, violent crime rates per 100,000 population, and murder/manslaughter rates per 100,000 population, 1997 - 2010 are taken from FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics. Data for violent crime and murder/manslaughter rates on college campuses for 1997, 1998 and 1999 are taken from (Congressional Research Service, 2011), adjusted by removing all for-profit institutions, and all private and public campuses awarding less than a two-year degree. Data for violent crime, and murder/manslaughter crimes on college campuses for 2001, 2002, 2003, are taken from Summary campus crime and security statistics – criminal offenses, at <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crime/criminaloffenses/index.html>. Data for violent crime and murder/manslaughter on college campuses from Clery Act data for 2007 to the present are reported in http://www.securityoncampus.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=97. U.S. violent crime rates are taken from Uniform Crime Report Statistics as prepared by The Disaster Center, United States Crime Index Rates per 100,000 Inhabitants, at <http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/uscrime.htm>. Campus crime numbers for 2004, 2005 and 2006 are based on Clery reports, at <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/criminal-04-06.pdf>. Clery data for 1997, 1998 and 1999 can be found in hard copy at *The incidence of crime on the campuses of U.S. postsecondary education institutions (Incidence of crime, 2001)*.

¹⁰ One study of criminal offenses on campus reported that “only 36.5 percent of schools reported crime statistics in a manner fully consistent with the Clery Act” (Karjane, Fisher & Cullen, 2002, p. xiii), and it has been estimated that only 35% of acts of violence against students in the period 1995-2002 were reported to the police. The data for rape are even more discouraging: 15-20 % of female college students report having been raped, but only 5 % were reported to the police (American College Health Association, 2005). Examples of underreporting such as these are the reason that “doubts about the reliability and validity of these statistics are commonplace” (American College Health Association, 2005, p. 3). The category of ‘forcible sexual offenses’ is not broken down further in Clery reports, but includes forcible rape, forcible sodomy, sexual assault with an object, and forcible fondling, and involves an unwilling victim who may report the crime. Non-forcible sexual offenses include incest and statutory rape, and may involve willing victim(s) who are less likely to report the crime.

¹¹ These reasons may overlook some more mundane structural matters that may also have an impact on the campus rates shown here. For example, while U.S. population members remain in that category 24/7 year-round, college attendees are on campus for only part of the day and part of the year. Campus crime rates reflect student actions only when they are on campus, and a student who is murdered off-campus would not ordinarily be included in Clery data.

¹² The legal requirements to permit frisking are specific and quite demanding. “To justify the stop, a law enforcement officer must be able to point to ‘specific and articulable facts’ that would indicate to a reasonable person that a crime has been, is being, or is about to be committed. If the officer reasonably suspects that the suspect is in possession of a weapon that is of danger to the officer or others, the officer may conduct a frisking of the suspect’s outer garments to search for weapons” (“Frisking,” 2012).

¹³ “Black Swan” is a metaphor used by Taleb to identify an event so rare and unlikely that no one has ever thought of planning for it. A dramatic example of a Black Swan event would be the destruction of the Twin Towers by jet

aircraft on 9/11. Black Swans are so-called because at one time they were thought not to exist and indeed until relatively recently all swans seen by Europeans had been white. The belief that there were no black swans persisted for hundreds of years in the West - until a population of black swans was discovered in Australia.

¹⁴ A harbinger of the latter possibility may be seen in a newspaper account (Associated Press, 2012) of a student who killed and dismembered his roommate with a knife, and then ate his heart and part of his brain. Although some may find it difficult to consider zombies as a reasonable possibility, it should be noted that the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention has already published some guidelines (Kahn, 2011) to follow in the event of a zombie apocalypse. In addition, professional journals are publishing articles (Chodorow, 2012) about the need for new laws to deal with the unique problems caused by the undead. To their shame, scholars of higher education are already behind the curve on these issues, even though any faculty member who teaches an 8 a.m. lecture class will attest that large numbers of zombies are already present on campus. You have been warned!

¹⁵ Even training would be unlikely to help. As of August 2012, well-trained and equipped military coalition forces in Afghanistan were required to be armed around the clock in order to prevent murders by inside agents. Despite this, the so-called 'green on blue' killings continue, with the perpetrators often escaping unscathed.

¹⁶ To consider this problem of data interpretation, perform the following thought experiment. In 2010 there were 15 murders/manslaughters on college campuses. Now make two alternate assumptions about the number in the year 2012. First, assume that the number doubled, to 30. Second, assume that the number fell to zero. Under either assumption, do you believe that the arguments and positions in favor of either MoreGuns or BanGuns would change?

¹⁷ As one example, in a recent discussion about the desirability of permitting weapons on campuses in Georgia, State Representative Rich Golick, chairman of the Non-Civil Judiciary Committee, said "for me, the debate boils down to this – given that the university system simply cannot guarantee the safety of all students at all times,... if a properly permitted female student has a baby and is pushing a stroller on campus, are we seriously going to deny her the ability to defend herself and her child in the event she is attacked?" (Galloway, 2012). A callous attacker, a young mother, a threat to personal safety, a baby, and a stroller all in one story; if only space aliens had also been mentioned, Representative Golick's argument would be a slam-dunk!

Table 1. Number and percentage of Clery-reported crimes on college campuses in calendar year 2010, by crime category

	Violent crimes (N=6,705, 20.8% of total)					Non-violent or property crimes(N=25,469, 79.2% of total)			
	Murder	Manslaughter	Forcible Sex Offenses	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Nonforcible Sex Offenses	Burglary	Motor Vehicle Theft	Arson
Number of offenses (N=32,174)	15	1	2,897	1,482	2,310	32	21,358	3,347	732
Per cent of total Crimes (100.00%)	0.05%	0.00%	9.00%	4.61%	7.18%	0.10%	66.38%	10.40%	2.28%

TABLE 2. Comparison of rates of violent crimes per 100,000 FTE on non-profit, degree-granting college campuses, and violent crimes per 100,000 U.S. population, 1997-2010.

	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Violent crimes per 100,000 FTE students	68.6	70.3	66.5	65.0	61.9	60.9	60.3	58.0	59.1	58.3	55.8	52.2	46.8	47.3
Violent crimes per 100,000 of U. S. population	611.0	567.6	523.0	506.5	504.4	494.4	475.8	463.2	469.0	473.6	466.9	457.5	431.9	403.6
College rate as a percent of U.S. population rate	11.2%	12.4%	12.7%	12.8%	12.3%	12.3%	12.7%	12.5%	12.6%	12.3%	12.0%	11.4%	10.8%	11.7%

TABLE 3. Murder and manslaughter rate per 100,000 FTE enrollment on college campuses, compared to the murder and manslaughter rate per 100,000 of the U.S. population, 1997-2010.

	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Murder and manslaughter rate per 100,000 FTE students	0.17	0.22	0.10	0.17	0.15	0.19	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.06	0.37	0.11	0.12	0.11
Murder and manslaughter rate per 100,000 U.S. population	6.8	6.3	5.7	5.5	5.6	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.6	5.4	5.0	4.8
Campus rate as a percent of population rate	2.5%	3.5%	1.8%	3.1%	2.7%	3.4%	1.4%	2.2%	2.0%	1.1%	6.6%	2.0%	2.4%	2.3%