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Social Status and the Effects of Legal Concealed Firearms on College Campuses

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ABSTRACT

Research consistently shows that students and faculty are generally against expanding access to firearms on campus, and many stakeholders worry about the effects of campus carry laws on student violence, civility, and feelings of safety. We contribute to this literature by investigating how potential changes to campus carry policies affect students' reported commitment to campus activities. Theories explaining fear of crime and social commitment led to hypotheses that predict members of socially disadvantaged groups—specifically women and minority students—would report less favorable attitudes toward gun possession on campus, greater feelings of vulnerability to victimization, and less commitment to the college environment when students or staff may possess guns. Hypotheses received support, and add to the growing literature documenting potential issues that legislators, administrators, and faculty might consider when debating the enactment of campus carry policies.

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Introduction

After mass shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Northern Illinois in 2008, many politicians responded by asserting that legal firearm possession on college campuses could deter future violence (Aber, 2009; McKinley, 2008; Vertuno, 2011). Major universities such as the University of Texas—itself the site of one of the deadliest campus shootings in U.S. history—opposed these bills. Some faculty have resigned out of protest, due to concerns the laws could lead to more violence and stifle open discussions of controversial topics (Jaschik, 2017). American college campuses, regardless of policy, may be vulnerable to crime because they provide open spaces for academics and the public to engage in both knowledge creation, preservation, and outreach (Nicoletti, Bollinger, & Spencer-Thomas, 2009; Schuh, 1998).

Proponents of gun possession on college campuses claim that weapons have a deterrent effect, minimizing the likelihood that a crime will occur or spread. According to deterrence theory, deterrence occurs when penalties are severe enough and

apprehension is certain enough that potential offenders or re-offenders avoid criminal behavior (Jacobs, 2010). The proponents of concealed carry on campus therefore posit that these laws deter potential campus shooters due to the likelihood of armed students, faculty, and/or staff. While deterrence does not require that students actually carry weapons to deter a would-be assailant, deterrence theory would posit that the certainty of sanction would result in greater deterrence. In fact, certainty of punishment is a better predictor of deterrence than severity of punishment (Nagin, 2013). Thus, the theory proposes that a rational student body and administration would encourage some nonassailants to arm themselves to deter violence.

One particular concern of educational stakeholders is how these laws would affect student feelings of safety and security, and research suggest most students, faculty, and administrators are against allowing concealed weapons (Bouffard, Nobles, & Wells, 2012; Cavanaugh, Bouffard, Wells, & Nobles, 2012; Patten, Thomas, & Wada, 2013; Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2018). For example, Price et al. (2014) found in their survey of college presidents that 95% of respondents were against anyone having access to concealed weapons on campus due to feelings that campuses were already safer than other environments. In a survey of 1,125 faculty members, Thompson, Price, Dake, and Teeple (2013) found that faculty overwhelmingly felt safe on their campuses and viewed concealed weapons as having fewer benefits than risks, consistent with past research (Bennett, Kraft, & Grubb, 2012). Finally, Thompson et al. (2013) found that students were also against the expansion of access to guns on campus, largely reporting that they would feel less safe if students or faculty carried concealed weapons. Yet even though the majority of respondents were against concealed weapons on campus, research also shows some clear patterns where the few in favor of such policies are concerned; for example, men are more likely than are women to report seeing advantages in campus carry laws (Price et al., 2014). Here, we pose the question: why do some members of socially advantaged groups hold different attitudes toward campus carry laws, and what impact would campus concealed carry laws have on student feelings of vulnerability and commitment to the campus environment?

The vulnerability model of the fear of crime suggests that students with physical or social disadvantages would be more likely to fear victimization and so would be less likely to support legislation to allow firearms on campus. Further, we reasoned that this fear would result in fewer positive sentiments—including feelings of trust—attributed by students to the campus environment. In the present study, we recruited samples of students from two comprehensive regional universities, one in the Midwest and one in the Eastern United States. Our findings indicated that while most students disagreed with firearm possession on campus, women and members of ethnic minority groups were less likely to feel safe. Further, members of these socially disadvantaged groups also reported being less likely, relative to white men, to attend class or participate in campus activities if they thought others carried firearms. This research continues to find a link between student fear of crime and demographic characteristics (Steinmetz & Austin, 2014), while contributing to our understanding of the relationship between students' feelings of vulnerability and commitment to campus.

Theoretical framework

One of our goals is to advance a theoretical framework for understanding how campus concealed carry policies affect people's perceptions of their educational institutions. The vulnerability model of the fear of crime provides a general framework from which to view campus concealed carry laws. While several models explain how people develop a fear of crime, the vulnerability model explicitly treats social status and power differences as the basis for this fear. The vulnerability model explains how fear of crime results when a person feels that they lack either the physical or social resources to protect themselves from victimization (Hale, 1996). For example, groups traditionally viewed as being vulnerable such as women, those with disabilities, or the elderly, fear becoming victims due to their lack of physical strength (Hughes, Marshall, & Sherrill, 2003). Social vulnerability can include socioeconomic factors, including living in poverty, lack of formal education, or having fewer sources of social capital to help a person cope with anxiety (Will & McGrath, 1995). Regardless of the source of vulnerability, this model suggests that groups with less power or status in society feel less capable of dealing with threats to their well-being, and so members of these groups are more likely to fear victimization (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008).

Previous research has identified an empirical relationship between past victimization and fear of crime (Zhou, Lawton, & Longmire 2015); one critique of the vulnerability model is that it does not account for lower fear of crime among members of groups that are more likely to be victims. For instance, men are both more likely to commit and be the victim of violent crime, but report lower levels of fear than women (Franklin et al., 2008). Some researchers have suggested that these statistics ignore women's higher likelihood of being the victim of sexual assault or other hidden crimes (Ferraro, 1996; Sacco, 1990). Given research identifying an empirical relationship between past victimization and fear of crime (Zhou et al., 2015), underestimation of women's actual victimization may be occurring.

It is possible that victimization is not necessary for fear of crime victimization to develop, and this has hampered measurement of both fear of crime and perceptions that may relate to this fear (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987). The social disorganization model suggests that people use contextual cues (rundown neighborhoods, perceived deviant behaviors among community members) as signals for their risk of victimization. A social integration model also attempts to explain fear of crime, but views fear of crime as moderated by a person's feelings of belonging, emotional attachment, or investment in the community (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002), which can affect their feelings of vulnerability to crime (Adams & Serpe, 2000). The model proposes that community members who are more socially integrated will fear crime less than those who are not well integrated (Hartnagel, 1979). In sum, both personal experience and contextual or environmental factors seemingly play important roles in determining fear of crime.

Hence, as Franklin et al. (2008) point out, the processes explained by the vulnerability and social integration models may overlap. If differences in social status and power affect perceptions of vulnerability, then the resulting fear may reduce social integration within a community. Social integration involves social psychological correlates of emotion, such as feelings of commitment to groups or trust in others. Group

processes research traces the basis of these feelings to the emotions generated during social interactions among dyads. Lawler, Thye, and Yoon (2009) extended this research to propose the conditions under which people attribute these emotions to larger groups and organizational structures. Classrooms and organizations depend on actors coordinating their behavior to produce a positive learning environment. The theory of social commitments posits that actors working together attribute the emotions they feel in those settings to the settings in which they are experienced. Further, settings embedded in larger social structures (i.e. a classroom within a college or university) lead actors to attribute their emotions to the larger structure as well. When transitory emotions felt in a classroom strengthen positive interpersonal ties—such as between students or between a student and a teacher—then the emotions produced are likely to be attributed to the school. These attributions occur regardless of the valence of the emotion—positive or negative.

Thus, we predict that any factors producing negative emotion within the classroom or campus environment that affect the interpersonal experiences of students is likely to be attributed to the school, and students would be less committed to the school environment as a result. Some support for these predictions comes from research showing that people report less trust when they perceive themselves to be vulnerable to and fearful of crime (Gainey, Alper, & Chappell, 2011).

Additionally, we suspect that changes to laws encouraging gun possession on college campuses will lead people to confront their relative status and vulnerability to crime. Thus, students from socially disadvantaged or vulnerable populations would view the classroom as less safe. Also, fear and other negative emotions would likely reduce the commitment of students who feel vulnerable to crime or violence. This led us to hypothesize that white men are more likely to support gun possession in college classrooms than minority men and women of any racial group. We also hypothesize that white men will report feeling less vulnerable to victimization than minority men and women of any racial group. Based on theories of social commitments, our third hypothesis predicts that gender and race operate through feelings of being vulnerable to victimization to affect commitment to the campus environment.

Data and measures

Using survey research, we administered questionnaires to measure college student attitudes toward campus gun possession laws. Questionnaire items remain consistent with those used by Jenkot, Lovekamp, and Creek (2010). A convenience sample of undergraduate students in introductory level sociology courses at two mid-sized university campuses completed the questionnaire during the 2016–2017 academic year. One of these campuses was in the Midwest, and one was on the East Coast. Preliminary analyses indicated no significant differences in responses based on institution, and so we combined data from both campuses for analysis. This resulted in a sample of 242 students from a variety of disciplines and class standings, even though they were all enrolled in introductory sociology courses, because this course serves as a general education course.

Independent variables

Our hypotheses predict differences on dependent measures by sex and race/ethnicity. We collected information on these variables using a set of demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire, which also asked participants for their age, hometown, home state, and year in school. Given differences in the stated platforms of political parties on the issue of gun control, we also included an item measuring political views of respondents.

Sex

Participant sex was determined by a question, "What is your sex?" with the response categories coded as 'Male' = 1 and 'Female' = 2.

Race/ethnicity. Race or Ethnicity was measured with the question, "What is your race/ethnicity?" Possible response categories were 'White' = 1, 'Black or African American' = 2, 'Hispanic or Latino' = 3, 'Native American' = 4, 'Asian' = 5, 'Pacific Islander' = 6, 'Multi-racial' = 7, and 'Another Race' = 8, with a space given for participants to write in their race/ethnic identification.

Political views. Participants were also asked to identify their political views on social issues with the question, "How would you rate yourself with regard to social issues?" Response categories were, from left to right, 'Liberal' = 1, 'Somewhat Liberal' = 2, 'Centrist' = 3, 'Somewhat Conservative' = 4, and 'Conservative' = 5.

Dependent variables

Favorability of campus carry laws

We included questions asking participants to indicate whether (1) it is legal to carry guns on their campus, (2) if they believed students or faculty/staff should be able to legally carry guns into classrooms on campus, (3) if they would like to legally carry a gun on campus, (4) if they would feel safer being able to carry a gun, and (5) if they knew of or were members of any gun control groups on campus. A 'yes' was coded as '1,' 'no' was coded '2,' and 'I don't know' was coded as '3.' For the purposes of analysis, '3' was treated as missing data.

Feelings of being vulnerable to victimization

Ferraro and LaGrange (1987) make a clear case for carefully conceptualizing outcomes related to crime perceptions. Given our interest in affective perceptions, we follow their suggestion and attend to feelings regarding a person's vulnerability to victimization. After instructing participants to keep the scenario from above in mind, we asked them to respond to questions measuring how much they would worry about victimization with guns using the following four items:

"How much would you worry about you or someone close to you being *assaulted* with a gun?"

Table 1. Selected demographic characteristics.

Race/ethnicity			Years in college		
White	53.5	(129)	One	55.8	(135)
African-American	32.6	(79)	Two	19.4	(47)
Latino/a	2.9	(7)	Three	12.8	(31)
Native American	0.8	(2)	Four	7.9	(19)
Asian American	2.5	(6)	Five	1.7	(4)
Multiracial	2.9	(7)	Six +	1.2	(3)
Other	0.0	(0)			(239)
		(231)	Age		
			18–20	77.3	(184)
			21–25	20.7	(50)
Sex			26–30	1.3	(3)
Female	60.3	(146)	31–35	0.0	(0)
Male	36.4	(88)	36+	0.4	(1)
		(234)			(238)
Political views					
Liberal	44.1	(97)			
Centrist	23.6	(57)			
Conservative	27.3	(66)			
		(220)			

Note. Figures are reported in percentages; Actual numbers reported in parentheses.

"How much would you worry about you or someone close to you being *murdered* with a gun?"

"How much would you worry about you or someone close to you being *robbed* with a gun?"

"How much would you worry about you or someone close to you being the victim of an *accident* with a gun?"

Response categories for these items included 'Very frequently' = 3, 'Somewhat frequently' = 2, 'Seldom' = 1, and 'Never' = 0. Codes were added together and averaged to form a scale of fear of victimization.

Commitment to campus environment

We also asked participants whether knowing that a classmate may be carrying a gun would affect their class attendance, class participation, and attendance or participation in campus activities (such as sporting events, concerts, homecoming, theater, movies, and any other campus activity). Each question allowed respondents to choose from the following response categories: 'I would attend or participate more than I currently do' = 3, 'I would attend or participate about the same amount of time that I currently do' = 2, and 'I would attend or participate less than I currently do' = 1. Codes for answers to each item were added together and averaged to produce a commitment to campus scale.

Campus cohesion

We measured feelings of cohesion on campus with four items. Participants were asked to imagine that their campus had just put in place a policy where firearms were allowed for self-defense on campus and in classrooms and were asked to think of this type of situation while answering a series of questions. They were then directed to

Table 2. Binary logistic regression analysis of gun possession preferences on campus.

Predictor	Dependent measures								
	Would not carry			Students shouldn't carry			Faculty should not carry		
	<i>B</i>	SE	Ex ^b	<i>B</i>	SE	Ex ^b	<i>B</i>	SE	Ex ^b
Gender (female)	1.337***	0.397	3.808	1.118**	0.406	3.059	0.923**	0.325	2.516
Race/ethnicity (white)	-0.931*	0.404	0.394	-1.248**	0.432	0.287	-1.332***	0.330	0.264
Political views (liberal)									
Centrist	-0.292	0.528	0.747	-0.607	0.536	0.545	-1.007*	0.396	0.365
Conservative	-1.349**	0.466	0.260	-1.334**	0.488	0.264	-0.898*	0.383	0.407
-2 log likelihood		171.802			163.802			233.767	
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> ²		0.247			0.225			0.241	
Chi-square		34.718***			30.564***			40.401***	
Total <i>N</i>		(242)			(242)				

Reference category in parentheses.

**p* < 0.05.

***p* < 0.01.

****p* < 0.001.

Ex^b are exponentiated beta coefficients from logistic regression analysis.

answer seven items measuring how the participant felt campus carry laws would affect their experiences with campus, staff, and fellow students. Participants then rated how much they agreed with the following statements: "People on our campus would be likely to help one another," "Our campus would feel like a real home to me," "I would talk to my fellow students often," and "I would trust my fellow students to look out for my safety." Response items were 1 = "strongly agree," 2 = "agree," 3 = "slightly agree," 4 = "slightly disagree," 5 = "disagree," and 6 = "strongly disagree." These items were reverse coded, summed, and averaged, with higher scores indicating greater levels of perceived cohesion on campus.

Analysis

Two hundred and forty-two college students took part in the study. Table 1 presents basic demographic characteristics of the participants. Eighty-eight self-identified males (36.4%) and 146 self-identified females (60.3%) were included in the sample, with eight respondents leaving sex blank. The participants were predominantly white (53.3%), with the next largest group reporting their race as 'Black or African American' (32.6%). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 37, with a mean age of 19.78 years and a modal age of 19. The majority of participants had one year of college or were in their first year (55.8%).

Attitudes toward firearm possession

As with past research, the majority of participants reported that they would not feel safer carrying a gun, feel safer if a classmate carried a gun, or feel that faculty and staff should be able to carry a gun into a college classroom. For instance, only 15.3% of participants said it should be legal for students to carry guns into college classrooms. Concerning gender, there was no question on which men or women were more likely to respond 'yes' than 'no.' However, 51% of white participants said that

faculty or staff should be able to legally carry guns into campus classrooms. No other ethnic group was more likely to respond 'yes' than 'no' to questions regarding the preferred legality of campus firearm possession.

We used binary logistic regression analysis to test our first hypothesis, which predicted that white men would be more likely to support gun possession on college campuses than other groups. We constructed dummy variables for race and sex and the interaction between race and gender was not a significant predictor of support for gun possession on campus, so we did not include it in our analyses. Given differences in preferences for guns that are likely to correlate with political views, we used political affiliation as a control variable, and recoded it with the categories 1 = "liberal or somewhat liberal," 2 = "Centrist," and 3 = "Conservative or somewhat conservative." Table 2 displays results from this analysis.

While testing our first hypothesis, we found that men were significantly more likely to report that they would carry a weapon than women. Similarly, men were also more likely to say that students should carry weapons, or that faculty or staff should carry weapons. Results of binary logistic regression indicated that the odds of a woman reporting "no" were 2.8 times greater than those for a man when asked if they would want to be able to carry a weapon into a college classroom, 3.06 times greater when asked if students should be allowed to carry guns into campus classrooms, and 2.52 times greater when asked if faculty and staff should be allowed to carry guns into classrooms.

Moreover, we found race to be a significant predictor of gun possession preference on campus. White participants were significantly less likely to report "no" to each item than were non-white respondents. For example, compared to non-white participants, the odds of a white participants reporting "no" to the question of whether they would want to carry a weapon into a college classroom were reduced by approximately 60%. Taken together, these findings indicate that men and white participants were more accepting of gun possession on campus than women or minority students.

Our results also found that conservative participants were less likely to reply "no" to any of the measures, as would be expected given the generally favorable views of conservatives in the United States toward legal gun possession. Given these findings, political views act as a control in subsequent analyses of the effects of race and gender on fear of victimization, commitment to campus and classroom activities, and perceptions of campus cohesion.

The vulnerability model suggests that whites and men are less likely to fear victimization, as predicted by our second hypothesis. Our third hypothesis predicts that fear of victimization mediates the effects of gender and race on perceptions of campus cohesion and intended commitment to the classroom and campus activities. Thus, we used a mediation model procedure to test our second and third hypotheses.

Feelings of victimization, campus cohesion, and commitment

Our second hypothesis predicted that women and minority students would report greater feelings of vulnerability to victimization than white men, and our third hypothesis predicts that measures of campus cohesion and respondent commitment

Table 3. OLS regression and mediation analysis testing hypotheses 2 and 3.

Predictor	Dependent measures					
	Victim vulnerability		Campus cohesion			Commitment intentions
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	SE
(Constant)	0.367**	0.275	4.570***	0.367	2.310***	0.128
Gender (female)	0.367**	0.122	-0.103	0.151	-0.089	0.052
Race/ethnicity (white)	-0.341**	0.155	0.094	0.143	0.059	0.050
Political views	-0.126	0.069	0.071	0.084	-0.023	0.029
Fear of victimization	—	—	-0.665	0.085	-0.278***	0.029
<i>R</i> ²	0.116		0.282		0.361	
Sobel test (SE)	—	—	0.227**	0.083	0.090**	0.034
Total <i>N</i>	(208)		(208)		(210)	

p* < 0.01;*p* < 0.001.

intentions will be indirectly impacted by gender and race through vulnerability to victimization.

We conducted factor analyses on each scale used as a dependent variable in this study, and assessed the reliability of each scale. Four items made up the *Feelings of Being Vulnerable to Victimization* scale. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that these four items loaded on a single factor, eigenvalue = 3.326, accounting for 83.16% of variance in these items. These items also formed a highly reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.932). The four items used to construct the *Campus Cohesion* scale also loaded onto a single factor, eigenvalue = 2.787, accounting for 69.67% of variance in measures. These items also formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.854). Finally, the three items used to assess respondent intentions to commit to the campus and classroom loaded onto a single factor, eigenvalue = 2.222, accounting for 74.07% of variance in measures and loading onto a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.824).

To test both Hypotheses 2 and 3, we used a procedure by Hayes (2013) that adapts OLS regression procedures for mediation analysis. Using this procedure, *Feelings of Being Vulnerable to Victimization* was regressed on dummy variables for White Respondent and Female Respondent, controlling for respondents' political views. Then, measures of cohesion and commitment were regressed on *Feelings of Being Vulnerable to Victimization*, and both the direct and indirect effects of gender and race on campus cohesion and commitment intentions were estimated. Table 3 displays results of these analyses.

As predicted, white respondents reported significantly less fear of victimization than did non-white respondents (*B* = -0.341, *SE* = 0.115, *p* = 0.003, two-tailed). Also as predicted, female respondents reported significantly greater feelings of vulnerability to victimization (*B* = 0.367, *SE* = 0.122, *p* = 0.003, two-tailed). Thus, Hypothesis 2 received support.

Hypothesis 3 also received support. Mediation analysis found significant indirect and total effects of gender and race on *Commitment to Campus Environment* and *Campus Cohesion* measures, but no significant direct effects. As predicted, there were significant indirect effects of gender on *Campus Cohesion* as indicated by a Sobel test

($Z = 2.752$, $p = 0.006$), mediated by the significant effect of *Feelings of Being Vulnerable to Victimization* on Campus Cohesion ($B = -0.665$, $SE = 0.085$, $p = 0.000$).

Similar results were found for *Commitment to Campus Environment*. While there were significant total effects for race and sex on *Commitment to Campus Environment*, these variables only exerted a significant indirect effect through *Fear of Victimization* ($Z = -2.657$, $p = 0.008$). Again, the direct effects of *Feelings of Vulnerable to Victimization* on *Commitment to Campus Environment* was negative and significant ($B = -0.278$, $SE = 0.029$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that respondents' fears of victimization reduced their reported commitment to classroom and campus participation and attendance.

Discussion

Our results supported both a vulnerability model of the fear of crime and social psychological theories linking fear and other negative emotions to the reduction of social integration. As predicted, women and members of racial minority groups were more likely to report concerns that they could become the victims of violent crime if laws were changed to allow students or faculty to carry firearms onto campus or into classrooms. White and male respondents reported feeling less vulnerable to victimization, and whites and males were more likely to support students or faculty and staff having the ability to carry guns into classrooms.

Importantly, feeling vulnerable to victimization had a significant direct impact on people's reports of intentions to attend and participate in campus and classroom activities. This finding shows the possible negative impact of campus carry laws on the experiences and success of minority students, especially women. If students from socially disadvantaged groups feel less safe due to the potential presence of firearms on campus, lawmakers and administrators may want to account for these effects when considering policies related to gun possession.

The majority of students, regardless of race or reported sex, were against the possession of firearms on campus. While these preferences were affected by gender, race, and political affiliation, only white students were more likely than not to prefer that gun possession be allowed on campus, and then only if the person possessing the gun were faculty or staff.

These findings are particularly salient for universities and administrators and need to be taken seriously. As we previously discussed, the implementation of concealed weapons on campus would likely to be attributed to the school, and students would be less committed to the school environment as a result. Additionally, students from socially disadvantaged or vulnerable populations would view the classroom as less safe, and fear and other negative emotions would likely reduce the commitment of students who feel vulnerable to crime or violence. Therefore, it is our belief that while allowing guns on campuses might be considered to be a strategic measure to enhance campus safety and create an environment more conducive to student learning, this action is likely to have the unintended consequence of eroding or eliminating student involvement in campus life and social cohesion amongst students overall.

Conclusion

We acknowledge several limitations of this study. First, the sample of students who responded were neither representative of their campuses nor of college students in general. Therefore, we cannot generalize statistically from our findings to a larger population of college students. However, hypotheses tested here provide further support for theoretical models of vulnerability and social integration that have already received a large degree of empirical validation. This study extends work supporting these models to a new domain and question—whether campus gun possession might erode student commitment and campus cohesion. Given our findings in support of these theoretical models, a larger study with a representative sample of college students could establish whether results generalize statistically to the college student population. A larger study could include a greater diversity of institutions, such as community colleges and private schools, as well as students from more diverse backgrounds.

A second limitation of this study is that the direction of the causal relationship between feeling vulnerable to victimization and campus cohesion and student commitment cannot be assessed. It is possible that students who feel their campus is not cohesive or are not committed to their education will then feel more vulnerable as a result. A carefully designed experiment might vary participants' feelings of vulnerability to crime in a safe and controlled setting to measure the impact of these feelings on commitment to a group.

Overall, this study serves as a call to increase attention to the proliferation of campus carry laws. As noted by the American Sociological Association, nine states since 2004 have passed laws allowing concealed handguns on college campuses, and another 14 states have sought to enact legislation in support of legal campus gun possession since 2014 (NCSL, 2017). These laws may have a chilling effect on campus discussion and participation. As our research suggests, this may directly affect students who may become concerned for their own and others' safety. Further, several faculty and administrators, such as history professor John Dorman at the University of Kansas (Jaschik, 2017) and Dean Fritz Steiner at the University of Texas (Samuels, 2016), have left their positions over these policies citing concerns over campus safety, free speech, and intellectual freedom. Sociological research on the effects of these laws on student and faculty experiences would provide a useful tool for the public and policy makers as they debate these laws.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Shane D. Soboroff is an assistant professor of Sociology at St. Ambrose University. His research has appeared in *Social Science Research*, *Advances in Group Processes*, *Teaching Sociology* and *Sociological Focus*. He also serves as the Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Current Research in Social Psychology*, an online peer-reviewed journal. His ongoing research investigates how social status and interaction processes affect social cohesion in groups and communities.

William E. Lovekamp is Professor of Sociology at Eastern Illinois University. He is a co-editor of the book *Social Vulnerability to Disasters*, (2nd ed), and some of his more recent research has appeared in *HazNet*, *The International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, *The Association of Gravestone Studies Quarterly*, *Markers and Teaching Sociology*. Much of his current research focuses on sociological cemetery studies and preservation in Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, examining the impact of disasters on cemeteries and communities, and studying student views of disasters, security issues, and other threats to safety.

Robert B. Jenkot is chair of the Department of Psychology and Sociology at Coastal Carolina University. His research focuses on the interaction of race, class, and gender as they interact with criminal and deviant behavior. He is also keenly interested in the way that criminals and deviants overcome the moral and ethical boundaries learned in order to take part in non-conforming behavior. In particular, how these factors influence illicit drug use, sales, and manufacturing. He has also conducted research about historical aspects of organized crime, sexuality & gender, internet fraud/crime/cons, prisons, the civil rights movement, drug and alcohol use/abuse among college students, school shootings, and policies regarding carrying firearms on college campuses.

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