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Concealed Carry Handguns at Intercollegiate Football Games: Perceptions of Division I Power 5 Intercollegiate Athletic Event Directors

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Division I football games between Power 5 football teams are the most highly attended and emotionally intense intercollegiate sports contests. Due to the intensity of the events, previous incidents have occurred on university campuses at Division I football games in which fans exhibited violent behaviors, including shootings. While perceptions of college students, faculty, presidents, and police chiefs regarding concealed carry on college campuses have been studied, to date, no other study has investigated the concealed carry handgun perceptions of Division I intercollegiate athletic event and operation directors. The results revealed that most athletic directors considered concealed handguns at athletic events their primary spectator safety concern. Additionally, despite the majority of athletic directors' perceptions that intercollegiate football games presented an emotionally volatile environment that was often too crowded, nearly 80% indicated that spectators had been detected carrying a concealed handgun into a game. Finally, while concealed handguns were not allowed into the stadiums due to state laws, they were permitted in the tailgating area on campus before, during, and after the games. These findings demonstrate the complex and nuanced concealed carry handgun issues that intercollegiate event athletic directors must consider.

The question of whether concealed guns should be allowed into college sports stadiums or arenas has become an issue in intercollegiate athletics (Bocclair, 2017; Dodd, 2018; Skinner & Ganucheau, 2018; Taylor, 2017; Valentine, 2019). Moore, Flajšlik, Rosin, and Marshall (2008) reported that as crowd size at athletic events increases, the probability of crowd violence resulting in unnecessary harm also increases. Fans that strongly identify with particular teams have been associated with higher aggression and increasingly violent acts against fans of other teams (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). In fact, while fan identification has been usually viewed as a positive aspect in one's fan base, previous studies suggest that highly identified fans may become so passionate that "dysfunctional" behaviors considered to be inappropriate, illegal, and sometimes lethal are exhibited (Berehendt & Urich, 2018; Larkin & Fink, 2019; Wakefield & Wann, 2006).

Violent behavior, including shootings, among fans at sports contests is an issue that has led to severe trauma, injury, and death not only in the United States but internationally as well (Ostrowsky, 2018). For example, an average of six deaths of soccer (football) spectators occurred due to assaults and shootings during Great Britain's "Golden Age" of hooliganism from 1974 to 1989 (Hobbs & Robin, 1991). To address the violence at sports events, the British government enacted several legislation and security measures (Hall, 2010). Significantly, the British government published a set of safety requirements referred to as the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. This safety legislation required each club to possess a safety certificate.

Additionally, the local governing authority must oversee the stadium to ensure that the safety guide requirements are enacted properly (Hall, 2010). In another international example, Murad (2013) reported that violent actions in Brazil resulted in 14 deaths in the year of 2007-2008. Brazilian law currently prevents rival fans from sitting together at soccer games to prevent such violence from re-occurring (Newson, 2019).

In the United States, violent actions involving shootings or potential shootings have been reported at Division I intercollegiate football games. For instance, two brothers were arrested in the shooting deaths of two other young men (one of which was a Marine officer) at a tailgate party before a 2004 North Carolina State University football game (Associated Press, 2004) after the two brothers, who were intoxicated, were beat up in a fight by the other two individuals. Another example would be a fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide football team who allegedly shot a fan of Auburn University in the thigh after arguing about the superiority of each team (Payne, 2017). A final illustration recently occurred when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Penn State University investigated a credible threat made by a fan to "commit the biggest mass shooting in the history of the world" (Rollins, 2018, para. 1).

While the likelihood of shootings at Division I football games between Power 5 affiliated teams are rather minimal, they do occur as depicted in the previous paragraph. Moreover, and importantly, the severity of the harm (i.e., death by shooting) is significant. However, to date, no other study has empirically investigated the perceptions of Division I intercollegiate athletic event directors regarding the issue of concealed weapons at sports contests. Thus, this exploratory study assessed the perceptions of Division I Power 5 athletic event directors for football (hereafter referred to as athletic event directors) regarding concealed handguns being carried into athletic contests or being present at nearby tailgating activities before, during, and after games.

Review of Literature

Inarguably, Division I football games between Power 5 football teams are the most highly attended intercollegiate sports contests. It is important to note that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2017) reported that more than 34 million fans attended Power 5 football games for an average of slightly over 42,000 people. Furthermore, the attendance of the top 10 FBS teams ranged from 110,737 (University of Michigan) to 86,735 (University of Oklahoma) (Poorman, 2018). Additionally, these games may be among the most emotionally charged events in all of the sports in the United States (Wechlser, Moeykens, Davenport, Castillo, & Hansen, 1995). As such, studies have revealed that an individual's violent tendencies increase, especially when placed in a passionately stimulating environment such as an intercollegiate football game (Harford, Wechsler, & Muthen, 2003; Leonard, Quigley, & Collins, 2002). A former New York Giants Stadium manager stated that:

At a football game, most spectators are passionately attached to their team. The depth of their attachment is often underrated. And if they like one team, they definitely don't like the other team. They especially don't like the other team's fans. That's an explosive mix.

It doesn't take much to set them off (Rowe, as quoted by Oates, para. 47). While the shooting tragedies at the high schools in Santa Fe High School, Texas, and Parkland, Florida have been rightfully foremost in the news, these incidents bring a reminder of controversial state laws that permit concealed carry handguns onto campuses (Jervis, 2018). State laws generally articulate the potential public places in which handguns are permitted to be carried. Yet, current public perception as to where handguns are allowed is limited (Wolfson, Teret, Azrael, & Miller, 2017).

State Conceal Carry Laws

Over the last several decades, the gun control policy has transpired in the United States making it easier for individuals to obtain guns in a number of states (De Angelis, Benz, & Gillham, 2017). As a result, some states have increased the types of public places in which it is legal to bear a gun, including bars and college campuses (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2017). To alleviate concerns, campus administrators and state legislatures have searched for ways to advance campus safety. Between 2013 and 2014, more than 20 states considered legislating policies that would have allowed individuals possessing concealed carry handguns on campus (Hultin, 2017). Alternatively, other states have tried to pass legislation that would make it illegal for individuals with concealed carry licenses to bring their handguns on campus (Hultin, 2017). While nine states (Texas, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin) permit concealed carry on campus (Schildkraut, Jennings, Carr, & Terranova, 2018), others have established concealed carry on campus practices through legal challenges (*Oregon Handguns Educational Foundation v. Board of Higher Education*, 2011; *Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus*, 2012).

State laws regarding carrying guns in public have changed in two primary ways (Wolfson et al., 2017). First, states have been refocused in the direction of “shall issue” and “may issue” laws (Wolfson et al. 2017). To clarify, “shall issue” requires authorities to issue a gun permit to

an individual meeting the minimum criteria (Grossman & Lee, 2008). Conversely, “may issue” laws provide the local law enforcement agency to require applicants to indicate the rationale for carrying a concealed weapon (Grossman & Lee, 2008). Secondly, some states have expanded the types of public places where carrying open or concealed guns are either allowed or not banned. For example, Alaska, Arizona, Kansas, Maine, Vermont, and Wyoming legislation have passed “constitutional carry” which allow guns to be carried without any permits or required training (Ingraham, 2015). Additionally, California, Florida, and Illinois, as well as the District of Columbia, do not allow guns in any public place (Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2016).

Recently, Oklahoma passed legislation that would allow most citizens to carry concealed or unconcealed handguns without a background check or training (Murphy, 2019). In addition to Oklahoma, South Dakota joined ten other states (Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Vermont, and West Virginia) to allow people to carry a concealed handgun without a permit (Mallory, 2019). Most of these states provide similar language regarding places that handguns would not be permitted.

Conceal Carry on College Campuses

The perceptions of college students, faculty, presidents, and police chiefs regarding concealed carry on college campuses have been studied (Cavanaugh, Bouffard, Wells, & Nobles, 2012; Price et al. 2014; Thompson, Price, Dake, & Teeple, 2013a; Thompson, Price, Dake, Teeple, ... & Aduroja, 2013b; Thompson, Price, Mrdenovich, & Khabchandani, 2009). Cavanaugh et al. (2012) studied the perceptions of undergraduate students from two different universities. The results indicated that the students were uneasy regarding concealed handguns to be allowed on their campuses. Furthermore, Cavanaugh et al. (2012) reported that three times as many students felt “not at all” comfortable with the idea of handguns on campus than felt “very comfortable” with the concept. Additionally, Cavanaugh et al. (2012) stressed that even with policy changes prohibiting concealed handguns on-campus did not increase the students’ perception of safety.

Thompson et al. (2013b) analyzed college students’ perceptions of carrying concealed handguns on college campuses. The results of the study indicated that more than 75% of the respondents did not support having concealed handguns on campus nor did they feel comfortable obtaining permits to possess a gun (Thompson et al., 2013b). In another study regarding student perceptions of conceal and carry on college campuses, Sanfillipo and Weed (2017) revealed that an increased number of handguns on campus would potentially have increased harmful, such as unintentional discharge of a weapon, rather than helpful effects.

Thompson, Price, Dake, and Teeple (2013a) assessed university faculty perceptions about the issue of carrying concealed handguns on college campuses. The results revealed that 94% were not in support of carrying concealed handguns on campus, and 97% would not carry a weapon if permitted. Another study regarding faculty perceptions found that 78% of the respondents opposed permitting licensed gun owners the right to carry handguns on campus (Bennett, Kraft, & Grubb, 2012).

Price et al. (2014) examined the perceptions of college and university presidents concerning carrying concealed handguns on campuses. The results indicated that the presidents perceived that carried concealed handguns would not make students and faculty feel safer (90%).

Finally, the university presidents believed that neither faculty nor students would be able to protect others (89%) or protect themselves (74%) if they carried concealed handguns.

Thompson et al. (2009) investigated the perceptions of concealed carry on university campuses by university police chiefs. The results reported that 86% of the respondents perceived that permitting students to carry concealed handguns on campus would not provide protection. Additionally, 89% of the police chiefs felt that the paramount method of restricting gun violence on campuses was to bar handguns on college campuses.

Policies have been authorized to improve safety on school and college campuses, including those that permit or prohibit concealed carry on college campuses (Fox & Savage, 2009). Thus, it is apparent that the debate of whether to allow or prohibit concealed carry practices on college campuses exists (Levin & Madfis, 2009; Rocque, 2012). Opponents of concealed carry practices maintain that colleges and universities possess responsibility and commitment to promoting a learning atmosphere in which fear and danger do not exist (Arrigo & Acheson, 2015). Conversely, supporters for concealed carry practices contend that Americans have the right to defend themselves and any prohibition infringes on their Second Amendment rights (Langhauser, 2009).

Conceal Carry to Sports Events Legislation

Over the past several years, state senators have proposed legislation that would have allowed fans to bring guns into collegiate and professional football stadiums. In 2017, the Tennessee Senate Judiciary Committee passed a bill that allows off-duty police officers and sheriff deputies to carry guns at sporting events at such venues as Bridgestone Arena, Nissan Stadium, and Neyland Stadium (Bocclair, 2017). Georgia House Bill 280 (GA HB 280) became effective July 1, 2017, and permits anyone with a concealed carry license to carry handguns on campus but prohibits them from buildings used for athletic events. Although GA HB 280 does not allow handguns in sports stadiums, it permits individuals to carry concealed guns into tailgating areas before home football games (Hinds, 2017).

Another example occurred in the spring of 2017 during which the Arkansas legislature passed a law (House Bill 1249) permitting concealed-carry handguns on publicly owned property, including intercollegiate sports games (Taylor, 2017). Shortly after that, the Arkansas State Senate amended the vote prohibiting concealed-carry handguns at intercollegiate sports contests (Taylor, 2017). Most recently, a bill in the Wyoming legislature that would repeal gun-free zones in K-12 schools and universities is being considered (Patterson, 2019). The proposal, Senate File 75, if passed would repeal gun-free zones at public schools, government meetings, and college and professional athletic events. The bill would allow concealed carry permit holders to have handguns in those areas (Patterson, 2019). Finally, Oklahoma legislation recently passed a mandate that handguns would not be allowed in places such as sporting events, schools, bars, casinos or other public buildings (Murphy, 2019).

Second Amendment

The Second Amendment 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’ (U.S. Const. Amend. II). In the *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the United States Supreme Court reported that citizens have an inherent right to self-defense which is an essential element of the

Second Amendment. However, the *Heller* rulings are restricted in that the Second Amendment applies to possession of guns in a modern city in the United States. In essence, the *Heller* decision recognized that the Constitution's Second Amendment offers citizens the right to store guns at their residence for self-defense purposes (Neil & Neil, 2009). Nevertheless, the Court also revealed that a citizen's right to own a gun was not unrestricted (Neil & Neil, 2009).

Importantly, the U.S. Supreme Court observed that the verdict did not weaken the banning or the presence of handguns "... in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings" (p. 626). While the verdicts in *Heller* as well as *McDonald v. City of Chicago* (2010) buttresses the constitutional right to use handguns in self-defense; in fact, the U.S. Supreme Court's application to university and college campuses is restricted (Arrigo & Acheson, 2015). For example, the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that educational institutions such as college campuses are considered "special places" where barring guns is acceptable (*D.C. v. Heller*, 2008).

Allowing concealed carry license holders to bring their handguns onto campus grounds is an issue that Division I Power 5 intercollegiate athletic event administrators for football games must be aware for several reasons. First, previous studies violence between fans at sports events, have become more spontaneous (Doidge & Lieser, 2017; Stott, Adang, Livingstone, & Schreiber, 2007). Second, the significant number of spectators in attendance at Power 5 intercollegiate football games (i.e., often greater than 50,000 people). Third, because patrons are paying to attend the game (as well as to tailgate on university property), they are owed an elevated standard of care by the university to provide a reasonably safe environment. Fourth, while concealed handguns may not be allowed in the stadium by state law, licensed holders may be allowed to carry concealed guns on the university premises such tailgating areas, again by state law. Finally, foreseeable exposure of harm may occur to fans as many Power 5 intercollegiate football games provide environments that are emotionally charged, thereby creating a potentially hostile atmosphere (see Table 1).

Table 1
Breakdown of Campus Carry Permission State Laws Effecting Power 5 Schools

State	Campus Carry Permission State Laws
Alabama	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Auburn University (SEC), University of Alabama (SEC)
Arizona	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Arizona State University (PAC 12), University of Arizona (PAC 12)
Arkansas	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses University of Arkansas (SEC)

California	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Stanford University (PAC 12), University of California – Berkley (PAC 12), UCLA (PAC 12), University of Southern California (PAC 12)
Colorado	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses University of Colorado (PAC 12)
Florida	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Florida State University (ACC), University of Florida (SEC), University of Miami (ACC)
Georgia	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses Georgia Tech University (ACC), University of Georgia (SEC)
Illinois	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Northwestern University (Big 10), University of Illinois (Big 10)
Indiana	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Purdue University (Big 10), University of Indiana (Big 10), University of Notre Dame (Independent)
Iowa	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Iowa State University (Big 12), University of Iowa (Big 10)
Kansas	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses Kansas State University (Big 12), University of Kansas (Big 12)
Kentucky	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually University of Kentucky (SEC), University of Louisville (ACC)
Louisiana	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Louisiana State University (SEC)
Maryland	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually University of Maryland (Big 10)

Massachusetts	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Boston College (ACC)
Michigan	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Michigan State University (Big 10), University of Michigan (Big 10)
Minnesota	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually University of Minnesota (Big 10)
Mississippi	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses Mississippi State University (SEC), University of Mississippi (SEC)
Missouri	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus University of Missouri (SEC)
Nebraska	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus University of Nebraska (Big 10)
New Jersey	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Rutgers University (Big 10)
New York	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Syracuse University (ACC)
North Carolina	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Duke University (ACC), North Carolina University (ACC), University of North Carolina (ACC), Wake Forest University (ACC)
Ohio	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Ohio State University (Big 10)
Oklahoma	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Oklahoma State University (Big 12), University of Oklahoma (Big 12)

Oregon	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses Oregon State University (PAC 12), University of Oregon (PAC 12)
Pennsylvania	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually Penn State University (Big 10), University of Pittsburgh (ACC)
South Carolina	Bans carrying a concealed weapon on a college campus Clemson University (ACC), University of South Carolina (SEC)
Tennessee	Allows faculty members with licenses to carry weapons on campus but the law does not extend to students or the general public University of Tennessee (SEC), Vanderbilt University (SEC)
Texas	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses Baylor University (Big 12), Texas A&M University (SEC), Texas Christian University (Big 12), Texas Tech University (Big 12), University of Texas –Austin (Big 12)
Utah	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses University of Utah (PAC 12)
Virginia	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually University of Virginia (ACC), Virginia Tech University (ACC)
Washington	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually University of Washington (PAC 12), Washington State University (PAC 12)
West Virginia	Decision about concealed carry weapons on campuses is made by each college or university individually University of West Virginia (Big 12)
Wisconsin	Allows the carrying of concealed weapons on public postsecondary campuses University of Wisconsin (Big 10)

** Source for concealed carry policies: National Conference of State Legislatures (2019)

Purpose of the Study

As mentioned previously, prior studies have addressed the perceptions of college students, faculty, presidents, and police chiefs regarding the issue of concealed carry on college campuses. While media attention on the larger gun control debate on college campuses, no empirical research exists concerning the perceptions of Division I intercollegiate athletic event directors regarding conceal carry of handguns at football games. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory research study was to analyze the perceptions of Division I Power 5 athletic event directors regarding their perceptions of concealed guns being carried into athletic contests or being present at nearby tailgating activities before, during, and after games.

Exploratory Research

Exploratory research may be defined as research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon (Burns & Grove, 2001; Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2001). When conducting an exploratory research project, no obvious hypotheses have been developed (Smith & Albaum, 2005). According to Smith and Albaum (2005), investigators search for information that will allow them to develop specific research questions or develop hypotheses regarding the issue.

In describing the importance of exploratory research, Jebb, Parrington, and Woo (2017) stated, “confirmatory research is desirable for testing and/or validating specific effects that are theoretically expected, but without exploratory work, a great deal of data goes to waste” (p. 266). Woo, O’Boyle, and Spector (2017) stated that exploratory research papers should be “valued for their ability to detect new phenomena and new patterns in the data (p. 257). The results of an exploratory study may reveal that further research can be reduced (Smith & Albaum, 2005). Woo et al. (2017) further contended that good science is as much about discovery (exploratory research) as it is about substantiation (confirmatory research). Thus, the authors’ believed that conducting exploratory research for this study, devoid of research questions due to the lack of prior research and to develop more specific research on concealed carry guns at intercollegiate athletic contests in the future, as appropriate.

Methods

A 17-item questionnaire consisting of two demographic items and 15 Likert-scale statements. One of the demographic statements inquired about the number of years had they been an intercollegiate athletic event director at any level (i.e., NCAA Group of 5, Division II or III or National Athletic Intercollegiate Association [NAIA]). The second item asked for the number of years had they been a Division I athletic event director at their present Power 5 affiliated university. The 15 Likert-scale (1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly disagree) items were developed by the researchers using extant literature (Armed Campuses, 2016; Cavanaugh et al., 2012; Price et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2013a).

Content validity was employed by using three experts in survey research and three experts in intercollegiate athletic event operations. Experts were defined as those individuals who had worked in intercollegiate athletic event management for at least three years or had published articles in peer-reviewed, academic sport management journals using survey-based research. Experts were asked to evaluate the questionnaire regarding measuring perceptions of

carrying concealed handguns on college campuses and at intercollegiate contests. Minor alterations were made to the questionnaire predicated on the recommended changes.

Since test-retest reliability is the most frequently used approach to establish survey instrument reliability (Litwin, 1995), it was used for the present study. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the coefficient of reliability or consistency of the questionnaire (Patten, 2000). To conduct the test-retest for reliability, three individuals who possessed prior experience in conducting a sports event and two with proficiency in survey design were asked to participate. Each expert independently completed the initial questionnaire under the supervision of the lead author of this study. A second appointment was made with each expert during which they independently completed the same questionnaire again under the supervision of the lead author. Inputting this information into SPSS, the Cronbach's alpha revealed $\alpha = .82$, which is above the criteria to establish reliability (Patten, 2000). Thus, the questionnaire was considered to have adequate validity and reliability for the investigation.

Study Criteria and Sampling

According to Polit and Beck (2004) research population is the aggregate total of individuals who conform to a set of specifications. Durrheim and Painter (2006) view the population as a set of individuals or objects that possess or meet the same criteria for inclusion in the study. To meet the aims of this research study, purposive sampling was used. According to Rowley (2014), a preponderance of social science research is dependent upon non-probability samples used is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling technique is most effective when one needs to study participants who are knowledgeable about the issue in question due to their involvement in and experience of the circumstances (Bernard, 2002). Due to their experience and involvement in intercollegiate athletic event management, all associate/assistant athletic event directors for football games at universities affiliated with Power 5 conferences ($n=65$) were identified to participate. These conferences include the Big Ten Conference, the Big 12 Conference, the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Pac-12 Conference, the Southeastern Conference (SEC), and the University of Notre Dame (football independent).

Procedures

Two weeks before the distribution of the survey instrument, each of the athletic event directors was sent an introductory letter informing them of the intent and purpose of the study via email. Prior research has shown that pre-notification letters may decrease the potential of the online questionnaire being unintentionally put in junk mail, increase the trustworthiness to the researcher(s), and improve the response rate (Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988; Kent & Turner, 2002).

Two weeks after the pre-notification email as sent, a letter was sent to formally reiterate the purpose of the study and the link to the questionnaire webpage. Since Qualtrics was used to develop and distribute the online questionnaire, a link to it was provided. The letter also informed them that the study would take place over four weeks from the receipt of the invitation, participation in the study was completely voluntary, and there would be no penalties for choosing not to participate, or to withdraw at any time, for any reason. Nowhere on the questionnaire were the respondents required to identify themselves or their university.

One week before it was due, a third email was sent to all of the identified athletic event directors to remind them of the deadline. Additionally, the participants were reminded of the

purpose of the study as well as to provide them a link to the questionnaire. It should be noted that each of the athletic event directors in this study was contacted in late spring as that time of year is comparatively less busy than during the fall (football) or winter (basketball).

To be clear for this study, a distinction between a handgun and a weapon was made to the participants. A handgun is a short firearm that is easily portable and allows a person to fire bullets often using one hand (Wills, 2017). Conversely, a weapon may be considered as an instrument designed for an attack or defense in combat or hunting such as a high powered or semi-automatic rifle (Wills, 2017). Using these descriptions, in each the prenotification and subsequent emails, the participants were instructed to consider a concealed carry as a handgun only.

Eighteen out of 65 completed the questionnaire in the allotted timeframe for a response rate of 28%. Online survey-based research response rates may approach 25% to 30% without follow-up e-mail and reinforcements (Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Thus, the response rate for this study is within the recommended parameters (McCabe, Couper, Cranford, & Boyd, 2006; Sheehan & McMillan, 1999).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, were utilized to describe the intercollegiate athletic event directors in terms of their background characteristics and their perceptions regarding concealed carry on campuses and intercollegiate contests, specifically football games. Additionally, a linear by linear association, also referred to as an ordinal chi-square test (Agresti, 2007), was employed to test if a significant linear association existed between:

1. The overall number of years of experience as an intercollegiate athletic event administrator and the other 15 Likert-scale statements
2. The number of years the respondent had been an intercollegiate athletic event administrator at their present Power 5 affiliated university and the other 15 Likert-scale statements.

The confidence level used for this analysis was .05. The following results are delineated by the demographics of the respondents; official university and athletic department policies regarding concealed carry handguns; and the perceptions of intercollegiate athletic event directors concerning concealed carry handguns at their sports events.

Results

Demographics

None of the respondents had served as an intercollegiate athletic event manager at any level for less than five years. Seven (47%) of the respondents indicated that they had been an intercollegiate athletic event manager for 16 to 20 years. Additionally, four (27%) revealed they had been in such a position for 11 to 15 years. Finally, two (13%) had been an intercollegiate athletic event manager for either 6 to 10 years or more than 20 years.

When asked how many years they had been an intercollegiate athletic event manager at their present Power 5 affiliated university, 6 (40%) had served for 11 to 15 years in such a capacity. Three (20%) indicated they had been in their present position for either six to ten years or 16 to 20 years. Finally, one (7%) of the respondents had been at their Power 5 associated university for ten years or less.

University Concealed Carry Handgun Policies

Regarding the existence of concealed handguns on their campus, 12 (67%) acknowledged the university policy permitted such an action. However, 13 (72%) did not believe that policies existed in which signs forbidding carrying concealed handguns were present on the campus grounds outside of the sports venues. Additionally, 23 (83%) disagreed that university policies required signs prohibiting carrying concealed handguns inside or outside their football stadiums.

Athletic Department Concealed Carry Handgun Policies

All of the respondents revealed that their athletic department possessed a policy of disallowing concealed carry handguns to be brought into the football stadium. However, 13 (72%) reported that athletic department policies allowed concealed handguns to be carried in the tailgating area before and after an intercollegiate football game. While multiple methods may be employed for any potential circumstance, 23 (75%) conducted visual inspections, six (40%) used of metal detectors, and five (33%) utilized a pat-down method as primary methods ensuring concealed handguns were not being carried into the stadium.

Perceptions of Concealed Carry Handguns by Athletic Event Directors

Eleven (61%) of the Power 5 intercollegiate athletic event directors agreed that concealed handguns at athletic events were a primary safety concern. Possible reasons for such a perception may be due to 14 (78%), believing that intercollegiate football games presented an emotionally volatile environment. Secondly, 15 (83%) perceived that the games were too crowded to allow spectators to carry concealed handguns into the stadium safely. Third, 14 (78%) of the respondents revealed that spectators had been detected carrying a concealed gun into one of their home football games.

Seven (39%) did not perceive that carrying concealed handguns into a sports arena or stadium would increase the need for more trained security personnel. Additionally, 11 (61%) revealed that concealed handguns in tailgating areas would increase the danger to trained security personnel. Moreover, 14 (78%) perceived that if concealed handguns were carried into stadiums or arenas, trained security personnel would be put into more dangerous situations. Finally, seven (40%) believed that concealed handguns would increase the likelihood of robbery or aggravated assaults on university premises prior to and after a home game.

Linear by Linear Association

The linear by linear association, also referred to as an ordinal chi-square test, is a nonparametric measure that is used when examining the significance of the linear relationship between ordinal variables (Agresti, 2007). Using this statistical technique, no significant results

were found regarding the overall years of experience and any of the 15 Likert scale statements. Additionally, no significant associations were revealed between the years of experience as an intercollegiate athletic event administrator at a Power 5 school and 14 Likert scale statements. However, a linear-by-linear association was found to exist between the number of years the respondent had been an intercollegiate athletic event administrator at a Power 5 school and concealed guns as one of their primary concerns ($p = .02$). Thus, it appears that the longer a person had been in the athletic event management at a Division I Power 5 associated intercollegiate football, the more likely they would have greater safety concerns of concealed carry handguns inside and outside of the football stadium.

Discussion

The issue of permitting handguns onto U.S. college and university campuses has created a spirited national debate since the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings (Bennett et al. 2012; Bouffard et al. 2012). The Second Amendment offers citizens of the United States the right to bear arms. Yet, the meaning and impact of the Second Amendment is still a profoundly argued issue in states and statehouses across the U.S. (Sanfilippo, 2017). Twelve states (Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin) allow the carrying of handguns on their premises (i.e. campus grounds, classrooms, dormitories, or parking lots) (National Conference of State Legislators, 2017). Moreover, 22 states (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Montana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia) allow individual colleges and universities to develop campus concealed carry policies (Armed Campuses, 2016). However, previous research has reported that the majority of individuals (college students, faculty, and administrators) have strong, negative opinions regarding allowing concealed handguns on campus (Cavanaugh et al. 2012; Price et al. 2014; Thompson et al. 2013b). Despite these reports, state legislators appear to neglect or disregard these issues by introducing bills that would permit handguns to be near or on the premises of a sports stadium (e.g. states of Arkansas, Georgia, and Wyoming).

According to Shoham, Dalakas, and Lahav (2015), “aggressive behaviors by sport spectators have become a major social problem in multiple sports and numerous countries” (p. 22). Furthermore, Young (2015) reported that sports-related violence “remains a thorn in the side of sports organizations” (p. 643). It is important to note that research has supported the notion that fans who highly identify with a team are more likely to be involved in negative rivalry outcomes, such as violence against others, or defacing facilities (Cobbs, Sparks, & Tyler, 2017; Dalakas & Melancon, 2012; Wann et al. 2001). Therefore, a combination of strong identification, strong rivalry, and contentious relationships can indeed be a formula for disaster if not managed properly. This study supports these contentions as the majority of respondents perceived that Division, I Power 5 intercollegiate football games being a fervently combustible environment and were too crowded. Thus, it is not surprising that the majority of athletic event directors indicated that concealed handguns at athletic events were a primary safety concern.

The results also revealed that most of the schools did not permit concealed handguns onto their campus and none of the schools allowed concealed handguns into the stadium. Disturbingly, the results revealed that nearly 80% of spectators had been detected carrying a concealed gun into one of their home football games. Additionally, more than 70% of the universities allowed such handguns in the tailgating area. This finding is of significant concern

for several reasons. First, according to this study, almost 80% indicated that intercollegiate football games offer an emotionally volatile environment. Secondly, a significant reason for violent fan behavior is that fans tend to drink more alcoholic beverages on game days (Glassman, Dodd, Sheu, Rienzo, & Wagenaar, 2010; Glassman, Werch, Jobli, & Bian, 2007). Miller, Vogt, Olinger, and Gillentine (2019) reported that more than 90% of Division I intercollegiate athletic departments did not restrict tailgaters from type (i.e., beer, wine, or alcohol) or amount of alcohol in the tailgating area. Thus, it appears that the universities allow concealed handguns in areas in which the number of fans that highly identify with a team is not limited regarding the amount or type of alcohol being ingested before, during, or after a game that may result in violent behavior.

According to the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2017), carrying concealed handguns may elevate the risk that disagreements will deteriorate into violent behavior or shootings, especially when alcohol is involved. While alcohol consumption may be a significant variable for violent actions of sports fans attending games (Cobbs et al. 2017; Dalakas & Melancon, 2012; Wann et al. 2016), Pearson and Sale (2011) stated that, “imputing the cause of crowd disorder to one single variable (i.e. alcohol abuse), it fails to acknowledge the complex interactions between structural, situational and individual factors leading to disorder occurring” (p. 152). Furthermore, de Waal (2000) maintained that when dealing with violent behaviors, more is acknowledged regarding how aggression begins than how to stop or control it. Yet, carrying concealed handguns was not perceived as a significant reason to have more trained security personnel in the stadium or area around the stadium.

While legislative policies and the enforcement of those policies attempt to prevent concealed handguns from being carried into a stadium, this study shows a lack of physically monitoring policies in areas outside of the stadium. However, a prior study reported that 70% of Division I athletic departments did not identify any strategies to monitor (i.e., security patrol or closed-circuit television) activities in the tailgating area (Miller et al., 2019). Perhaps this result reflects the perceptions that the presence of security personnel in tailgating areas would put them into unsafe situations. However, as Jerry Sachs, event manager of the Washington Bullets, mentioned, “Any campaign against fan misconduct is most successful when each stadium employee is, in effect, a security guard” (as quoted in Oates, 1990, para. 58).

To assist Division I event athletic event directors in reducing potential firearm violence at a sports event, the following risk management recommendations may be considered:

1. If not in conflict with state law, post signage around the tailgating areas and sports facilities that are on the university’s premises that handguns are prohibited on campus.
2. Provide a sufficient number of trained security personnel to be physically present inside as well as outside of the sports stadiums, arenas, or fields at all athletic contests on the university premises.
3. Promote a greater sense of community and collective responsibility for the safety and security of those who attend intercollegiate sports contests.
4. Strictly enforce firearm policies and publish the penalties against such policies.

5. Offer focused threat assessments that include tracking of fans whose words or behaviors suggest the potential for violence inside and outside of the stadium, arena, or fields.
6. Provide comprehensive communication services to fans that can alert them if a person is carrying a concealed gun, especially if the person is acting in an intoxicated or belligerent manner.

Limitations and Future Studies

Several potential limitations of the study should be addressed. First, because survey studies tend to depend on self-reported perceptions, a possible threat to the internal validity of the findings exists due to the population providing socially desirable responses. However, the provisions provided by the authors for anonymous participation of the potential respondents may have minimized the effect. Second, the single-themed nature of the concealed carry gun questionnaire could have caused some of the athletic event directors to perceive the issue in a distinctively personal manner. As such, this would also be a limitation of the study. A third limitation in analyzing the associations between years of experience and dependent variables in this study is that when either are “measured continuously, the variables may not conform to normality assumptions” (O’Leary & Schumacher, 2003, p. 1583). This limitation was addressed by employing a nonparametric linear-by-linear association as suggested by Agresti (2007).

Since this study is exploratory, several different avenues for future research are available. For instance, a future study could include identifying the perceptions of concealed carry handguns by fans inside and outside the venues of intercollegiate or professional sports contests. Another future study could analyze any differences or correlations between universities that allow concealed carry handguns on the campuses but do not allow them at or around sports contests on their campuses. An alternative study could focus on the liability the university may face as a state actor or non-state actor if a patron in the tailgating area or the stands is shot and injured. A third future study could conduct a similar study of perceptions of athletic event directors at smaller Division I, Division II, or Division III universities. Finally, future studies could apply theoretical constructs such as sport social identity, fusion identity, fan identification, or rivalries to potential violent actions.

Conclusion

This exploratory research study was a referendum against concealed handguns on university campuses. Rather due to the emotionally heightened atmosphere that is often present at Power 5 conference football games, the probability of crowd violence using handguns may increase, particularly if the teams are traditional rivals. Additionally, an increase in alcohol consumption by college football fans on game days may also increase the likelihood of violent actions (Glassman et al. 2007; Nelson & Wechsler, 2002). In fact, it has been stated that “it’s almost a truism that if there’s violence at an event, there’s usually alcohol involved (Mosher, as cited in Dvorchak, 2005, p. 9).

Recent mass shootings in public places such as Las Vegas, Parkland, Florida and El Paso may have altered the public beliefs regarding the potential risks of concealed weapons. Such a modification could influence the attitude regarding the advantages or disadvantages of allowing

individuals to carry open or concealed guns in public areas. Furthermore, campus shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois have resulted in refining and upgrading security systems of universities across the United States (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). While this study revealed that concealed handguns are not allowed into football stadiums, permitting them to be present outside of the facility on university premises, increases the liability of the university, which has a duty to protect fans (Dobbs, 2000; Grady, 2013; Miller & Gillentine, 2006).

Intercollegiate athletic event directors who want their organizations to manage the risks, such as concealed carry, must understand gun legislation applied to college campuses. Additionally, Second Amendment aspects, as well as perceptions of other stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and administrators), must be understood as well as to appreciate the complex issues of concealed carry handguns at intercollegiate athletic events. As university policymakers, including academic and athletic administrators, police, and fans debate the issues of concealed carry guns on college campuses empirical estimates become even more important. The societal salience of concealed carry handgun regulations and the likelihood that it will continue to be featured by ardent opinions from relevant parties is a complex issue. However, it is time for intercollegiate athletic event directors to analytically measure and recognize the factors described in this study to address the issue of concealed carry handguns at intercollegiate athletic contests.

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