The University of Texas at Austin
Texas Education Review
College of Education

Journal Homepage: Texas Education Review
Published online: January 2021
Submit your article to this journal

Fear in the Classroom: Campus Carry at The University of Texas at Austin

ALBION M. BUTTERS
University of Turku, Finland

To cite this article: Butters, A. M. (2021). Fear in the classroom: Campus carry at The University of Texas at Austin. *Texas Education Review*, *9*(1), 50-63. http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/11418

Fear in the Classroom: Campus Carry at The University of Texas at Austin

ALBION M. BUTTERS
University of Turku, Finland

When Texas Senate Bill 11 went into effect in Fall 2016, individuals with a license to carry (LTC) were given permission to bring concealed handguns into most public spaces at The University of Texas at Austin, including classrooms (Texas, 2015). There was a loud outcry against the new "campus carry" law, with students, faculty, and staff strongly protesting against firearms in the learning environment, especially in their seminars and lecture halls (McGaughy, 2015). Some were against the legislation on purely ideological grounds, some were afraid for their personal safety, and others believed that it would compromise the quality of education (Gun-Free UT, 2015).

Not all, however, saw the new law as a negative development. UT Austin has a long and complex history of murders on campus. The university's mass shooting in 1966—where 14 innocent people lost their lives—was the first of its kind in U.S. history (Britannica, n.d.). More recently, students have been killed both at night and in broad daylight, in remote areas and on heavily populated thoroughfares (Waitt, 2017). As seen in existing research, previous victimization and perceived risk of violence are known drivers to carry a gun (Dowd-Arrow et al., 2019; Hauser & Kleck, 2013; Kleck et al., 2011). By legally allowing those with an LTC to bring their concealed firearm onto public university premises, as done in seven other states before Texas (Cramer, 2014), campus carry provides a means for individuals to extend this form of self-defense to a wide array of permitted zones, such as classrooms and other public spaces.

The introduction of campus carry at UT Austin exposed conflicting perceptions of security and insecurity—often accompanied by feelings of fear, both implicit and explicit—in the teaching environment. As new and existing fears collided, the collegiate atmosphere experienced a shift. The definition of personal and shared space was redefined, and ideological lines were drawn. Perhaps nowhere was this more strongly felt than in the confined milieu of the classroom, an occasionally volatile landscape where contentious issues are debated and strong opinions voiced.

This paper takes a multimethod approach (Anguera et al., 2018) to examine the significance of fear for both sides of the campus carry divide during this moment of educational change. It draws on 17 semi-structured interviews with faculty, students, and staff held at UT Austin in 2018–2019, as well as two focus groups with undergraduates supporting or opposing the new law, respectively. The qualitative research is also complemented by 58 open-ended written testimonials, in which undergraduates were asked to share their thoughts or experiences with campus carry, either in prose or through illustrations (Lehtonen & Seppälä, 2020). Finally, a survey conducted in spring 2019 provided a quantitative dimension to the study. The sample of UT Austin undergraduates (N=1,204) was representative of that segment of the campus community in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and fields of study (Ruoppila & Butters, 2020).

While existing research on campus carry has focused on practical aspects of the policy vis-à-vis security or explored opinions of university students and faculty (Bouffard et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2013; Jang et al., 2014; Kyle et al., 2017; Shepperd et al., 2018), including quantitative studies on the question of fear (Hauser & Kleck, 2013; Wright, 2014), gaps still remain, especially concerning institutions where campus carry has already been introduced. Through its focus on affect surrounding

firearms in the educational context, a subject which has received limited attention to date, this article seeks to respond to anthropologist Niklas Hultin's (2013) call to reconnect awareness of cultural relativism to local studies of guns, understanding practices in their own context while also interrogating the larger context of the driving impulses and experiences of the opposing sides. Criminologists Bruce Arrigo and Austin Acheson (2016) also identify the need for more detailed analysis connecting institution-level and individual-level dynamics with societal conditions. Fear is not only embodied and expressed in terms of individual lived experience but also reflects a broader dynamic of cultural forces. Comprehending fear in the classroom as a complex phenomenon with manifold ramifications for higher education, including matters of pedagogy and the relationships between instructors and students, I thus examine how emotion—whether personal or culturally informed—becomes visible in the learning environment of shared social space.

Theoretically Framing the Multi-level Relationship of Fear and Affect

"I think [campus carry] creates a whole heightened climate."
– UT Austin professor, April 24, 2018

Both faculty and students at The University of Texas at Austin have expressed significant apprehension of guns in the classroom (Somers & Phelps, 2018). As seen in the interviews discussed below, this was articulated in different ways, from personal fear to a collective experience of vulnerability. Given the range of feelings of the research participants, it was necessary to establish an analytical frame to better understand the various ways and contexts in which they were experienced. In the following, they are thus regarded in terms of three levels: micro, macro, and meso (Duff, 2019).

As a basic human emotion, fear reflects past personal experiences, informing subjective perceptions which in turn color one's social (micro) sphere. On the other hand, collective expressions of fear reflected in shared attitudes, behavior, and rhetoric can have a powerful (macro) effect on people, as cultural norms and ideologies directly and indirectly shape private lived experience (Furedi, 2002), including those of guns. Recognizing the psychological/cognitive aspects or general sociological processes of fear as micro- and macro-level dynamics, one finds a complex interplay of forces. In the relational (meso) nexus of the university classroom, however, more than mere fear is involved. The meso level is also the domain of affect.

Affect theory is used quite differently in various fields (e.g., sociology, social psychology, cultural studies) and even within them, as seen in the "affective turn" in cultural studies (Clough, 2007). Accordingly, the following analysis pulls from Christian von Scheve's (2018) attempt to reconcile the multiple interpretations. In the context of this paper, affect is understood in two ways: as an orientation toward the world (shaped by a variety of forces) and as a "mode of being." Highlighting the relational nature of affect, this theory may be operationalized in the classroom context.

When discussing the interplay between fear and affect, it is important to examine the relationship that exists between both domains, and how they differ. While fear may certainly be read as individual and affect as collective, the boundaries between them are still fuzzy. As Sara Ahmed (2004) points out, this is due to the fact that fear is relational, extending beyond the individual to include not just preservation of oneself but "life as we know it" (p. 64). In this intersection, an "affective politics of fear" effectively "works to contain bodies within social space through an expectant withdrawal from a world that might present itself as dangerous" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 70; see also Stengel, 2008). The multidirectional dynamic of social space in certain UT classrooms after campus carry

does not allow such withdrawal, but rather exhibits aspects of Othering, a separation of "us" and "them" that draws on and impacts both personal and shared experience.

Furthermore, rather than taking affect and emotions such as fear as synonymous, as has been done in cultural studies (see von Scheve, 2018), it may be helpful to expand the discussion of affect to include a state of relations and being (Massumi, 2002). It could be argued that affect is a step removed from the direct trigger or experience of fear itself (caused by someone suddenly drawing a gun or a gun going off accidentally) and, as such, it is more of a sustained feeling (that someone might draw a gun or that a gun might go off). But this does not prevent affect from being quite intense, or even resembling active fear. As Massumi (2005) notes, "When an emotion becomes enactable in anticipation of itself, independent of action, it becomes its own threat. It becomes its own virtual cause. […] Now, fear can potentially self-cause even in the absence of an external sign to trigger it" (p. 41). This actualization has been found in shared spaces with concealed carry, where fear can grow in proportionality to the uncertainty of the firearm's existence. As one UT student put it, "Not knowing whether or not the person sitting next to you in class has a gun is terrifying" (Testimonial 1, 2/20/2019).

Being different than a momentary surge of emotion, fear-based affect reflects the overall gestalt of the individual and their environment, as well as the change processes within them. At the meso level of the classroom, for example, affect comprises the relations between bodies (i.e., how students and faculty interact) but also the feelings engendered by those relations. Here affect is not a discrete moment but a quotidian reality. For some, campus carry introduced an ambient and perpetual feeling of imminent danger. An undergraduate explained that her lived experience changed overnight:

> Before, guns were not present so there was not fear or terror deep-rooted into me. But knowing that my peer, professor, or friend can have a firearm in their possession greatly impacts the way I live every day. Because guns are present, that means there is a reason to be fearful and/or terrified of walking these halls and talking to these peers… And the fear is not [of] the firearm itself… (Testimonial 2, 2/20/2019)

Guns fit well into a discussion surrounding the affective politics of fear because they intersect personal and collective space. Tension arises when the sphere of the individual who carries the gun (defined by their range of action) overlaps the private sphere of the person who is afraid of the gun. Such friction may be accentuated by the limited physical confines of the classroom, as well as through preexisting fractures within and between social bodies of students and faculty, based on ideology, race, gender, and so forth, which have their own intersectional expressions of affect.

Beyond individuals and their micro-level fears, or collisions of relative perceptions of security and insecurity, the atmosphere of the classroom is also impacted by macro-level cultural and societal forces. For example, the media and national gun rights organizations work as drivers of fear. Ideologies channeled through rhetoric filter down from the macro level of U.S. society to inform the micro-level perceptions and experiences of individuals, which in turn feed back into meso-level interactions in the classroom. As Duff (2019) points out, "all of these social components or scalar levels interact or co-produce one another; furthermore, none of the factors (e.g., ideology, identity, interaction) are contained within one level alone" (p. 8).

Fear has long been studied as a macro-level societal phenomenon fomented by the media. Around the same time that Frank Furedi (2002; see also Beck, 1992) advanced his idea of a "culture of fear"

promoted by news organizations but reflecting "a tendency to regard a growing range of phenomena as threatening and dangerous" (2003, p. 16), David L. Altheide framed media coverage on mass shootings in terms of an overall "discourse of fear" and the social control effected by newspaper coverage after 9/11 as part of a "politics of fear" (Altheide, 2006; see also Burns & Crawford, 1999). Read as affect, these phenomena have shaped the collective consciousness of the country, significantly impacting individuals' orientation to public spaces—from Times Square to shopping malls. In the age of school shootings, it only follows that media coverage of violence leading to increased levels of fear (Stroud, 2016, p. 155; Elsass, Schildkraut, & Stafford, 2014) would extend to the classroom as well.

Multiple studies (see, e.g., Heath & Gilbert, 1996; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990) show that an individual's fear grows when media reporting connects seemingly random attacks to a location they frequent. But while coverage of violence at schools and universities can have an effect on the perceptions of people in those areas, the media alone is not responsible for perceptions of increased risk at the university. Incidents of directed violence at institutions of higher education are indeed growing much more common, with instructional areas being one of the most dangerous locations on campus (Drysdale et al., 2010; Gunter, 2016). While school attacks are a nationwide trend, Texas stands out, coming third after California and New York (Drysdale et al., 2010, p. 11, n. 25). This fact may even explain the success of Texas legislators in passing a campus carry law.

At the micro level, there are a range of reasons why individuals may be afraid of guns on campus. Preexisting factors include cultural upbringing, a general lack of exposure to firearms or negative experiences with them, or past trauma of being threatened or shot. As became clear in the interviews, fear became more pronounced with the advent of campus carry. This was especially true for those who knew how volatile the classroom could be. Guns had not previously been part of their day-to-day reality, but future hypotheticals suddenly loomed large. The emotional charge in all these cases is connected to a specific physical object, namely, the gun. Following Latour's (1999) supposition that guns (like other technologies) are invested with meaning, in this case the meaning is negative. Thus, rather than being a tool to preserve one's life, the gun is held to be an actant that can end it. A former graduate student of UT Austin described experiencing such trepidation with guns throughout her whole life:

> I've never handled a gun. I've never owned a gun. My parents never owned a gun. I knew friends and family who did, but guns were always very terrifying for me. They never made me feel safe. So, that's always been a kind of deep-seated fear. (Interview 1, 4/26/2018)

A member of the UT Austin Task Force shared a similar sentiment, "I've never touched a gun. I'm deathly afraid of touching a gun" (Interview 2, 4/26/2018). Other members brought firearms for her to touch, explaining that a gun is just "a piece of metal" and "it's not the gun that's going to kill you, it's the person behind the gun" (Interview 2, 4/26/2018). Yet, a majority of UT Austin undergraduates surveyed (56.2%) grew up in a house with no firearms, and 17.2% of those who did not feel safe with guns in class felt unable to openly share their opinions about campus carry. There is a private nature to insecurity, and individual fear can be expressed as affect even if not directly translated into the social dynamic.

Past incidents in the classroom are also instrumental in the formation of strong opinions about the presence of guns in the educational space. This came out as a strong theme during the fieldwork period, with interviewees repeatedly sharing stories of students becoming violent. One professor explained:

> When you've been in the classroom, you are aware—very, very, in very concrete terms—that it is a high-stress situation for most students. […] They can respond very emotionally to what happens in the classroom. I've had students have outbursts. (Interview 2, 4/27/2018)

Another confessed her fear of students: "I've actually had students yell at me. If I had to worry that they were carrying a gun in my office or in the classroom, that's frightening. Or that they would come back, right?" (Interview 3, 4/26/2018). A graduate student shared how her orientation changed after campus carry: "There were a couple of incidents […] where I saw students who looked really upset, and I felt like I needed to be more on guard, if they were going to pull out a gun and freak out" (Interview, 4/25/2018). An undergraduate further highlighted the danger of students with psychological problems being armed:

> There was this one incident […] in the Slavic department, where there was this guy that had a mental breakdown in front of class before the teacher got there and wrote all this racist stuff on the board and threw a chair at this black kid. Then he ran away and the police had to track him down. If he had had a gun, I am sure he would have killed somebody. (Focus group participant, 4/26/2018)

In one final example, one professor described actually being attacked in a classroom by a student when she was teaching at Austin Community College. When he swung his heavy backpack at her head, she was able to dodge it, but it was obvious that things could have been much worse:

> I was terrified by the situation. […] It had very much occurred to me that if he had had a weapon there, it would have been a disaster. I would say that experience is very much present in my mind and informs my decisions about campus carry. (Interview 2, 4/27/2018)

The types of events described here underline the process of affect formation. That is, while fear of guns based on personal experience is individual, its expression in behavior shared with others becomes *actualized* as affect. In this way, students and faculty have developed communal sensitivity around the classroom being a locus for conflict and vulnerability (see also Trujillo, 2017). At UT Austin, three quarters of surveyed UT undergraduates (77.5%) expressed that they do not feel safe with students carrying permitted concealed handguns in class (Ruoppila & Butters, 2020), and this shared perception is distributed diffusely in the overall environment.

The Actualization of Fear in the Classroom

"I'm afraid of guns so I don't want them in my classroom."
– UT Austin Professor Paola Bonifazio (Lopez, 2015)

"Now I have an added uncomfortable feeling in class. […] I have tried to sit close to doors, or keep a watch on if anyone could be carrying a gun."
– Testimonial 3, February 20, 2019

"I do and don't feel scared in my classes. […] You don't know who to and not to trust around here. […] Someone in this very room could pull out a gun and fire at any given moment."
– Testimonial 4, February 20, 2019

Given the impact of social forces on multiple levels, it is important to understand how shifts in people's "mode of being" are reflected in actual praxis. How has the implementation of the law directly impacted classrooms at UT Austin? How do the experiences of supporters and opponents of campus carry differ, and what does this mean for the spirit of collegiate community?

Concerns about Security

As school shootings have become increasingly widespread across the U.S., law enforcement agencies have attached greater importance to students and teachers developing situational awareness. The persistent orientation to potential threats in one's environment is expressed through different types of affect, depending on whether one has a gun or not. For those who do, getting a license to carry includes training on maintaining "relaxed alertness," or "Yellow Alert," to use Jeff Cooper's (1989) widely adopted color code. But such vigilance is not for everyone, as learned by an instructor who carries a handgun while teaching. At first, he said, he opened his courses with a security briefing, but then he found it put students too much on edge:

> I just told them, "Here is what we do if something happens." Obviously, the chances of that are just minuscule. After that I thought about it more and it really just is going to alarm people more than anything else and I don't think that's good in a classroom environment. (Interview, 4/17/2018)

This example exposes how the exigency for preparedness can lead to fear, thus underlining a fundamental tension between physical and psychological orientations. Introducing a gun into an environment changes how one sees it. For this instructor, a desk was understood in practical and physical terms as potential cover during a shooter event, and line of sight was an important consideration when returning fire. For opponents of campus carry, however, situational awareness acted in an opposite way as a psychological source of worry that now pervaded the classroom. As one student explained:

> For example, when I go into a big lecture hall, I always keep an eye on my nearest exit. Even when I go to movie theaters, I worry that someone is going to shoot me. That should not extend to a classroom, but that's the reality. (Interview, 3/27/2018)

In the charged atmosphere of potential violence, both sides engage in profiling. Determining whether someone is armed is foregrounded by creation of the Other, so that a single class might have LTC-holders keeping an eye out for potential shooters *and* people fearful of LTC-holders keeping an eye out for them. Ana Lopez, one of the organizers of the Cocks Not Glocks student activist movement against guns at UT Austin, explained in a news interview: "I feel like campus carry has caused me to profile people a lot more" (Guan, 2017). The act of profiling is subjective but also shared, intersecting with gender and race. In another media interview, Lopez admitted, "If I've got some cowboy-looking dude in my class, I'm going to be more wary than [if it's] someone like myself" (Purtill, 2017).

Profiling

Tropes like the "good [white] guy with a gun" are built on social imaginaries and cultural stereotypes of Texas, but many gun owners embrace that narrative. To their mind, being profiled in this way accords them an identity of power, communicating that they are not to be messed with. The imposition of fear is part of the strategic effect of deterrence. Yet this identity construction also belies how gun owners perceive themselves as "normal." As Angela Stroud points out, the "good guy" believes there is no problem in his carrying, compared to people in the "bad parts of town"; accordingly, while it is unlikely that he will go to a "bad" neighborhood, he needs to be able to defend himself in the places where he normally goes, like a school (Stroud, 2012, p. 229; 2016).

This example illustrates an inverse dynamic of how profiling of the Other may also be done by those carrying guns. Macro-level stereotypes and personal experiences of violence led to new expressions on campus. In particular, racial/ethnic minority and sexual minority groups' preexisting fears of being targeted (Otis, 2007; Schafer et al., 2018) were exacerbated with the advent of the new gun policy. At UT Austin, this became such an issue that it was explicitly addressed by the Campus Carry Policy Working Group (2015):

> Perhaps the most passionate comments we received came from students, staff, and faculty of color and other historically underrepresented groups, including members of the LGBTQ community and international students. Understandably, they fear most viscerally that an increase in the number of guns on campus will place them at greatest risk. For example, a statement by the African and African Diaspora Studies faculty decried the "distinctly vulnerable position of Black people when it comes to firearm violence," adding that "the probability that bullets will find us is higher than for any other campus population." (p. 3)

Accordingly, the African and African Diaspora Studies Department published their opposition to the law, citing the potential for "deadly violence against us" in "highly charged" and "often fraught" classroom discussions (Gun-Free UT, 2015).

As existing fears became heightened and localized as meso-level classroom affect, individuals reacted in very different ways, as the following examples show. Sharing an experience of a heated discussion of the history of the Black Power Movement shifting to campus carry, one student remembered their instructor explaining: "You have to understand why professors don't want this law. I stand up here and talk to you about the Black Panthers and there's a lot of white frat guys—you guys who stand up there fuming at me" (Interview, 4/25/2018). In this case, the instructor directly spoke to the affect of the classroom, addressing the tension and mutual othering. It could be asked, however, how many similar moments of division and fear go unspoken? In one such instance, when students were using racial slurs against a fellow classmate, who was also a cleric of Islam, he chose *not* to speak up, being terrified "of the uncertainty of what the other person [had] in their backpack" (Bodenheimer, 2018).

Changing Classroom Dynamics

This unspoken aspect of affect can also be found in professors' perceptions of a shift in their authority and a "loss of control" over the classroom, as the possibility of an armed student "completely changes the dynamic" (Bodenheimer, 2018). Faculty have become painfully aware of a new sense of distancing. One professor explained: "I'm very aware of the fact that I could have a licensed

gun holder in my class. […] I think how it changes my classroom is, it takes me longer—it takes me probably a month—before I am comfortable with my students" (Interview, 4/24/2018). Significantly, the interweaving of fear, loss of authority, and polarization can impact teaching (see Jones & Horan, 2019). A so-called "chilling effect"—to cite the term used by three UT Austin professors in a lawsuit brought against the university's campus carry policy (Watkins, 2016)—has led some faculty to behave differently, speak differently, and teach differently.

Furthermore, instructors in Texas have pedagogically modified their courses (Lewis & De Luna, 2016), sometimes on their own initiative but also by following policy guidelines. At the University of Houston, for example, the faculty senate provided professors with specific tips: "Be careful discussing sensitive topics." "Drop certain topics from your curriculum." "[Don't] 'go there' if you sense anger" (DeBrabander, 2016). At UT Austin, campus carry has led some professors to grade more leniently, lest they provoke a dispute with a gun-carrying student (Interview 3, 4/26/2018; Gullion, 2018, pp. 107–110), while others omit polemical course material to reduce possible conflict. Nor is the educational impact of campus carry lost on students. One undergraduate bemoaned what she perceived as censoring:

> I know for a fact, the way I've talked to a lot of professors and the way we talk about delicate material has changed. And I know people that have taken things out of their course load because of this. So, that directly hurts my education. (Interview 1, 4/4/2018)

Importantly, however, this student was clear to point out that she did not blame her professor; she understood their perspective, because she had the same fear herself:

> My education is affected when I can't pay attention in class because I am afraid of a gun. A lot of the classes I take as a history major and a government major [have] a lot of controversial ideas. […] There are ethics classes where you are supposed to come and argue abortion and you are supposed to go in and argue the death penalty and stuff like that. Talking to those professors, it is hard to teach those classes now because there is always that fear. What if you have one person that's just so enraged by an idea that they—two seconds, into a backpack—shoot someone? (Interview 1, 4/4/2018)

This student was not alone in their perception: nearly half of UT Austin undergraduates surveyed (49.2%) agreed with the statement that "the presence of concealed handguns in the classroom creates a chilling effect, limiting discussions on contentious topics." The repercussions of campus carry on education are complex, moving in different directions, trickling down from the instructors' changed curricula and feeding into the classroom with students experiencing fear to freely speak their minds (Somers & Phelps, 2018; Jones & Horan, 2019).

The Impact of the Unknown

The complexity of the situation notwithstanding, there was a shared concern that appeared to inform affect among faculty and students alike. One question in particular was voiced by participants again and again, both implicitly and explicitly, as if always lurking in the background: "What if?" As seen above, in some interviews this concern was located in past experiences of violence: "What if that student had had a gun?" Elsewhere, it was framed in relation to a future hypothetical: "What if someone pulls out a gun in class?" In both cases, the temporality of the experience was bound to the present and narrowed to certain discrete events in one's daily schedule—namely, moments in

class—as representing a focal point of danger. Understanding the classroom as a specific locus of emotional vulnerability (Trujillo, 2017), it may explain why UT Austin undergraduates cited that location—more than anywhere else on campus—as the place where guns should not be allowed (on the acceptance of concealed handguns in various parts of the UT Austin campus, see Ruoppila & Butters, 2020).

For opponents of campus carry, the fear is present because of the simple fact that there may be guns in the classroom. One professor underlined the impact of the law: "because it increases the likelihood that a gun will be accessible, [it] increases the danger for me" (Interview 1, 4/26/2018). Yet, supporters of campus carry argue the exact opposite, that guns and LTC-holders are not the danger, but the solution to a statistically unlikely event. An undergraduate who carries on campus explained:

> I understand the proportional risk, which is very, very low. School shootings are very rare. School shootings on college campuses are more rare. I do not believe that things being rare means that you should not be prepared to confront them. (Focus group participant, 4/19/2018)

The "what if?" question thus hinges on how it is predicated—namely, whether the imagined shooter is a LTC-holder or not.

Concomitant with the question of fear and affect is the fact that value judgements are often applied to how people orient to a future hypothetical threat. For publicly expressing fear, opponents of campus carry have been dismissed as irrational or even paranoid. Conversely, LTC-holders have positioned themselves as realistic and practical, following the law, adhering to the classic civil defense ethos ("Be Prepared") and directives of how to respond to an active shooter event in the classroom ("Run, Hide, Fight"). These kinds of intentional framings represent epistemological claims vis-à-vis the "real" way to understand threats, on one hand finding expression though rhetoric in a contestation over the legitimacy and nature of fear itself (Butters, 2020), but also potentially leading individuals to not engage or publicly disclose their latent or actualized emotions.

Conclusions: The Way Forward

As seen above, fear-based affect around campus carry is experienced as a social phenomenon and reproduced in a wide range of ways, reflecting personal experiences and societal forces which exert force in the classroom. Accordingly, attitudes and fear surrounding guns have followed cultural scripts and appeared in rhetoric at UT Austin. Emerging from this picture is the power of fear to self-perpetuate, pervading both physical environments and collective perceptions. Indeed, as fear generates more fear, its "ontogenetic force" not only sustains the emotion but can lead it to continually increase. Speaking to this, Massumi (2005, p. 47) concludes, "All that is certain is that fear itself will continue becoming—the way of life." One faculty member agreed, describing the "community sense of fear" as a rising tide: the fact that "more guns exist out there […] makes me more likely to feel that I have a need to defend myself" (Interview 2, 4/27/2018).

Nearly two decades ago, Altheide (2003, p. 19) noted Americans becoming more "armored," moving to gated communities and carrying handguns. He observed this as part of a vicious cycle, whereby actions reaffirm and create a sense of disconnection that further actions perpetuate. Perceptions of the environment and how it must be negotiated (e.g., seeing threats because one is

trained to look for them, situational awareness) are specifically translated into laws and policy that in turn have a social consequence. In this feedback loop, "…the meanings that contribute to and stem from CHL [concealed handgun license] policy play a role in shaping the larger culture, which may well be its most significant impact" (Stroud, 2016, p. 152). Thus, while the classroom provides a discrete locus of fear-based affect impacting community, the phenomenon extends much more broadly.

Of course, such deepening divisions do not have to be the end of the story. Affect is locally operative and malleable, and some students, faculty, and staff at UT Austin are actively working together to find a way forward through the emotional divide caused by campus carry. For instance, they are addressing fear through self-defense workshops, mindfulness training, and open classroom discussion. One professor described the benefits of starting each class with five minutes of meditation, telling her students: "This is one thing that we can have in place that allows us to get together [and] focus on the fact that we are here together for a reason, which is to learn, that we are safe with each other right now" (Interview 1, 4/27/2018). In this way, by building the understanding that fear is a shared experience by both sides, additional points of commonality may be explored for potential reconciliation. It is important to note that campus carry is a process, and the fact that to date no university shootings have been involved with it—nationwide—supports continued dialogue, and possibly even the gradual deconstruction of associated fears.

Although UT Austin represents one example of a university navigating the lived experience of guns on campus, many of the dynamics explored in this article can be seen as more broadly applicable to institutions of higher learning elsewhere in the country (on Kansas, for example, see Drew, 2017; Wolcott, 2017). Fear of guns in the classroom is not limited to one specific locale. Given continually shifting attitudes toward firearms, however, further studies—including longitudinal research—are needed on the ways in which this issue can be navigated in shared space. Demonstrating that rapprochement is possible, even at one university, could provide a path toward a positive resolution of affect surrounding guns in other communities as well.

Albion M. Butters, PhD is a Research Fellow at the John Morton Center for North American Studies at the University of Turku, Finland. His current interests include competing ideologies around campus carry and gun politics in the United States, and more broadly they extend to cultural studies and the history of religion.

This work was supported by the Academy of Finland (grant 310568) as part of the larger project on campus carry conducted by the John Morton Center for North American Studies at the University of Turku. The author would like to thank all those who participated in the fieldwork, as well as the Department of American Studies at UT Austin for kindly hosting our research team.

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. New York and London: Routledge.

Altheide, D. L. (2003). Mass media, crime, and the discourse of fear. *The Hedgehog Review*, *5*(3), 9–25.

Altheide, D. L. (2006). Terrorism and the politics of fear. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, *6*(4), 415–439. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708605285733

Anguera, M. T., Blanco-Villaseñor, A., Losada, J. L. et al. (2018). Revisiting the difference between mixed methods and multimethods: Is it all in the name? *Quality & Quantity*, *52*, 2757–2770. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-018-0700-2

Arrigo, B. A. & Acheson, A. (2016). Concealed carry bans and the American college campus: A law, social sciences, and policy perspective. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *19*(1), 120–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2015.1101688

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. London: SAGE.

Bodenheimer, R. (2018, February 21). Armed college students instill fear in professors. *Good*. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from https://www.good.is/articles/guns-on-campus-carry-professors-respond/amp

Bouffard, J. A., Nobles, M. R., Wells, W. & Cavanaugh, M. R. (2012). How many more guns?: Estimating the effect of allowing licensed concealed handguns on a college campus. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *27*(2), 316–343. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511416478

Britannica (n.d.). Texas Tower shooting of 1966. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/event/Texas-Tower-shooting-of-1966

Burns, R. & Crawford, C. (1999). School shootings, the media, and public fear: Ingredients for a moral panic. *Crime, Law & Social Change*, *32*, 147–168.

Butters, A. (2020). Beyond *argumentum in terrorem*: The contested rhetoric of campus carry. *Journal of American Studies*, First Look (online), 1–12. https://doi:10.1017/S0021875820001395

Campus Carry Policy Working Group (2015, December). Final report. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from UT Austin website: https://utexas.app.box.com/v/CCWorkingGroup-FinalReport

Clough, P. (Ed.) (2007). *The affective turn: Theorizing the social*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Cooper, J. (1989). *Principles of personal defense*. Boulder: Paladin Press.

Cramer, C. E. (2014). Guns on campus: A history. *Academic Questions*, *27*: 411–425. https://10.1007/s12129-014-9451-2

DeBrabander, F. (2016, March 4). How guns could censor college classrooms. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-steep-cost-of-allowing-guns-in-the-college-classroom/472296/

Dowd-Arrow, B., Terrence D. H. & Burdette, A. M. (2019). Gun ownership and fear. *SSM - Population Health*, *8*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2019.100463

Drew, S. K. (2017). Making sense of campus carry at Pittsburg State University. *The Midwest Quarterly*, *59*(1), 81–98.

Drysdale, D. A., Modzeleski, W. & Simons, A. B. (2010). Campus attacks: Targeted violence affecting institutions of higher education. U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus-attacks.pdf

Duff, P. A. (2019). Social dimensions and processes in second language acquisition:

Multilingual socialization in transnational contexts. *The Modern Language Journal*, *103*, 6–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12534

Elsass, H. J., Schildkraut, J., & Stafford, M. C. (2014). Breaking news of social problems: Examining consumption and student beliefs about school shootings. *Criminology, Criminal Justice Law, & Society*, *15*, 31–42.

Furedi, F. (2002). *Culture of fear: Risk-taking and the morality of low expectation*. London & New York: Continuum.

Guan, K. (2017, December 1). Bringing dildos to a gun fight. *Study Break*. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from https://studybreaks.com/students/ana-lopez-cocks-not-glocks/

Gullion, J. S. (2018). Students may threaten professors for better grades. In A. C. Cunningham (Ed.), *Guns: Conceal and Carry* (pp. 107–110). New York: Greenhaven Publishing.

Gun-Free UT (2015, October 29). African and African Diaspora Studies Department Faculty: Statement on pending campus carry law. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from Gun-Free UT website: http://gunfreeut.org/african-and-african-diaspora/

Gun-Free UT (2016, February 25). GunFreeUT statement on President Fenves' campus carry policies. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from Gun-Free UT website: http://gunfreeut.org/category/department-statement/

Gunter, T. A. (2016). Qualitative collective case study of targeted violence preparedness at institutions of higher education. Dissertation, Liberty University.

Hauser, W. & Kleck, G. (2013). Guns and fear: A one-way street? *Crime & Delinquency*, *59*(2), 271–291. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128712462307

Heath, L. & Gilbert, K. (1996). Mass media and fear of crime. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *39*(4), 379–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764296039004003

Hultin, N. (2013). Guns, anthropology, and cultural relativism: A response to Hugh Gusterson's "Making a killing." *Anthropology Today*, *29*(2), 23–25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23486375

Jang, H., Lee, C.-H. & Dierenfeldt, R. (2014). Who wants to allow concealed weapons on the college campus? *Security Journal*, *27*(3), 304–319. https://doi.org/10.1057/sj.2012.31

Jones, H. E. & Horan, S. M. (2019). Guns on campus: Campus carry and instructor-student communication. *Communication Education*, *68*(4), 417–437. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2019.1643899

Kleck, G., Kovandzic, T., Saber, M. & Hauser, W. (2011). The effect of perceived risk and victimization on plans to purchase a gun for self-protection. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *39*(4), 312–319. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.03.002

Kyle, M. J., Schafer, J. A., Burruss, G. W. & Giblin, M. J. (2017). Perceptions of campus safety policies: Contrasting the views of students with faculty and staff. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *42*(3), 644–667. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-016-9379-x

Latour, B. (1999). *Pandora's hope: Essays on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lehtonen, M. & Seppälä, M. (2020). "Like a double-edged sword": Student testimonials on campus carry in Texas. *Journal of American Studies*, First Look (online), 1–12. https://doi:10.1017/S0021

Lewis, S. K. & De Luna, D. A. (2016). Symposium on "Texas gun law and the future": The fatal flaws in Texas's campus carry law. *Thurgood Marshall Law Review*, *41*(2), 135–150.

Liska, A. E. & Baccaglini, W. (1990). Feeling safe by comparison: Crime in the newspapers. *Social Problems*, *37*(3), 360–374. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1990.37.3.03a00060

Lopez, D., Haberly, D., Vabner, D. & Cavazos, H. (2015, October 22). Campus carry approval

sparks UT community debate. *Multimedia Newsroom*. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from http://multimedianewsroom.us/2015/10/22/campus-carry-approval-sparks-ut-community-debate/

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2005). Fear (the spectrum said). *East Asia Cultures Critique*, *13*(1), 31–48. https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-13-1-31

McGaughy, L. (2015, November 17). Which Texas colleges have banned campus carry?, *Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/education/campus-chronicles/article/What-Texas-colleges-have-banned-campus-carry-6639186.php.

Otis, M. D. (2007). Perceptions of victimization risk and fear of crime among lesbians and gay men. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *22*(2), 198–217. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260506295346

Purtill, J. (2017, November 7). Legally armed: What it's like going to uni when the students carry guns. *triplejHack* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). Retrieved October 5, 2020, from http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/how-campus-carry-gun-laws-changed-university-of-texas/9124030

Ruoppila, S. & Butters, A. (2020). Not a "nonissue": Perceptions and realities of campus carry at The University of Texas at Austin. *Journal of American Studies*, First Look (online), 1–13. https://doi:10.1017/S0021875820001425

Schafer, J. A., Lee, C., Burruss, G. W. & Giblin, M. J. (2018). College student perceptions of campus safety initiatives. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, *29*(4), 319–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403416631804

Shepperd, J. A., Pogge, G., Losee, J. E., Lipsey, N. P. & Redford, L. (2018). Gun attitudes on campus: United and divided by safety needs. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *158*(5), 616–625. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2017.1412932

Somers, P. & Phelps, N. (2018). Not chilly enough? Texas campus carry and academic freedom. *Journal of Academic Freedom*, *9*, 1–14.

Stengel, B. (2008). Facing fear, releasing resistance, enabling education. *Philosophical Studies in Education*, *39*, 66–75.

Stroud, A. (2012). Good guys with guns: Hegemonic masculinity and concealed handguns. *Gender and Society*, *26*(2), 216–238. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211434612

Stroud, A. (2016). *Good guys with guns: The appeal and consequences of concealed carry*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Texas (2015). SB 11, 84th Leg. Reg. Sess. https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/84R/billtext/html/SB00011F.htm

Thompson, A., Price, J. H., Dake, J. & Teeple, K. (2013). Faculty perceptions and practices regarding carrying concealed handguns on university campuses. *Journal of Community Health*, *38*(2), 366–373. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-012-9626-0

Trujillo, K. R. The learner, the teacher, and the classroom community: Building safe spaces for emotional sharing. In P. W. Orelus (Ed.), *Language, race, and power: A critical discourse analysis* (pp. 102–113). New York: Routledge, 2017.

von Scheve, C. (2018). A social relational account of affect. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *2*(1), 39–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431017690007

Waitt, T. (2017, May 3). UT student stabbed four on campus, killing one. *American Security Today*. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://americansecuritytoday.com/ut-student-stabbed-four-campus-killing-one-learn-video/

Wolcott, C. M. (2017). The chilling effect of campus carry: How the Kansas campus carry statute impermissibly infringes upon the academic freedom of individual professors and faculty members. *Kansas Law Review*, *65*, 975–911. https://doi.org/10.17161/1808.25573

Watkins, M. (2016, July 6). Three UT professors sue to block campus carry. *The Texas Tribune*. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from https://www.texastribune.org/2016/07/06/3-ut-austin-professors-sue-state-over-campus-carry/

Wright, B. R. (2014). Defensive pessimism and concealed carry of weapons on campus: Cause for calm or concern. Dissertation, University of the Rockies.