Bad Things Don’t Happen Here:
The Reality of Active Harmer Events, Neoliberalist
Responses to Threat, and Campus Rape Culture

Jennifer Thomson
University of Colorado Boulder
Honors in Sociology

Defended April 8, 2019

Honors Committee Members:
Glenda Walden, Ph.D., Sociology
Matthew Brown, Ph.D., Sociology
Orly Hersh, MA, Program for Writing and Rhetoric
ABSTRACT

Active harmer events, such as school shootings are steadily increasing. (Bonanno, Levenson 2014, Ahmed and Walker 2018). This study explores active harmer preparedness at Mountain Town University, and also delves into the university's neoliberalist response to threat, a failed attempt at a moral panic, and the rape culture that is currently taking place within this university. The study was conducted with a total of 12 participants, all of whom are affiliated with the university and fall under at least one category of student, faculty, or staff. I conducted face to face interviews to ask questions about things like active harmer preparedness, perceptions of safety on campus, and accounts of what happened during the last active harmer event on this campus. The responses given by my participants indicated that the three themes mentioned above, the university’s neoliberalist response to threat, a failed attempt at a moral panic, and campus rape culture, were extremely prevalent and commonly brought up during the interview process. For that reason the findings about these topics were indicated in my data chapters. Overall this study takes a hard look at the reality of the themes within the university.
To my parents who love me, my friends who support me, and my Grandma and Aunt who inspire me. I couldn’t have done it without you. My love and thanks to all.
INTRODUCTION

On October 5th, 2016 there were multiple real and alleged active harmer situations in a small college town in the midwest. The first incident, a man wielding a machete, took place early morning in a semi-populated building on campus.

At 9:15 a.m., a patient who was being treated at the sports medicine facility [in a building on campus] encountered the suspect in the parking lot outside the building… the suspect made harassing statements and followed the patient... into the building...officers from [the university] and the [County] Police Department arrived and confronted the suspect on a stairwell between the fourth and fifth floor of the [university building] (Kosmider 2016:4).

The active harmer refused to listen to police, who eventually used deadly force in order to deescalate the situation (Kosmider 2016). Despite the deadly shooting taking place, campus officials chose to keep campus open and keep classes continuing on their normal schedule. Later that day,

The [building the active harmer was allegedly in] was evacuated by police and put on lockdown after police responded at about 1:05 p.m. to a 911 call about an active shooter in the building. Surrounding buildings were put on lockdown as well. At about 1:20 p.m., the university Twitter account announced the report was false. (Siemens 2016:4)

One local news outlet reported that students who were on the main floor of the building in which the active harmer allegedly was, were fleeing the building and even falling over each other in an attempt to escape the potentially deadly situation (Byars 2016).

Just hours after the man wielding a machete was gunned down by police, students, faculty, and staff around campus were receiving alerts about a potential active harmer in a building on campus. In a coffee shop close by campus, Luna, a senior in university was with her friend when she received the alert texts. Almost immediately after, the coffee shop went into
lock down. This frightened two foreign exchange students who were confused as to why they were not allowed to leave, and were not able to understand what people were trying to tell them in order to calm them. Luna came out of her hiding place and, with the aid of someone who was able to speak their native language, helped to calm the two students. After explaining that the building was on lock down and that there was an alleged active harmer, the foreign exchange students complied with the lock down and got into their hiding places.

Meanwhile in an office on campus frequented by students, two counselors and numerous student employees received the automatically generated alerts on campus owned computer screens. One of the counselors, Lacey Williams, expressed concern about the lack of knowledge of lockdown procedures within the office once those alerts were sent out.

I remember that nobody knew what to do… we had students sitting in our lobby like waiting to come into the office to talk to people, and… we were like, ‘do we pull those students back with us, do we take our [student employees] out of the front desk area? Like nobody like really had any idea what to do.

In the same office, another counselor, Olivia Knowles, left her office and went into the lobby area where multiple students were awaiting appointments. She alerted them of the dangerous situation, and to her surprise, instead of coming into the office to seek shelter from the potentially harmful situation, many chose to leave the building entirely. The building itself needed to be locked down, and the counselors were also unaware of who had the ability to do so. Both counselors expressed concerns about the lack of preparedness within their office and Knowles continued on to say, “I kinda felt like.. every office should have a plan. It was pretty sad that no one, absolutely no one, knew what to do”.

4
Student employee Sierra Carter was working in the same office at the time of the incident had similar experiences of distress because she did not have an idea of what to do in an active harmer type of situation. She was also worried for friends and family who were texting her during the incident to ensure her safety.

I was actually at work, and... I think I received an alert from [the university] but then, my friends that were nearby the [building where the alleged harmer was] also started texting me… we were kind of like ‘Oh is everyone okay?’... um, but yeah I was somewhat close but not extremely close to the situation… I was scared… I mean I wasn’t there but… someone you know could be there or, you know getting all these texts from like friends and family asking me if I’m okay and you know they’re nervous too, and I’m at work so I also don’t know too much of what’s happening… so it is kinda scary.

These accounts are troublesome and it is clear thus far that no one had a solid idea of what procedures to follow during this incident.

Another student, Rachel Soka, expressed having symptoms of PTSD after the active harmer incident took place, and also expressed feelings of fear that yet again, no one knew what to do. Her statement is as follows,

I was in the building right next door [to the building where the alleged active harmer was supposed to be]... and a girl came into our class, just crying… and she just screamed ‘shooter!’ . Everyone drops to the floor, panic ensues, no one knows what to do, like, we’re going out like a back window and we’re ushered into the basement of [a nearby building], but like no one knew if it was true or not and you just had to act on instinct, and no one knew what to do when she said that like there wasn’t a… procedure that everyone knew to follow .

Rachel is one of many students, faculty, and staff members who has expressed these types of concerns about the level of preparedness for active harmer events on campus. Later on in this thesis we will take a closer look at perceptions of preparedness on this campus specifically.
Gale Rodgers, an instructor on campus explained that she received notification of what was going on, and immediately took action. There is a campus bus stop next to the building her office is located in on campus which concerned her. When she saw students arriving she explained that “a lot of [the students] were looking at their phones, you know, confused and I thought ‘okay they’re getting an alert, some of them but they don’t know what to do’”. She then explained that due to the proximity of her office to the area where the active harmer was she decided to usher the students inside.

I wasn’t sure what to do… I went out actually as people were getting off the bus I said ‘Get in the building quick!’... and maybe that's not the way to do it, maybe I should have told them to run, [this is part of the campus wide active harmer protocol], I don’t know, but where? I mean we didn't know where… I knew that we would be locking the door [to the building] and… you know you just don’t wanna stand by and just watch students just walking around.

After the real and alleged active harmer occurrances on campus, there was a lot of concern about the safety of those who work at and attend Mountain Town University. It was astonishing to me that no one knew what to do at the time. Students were being scolded for missing class while the building with an alleged active harmer in it was not yet cleared. There was no clear consensus of what to do in many classrooms, people were crowding as close as they could to the building to see what was going on, and there seemed to be a general lack of preparedness for this type of situation. Not only were students, faculty, and staff unprepared, but there were also students who felt that this experience was extremely traumatic. The lack of knowledge around what to do in active harmer situations is extremely unsettling and it is because of this lack of knowledge that I have chosen to look into whether or not Mountain Town University, faculty, and staff are truly prepared.
Clearly this topic is extremely important for me personally, but it is also important both socially, and sociologically. According to reports gathered from Gun Violence Archive, whose goal is to “provide comprehensive data for the national conversation regarding gun violence” (Gun Violence Archive 2019) there were 340 mass shootings in 2018. As Bonanno and Levenson (2014) explain, active harmer situations on campuses across the United States have increased dramatically in recent years. It seems as though though there are accounts of things like mass shootings in the news on a weekly basis. Sean Coughlan of BBC News reported that “With many parts of the US having about 180 school days per year, it means, on average, a shooting once every eight school days” (Coughlan 2018:1). The statistics show that this is a major societal issue and therefore should be considered important socially.

Sociologically, this is also extremely relevant and important because we can analyze not only the harmer themselves, but also the people affected by this and those who were not directly affected or affected at all by this phenomenon. Data that has already been gathered about active harmer occurrences on school campuses has shown that things like school climate, as well as relationships between students and faculty or staff are extremely important and can in some cases help to prevent active harmer situations (Madfis 2013). Others believe that instances such as these on campus in particular are more isolated and that the way the media is portraying these situations is creating a moral panic. A moral panic is defined by Burns and Crawford (1999) as a behavior that usually goes against societal norms, creating distress among some citizens, which is then heightened and over reacted to by the general public. Researching this topic proves to provide very interesting data that is valuable to the school and possibly society as a whole. The
possible implications of this study could further our understanding of feelings and knowledge around the topic of active harmer instances on campus as a whole.
LITERATURE REVIEW

“We're 21 weeks into 2018, and there have already been 23 school shootings where someone was hurt or killed. That averages out to more than 1 shooting a week (emphasis in original)” (Ahmed and Walker 2018) This includes minor weapons such as BB guns. These statistics were released in May of 2018, and again only involved instances with firearms. Though not all of these school shootings were carried out by active harmers, some were deemed accidents, this is completely unacceptable. As of November 8th 2018, the number of mass shootings has reached terrifyingly high numbers. “Wednesday night's shooting, which left 13 people dead at a bar in Thousand Oaks, California, marked the 307th mass shooting incident so far this year” (Jeffery 2018) and there are still two months left in 2018. It is because of this that many researchers have chosen to delve into the topic of active harmers on school campuses. The research I have found has been fruitful and filled to the brim with relevant and shocking information. The fact that there has been such a large amount of school shootings alone is dreadful, and unfortunately according to researchers Bonanno and Levenson (2014), these statistics will only continue to rise. In the following chapter I will introduce what other researchers have found about active harmers on school campuses.

Active harmer occurrences on school campuses across the United States are on a rise (Bonanno and Levenson 2014). Bonanno and Levenson look at Strain Theory and how it can be related to or even cause a person to break and decide to commit acts of violence at school against peers, as well as, faculty and staff. “Strain includes a range of negative experiences or events in social relationships at school, home, work, or in the neighborhood where the individual resides. Strain is viewed as a range of difficulties that result in anger, frustration, disappointment,
depression, fear, and, eventually, crime” (Bonanno and Levenson 2014). It is clear that not only do these horrific and frequent occurrences detrimentally affect the lives of those directly involved, but they also invoke fear in many American citizens. Bonanno and Levenson suggest that there are multiple methods to try and create ways to lessen the frequency that these atrocities take place. One suggestion they made involves school climates. They argue that a safe school climate created by staff and students is crucial to avoid school shootings. A safe school climate is one in which staff and students mutually respect each other, thus creating solid bonds between staff and students. In addition, focusing on anti-bullying programs creates less opportunities for potential active harmers to consider committing an act of violence as a viable option.

In Michael Pittaro’s article, “A Theoretical Explanation for the Increase in School Shootings” he discusses the increase in school shootings since the Columbine shooting of 1999. He also discusses the relationship between gun control and mental illness and explains that the issue has much more to it than that alone. After giving a description of what the ‘typical’ American active harmer looks like, he explains that Social Control Theory “can be used as a reliable and valid psychosocial explanation for school shootings, specifically in understanding the risk factors associated with someone who might resort to such violence” (Pittaro 2018:5). He discusses and defines the four main social bonds in Social Control Theory, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, and relates each one back to school shooters.

Attachment is expressed as compassion and empathy toward friends, family, coworkers, and even acquaintances like classmates. School shooters lack attachment. They harbor and internalize anger, frustration, and disappointment… [in some cases of active shooter occurrences] The random direction of these shooters’ aim suggests that they have no regard for human life and have rationalized their actions. This is very similar to the cognitive restructuring process that terrorists use to justify the killing of innocent lives (Pittaro 2018:8).
He goes on to say that strong connections to religious and educational institutions, and having good relationships with family are key in order to having a stable upbringing, without these factors children “can lack both resiliency and coping skills” (Pittaro 2018:14) which can lead them down the path to become active harmers. Pitarro then ends with The American Psychological Association’s 10 strategies to build resilience, these include:


Causes and Proposed Solutions

In a document from the Federal Bureau of Investigation written by Mary Ellen O’toole, she explains that many of the solutions made for active harmer instances in schools are short term solutions to long term issues. Often, people focus on what we can do now instead of trying to get to the root of what caused this person to become an active harmer. O’toole goes into depth about the problematic ways in which we as a society attempt to ‘pick out’ the students who could be considered potential active harmers through checklists and common characteristics of active harmers which are often times false. “Such lists, publicized by the media, can end up unfairly labeling many nonviolent students as potentially dangerous or even lethal” (O’toole 1999). The author explains that it is actually quite difficult to be able to pick out students who are actually potential active harmers, as there is no universal standard for active harmers. O’toole also delves into threat types, levels of threat, and why understanding the active harmers’ motivation is important when assessing and evaluating threats. She goes on to say that “once a threat is made,
having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important” (O’toole 1999).

In Eric Madfis’ article, “Averting School Rampage Student Intervention Amid a Persistent Code of Silence”, he discusses the importance of a good climate, “where staff had forged inclusive communities as well as trusting and supportive relationships with their students” (Madfis 2013) and how this can be crucial to breaking the “code of silence”. The Code of Silence is a phenomena in which students do not want to tell people of authority about prior knowledge of a student planning a potential active harmer attack which “reflects increasingly punitive and criminalized school environments that erode trusting relationships between students and school staff members” (Madfis 2013). Along with the code of silence, he mentions the bystander scholarship which is similar to the bystander effect; students choose not to come forward because they believe others in the group will. Various solutions are mentioned as well, which can be found not only in the research about successful active harmer occurrences, but also unsuccessful ones. Also mentioned is the fact that “any honest examination of recent developments in American schooling reveals a significant trend away from inclusivity, empathy, and supportiveness, and toward the punitive discipline and enhanced security” which is completely contradictory of creating good school climates (Madfis 2013). He explains that the “criminalization” factor plays a huge role in breaking down good school climates and rather creates a place of mistrust between students and people of authority in their school.

Hirschfield and Celinska (2011), authors cited by Madfis for their work on criminalization in this context speak about it in the article “Beyond Fear: Sociological Perspectives on the Criminalization of School Discipline”. The authors discuss the harsh ways in
which children are punished in school systems nowadays revealing that “the official treatment of student misconduct as crime is facilitated by the enactment of rituals and roles that cast students as suspects, criminals, or prisoners” (Hirschfield and Celinska 2011). They go on to speak about the racialized way in which students of color who live in predominantly urban areas are subjected to things like random lockdowns and having to go through metal detectors just to get inside (Hirschfield and Celinska 2011). The sociology of fear is mentioned and it is noted that “the first social fact that the fear perspective explains is the relatively early and intense criminalization of inner-city schools” (Hirschfield and Celinska 2011) as noted previously.

William S. Pollack, William Modzeleski, and Georiann Rooney delve into many issues, the most important being whether or not active harmer attacks on school grounds were planned or not, and what can be done in order to try and stop future active harmer instances from occurring. The authors speak about a study that analyzed multiple active harmer situations involving schools within the United States and were able to discover ten key findings,

“[1] Incidents of targeted violence at schools rarely were sudden impulsive acts. [2] Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to advancing the attack. [3] There was no useful or accurate “profile” of students who engaged in targeted school violence. [4] Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Moreover many had considered or attempted suicide. [5] Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack. [6] Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack. [7] Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement interventions. [8] In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity. [9] Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help. [10] Prior to the incidents, other people knew about the attacker’s idea and/or plan to attack (Pollack, et al. 2008:4)

The criteria with which study participants are chosen, including having had to attend a school where an active harmer incident took place and having knowledge of an attack before it
happening (Pollack, et al. 2008), was discussed, as well as the reasons as to why the participants who were chosen qualify. After intense and diligent research the authors were able to find six different key findings. These spoke about ‘bystanders’, people who had prior knowledge about an active harmer incident taking place, and their relationships to the active harmers, the amount of bystanders who actively attempted to convey their knowledge to others, the influence of school climate on bystanders coming forward, why bystanders did not come forward, and the impact of those in positions of authority on bystanders speaking out (Pollack, et al. 2008). They then delve into multiple solutions which include bettering school climates, developing policies in case situations like these arise, and that school officials should not only be trained for real active harmer situations, but also that they should be trained on how to respond to reports of potential active harmer situations (Pollack, et al. 2008).

In Evie Bald’s article “Do Schools ‘Active-Shooter’ Drills Prepare or Frighten?” she explains that the “traditional lockdown drills--which teach students to quietly hide in their classroom in the event of a school shooting-- [are being replaced and or supplemented] with multi-option response drills, which teach them a variety of ways to respond and escape” (Bald 2018:5). Through the ALICE approach (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) children are taught to run around in zig zaga patterns and throw things at the shooter in order to try and confuse them (Bald 2018). Some parents are horrified that their children are being subjected to these trainings in grades as young as kindergarten, while others believe that it is necessary in order to ensure that their children are prepared in case such events take place (Bald 2018). The author continues on to explain many other active harmer drill types and mentions that one particular study advocated for teachers and school officials to try to incapacitate the shooter by
using aggressive force and items in their environment… [which] drew concern from some school safety consultants who said such a ‘run, hide, fight’ approach is unproven by research and may even be dangerous in the event of an actual shooting (Bald 2018:6).

It is important to note that the Mountain Town University plan of action for active harmer situations is the run, hide, fight method. Despite the backlash from different groups, the supporters of ideas such as these, which train children to be prepared for active harmer situations in school, have also made steps to keep trainings like these in schools and give the parents the option to opt their children out of said trainings (Bald 2018). The ALICE approach, mentioned previously, has caused a lot of concern for parents who don’t believe that their children should be exposed to the topic of potential active harmers in school because it might scare them, others counter that schools often hold things like fire drills with little to no backlash from parents, and that this should be no different (Bald 2018). The article goes on to explain that students are only exposed to what they need to know and are given appropriate training based on age. One school in particular allowed students to express their concerns after the trainings, and the concerns were then addressed by the principal (Bald 2018). Bald completes the article with a powerful quote in which a teacher and father expresses his concern about the fact that, although the chances of a school shooting taking place is slim, he would never want his students or his child to be in that situation and know that they could have been prepared but chose not to be (Bald 2018).

Moral Panics

The idea of moral panics is particularly interesting for this thesis due to the nature of the subject. The authors of Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance, by Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda introduce their take on moral panics and explain that essentially a moral
panic occurs when a large group, anywhere from a communal to a national level, deems one particular group ‘evildoers’ and feel as though they pose a threat to the ‘moral order’ of things. Moral order is the generally understood way in which society functions. They go on to explain the terminology of ‘suitable targets’, who are the folk devils/evildoers, and ‘suitable victims’, those who are negatively impacted by the folk devils. The authors also explain that the singling out of folk devils is done so in order to provoke fear and a sense of danger within one’s community.

Another author who delves into the subject of moral panic theory is Jennifer Carlson. In her article “Moral Panic, Moral Breach: Bernhard Goetz, George Zimmerman, and Racialized News Reporting in Contested Cases of Self-Defense” she explains the terms ‘moral panic’, “characterized by individual folk devils presented as demonstrative of a larger racialized threat to social order… (Carlson 2016:2) as well as ‘moral breach’,

(1) it is characterized by competing, rather than complementary, narratives; (2) it reframes folk devils as victims and disrupts clear-cut allocations of blame; (3) it emphasizes harm to communities rather than harm to social order; and (4) it elicits calls for dialogue and acknowledgement rather than collective punishment and shaming (Carlson 2016:2).

Carlson uses two examples to illustrate these phenomena. The first is the case of Trayvon Martin, an African American teen who was shot and killed by a white man, George Zimmerman (Gutman, Smith, and Thomas 2012). The second took place in 1984 when four African American teenage boys, Barry Allen, Troy Canty, Darrell Cabey and James Ramseur, were shot and horrifyingly wounded by perpetrator Bernhard Goetz (History 2010). The author explains that the media “coverage of the Zimmerman case did not present a monolithic, racialized criminal; instead it drew attention to competing narratives that contested the production of ‘folk devils’
and recast them as victims” characterizing it as a moral breach (Carlson 2016:2), whereas the Goetz case coverage was an example of a moral panic because it identified black criminals as folk devils and the supporters even praised Goetz for his actions, presumably because his supporters could see themselves as victims (Carlson 2016). There was also a “Public outcry centered on enhancing punitive sanctions for wrongdoers” (Carlson 2016:17).

In Ronald Burns and Charles Crawford’s article, “School shootings, the media, and public fear: Ingredients for a moral panic” written in 1999, the authors question whether the average American’s fear of gun violence in schools committed by juveniles is justified, or if it is simply a moral panic. Moral panic in this article is defined as;

a problematic behavior that generates heightened senses of societal concern and hostility, a general societal consensus that the behavior is harmful, and a disproportionate societal interpretation/reaction to the problem… In addition, a key-defining concept of the moral panic is the fact that a ‘folk devil’ or evildoer is located and the actions taken against them are scientifically defensible (Burns and Crawford 1999:149, 150).

The authors go on to investigate the correlation between moral panic and juvenile crimes as well as school shootings. Burns and Crawford also discuss the statistics at the time which lead them to believe that juvenile crime was dwindling, and that likely society's response was simply an over reaction and a main part of the reason for the moral panic aspect to take place, which in turn causes more fear. Within the article “[the authors] argue that the situation evolved largely due to the self-serving interests of several groups in American society. Put simply, we claim that the recent school shootings have resulted in a moral panic” (Burns and Crawford 1999:148). After discussing the limitations within their research, the authors conclude that schools are some of the safest places a child can be in. An interesting contributor on this subject speaks about the ways in which the media affects the perception of fear within society, and that in all reality it is
far more likely for a child to be killed by their parent/guardian, or another adult (Males 1998). They end the article by saying that as a society we need to use caution when reporting on information such as this in order to try and avoid creating a moral panic, and that quick reactions to these issues that arise need to be calculated more carefully in order to take into account the effects of the reaction.

**Neoliberal Response To Threat**

In the article “Avoidance Learning: a Review of Theoretical Models and Recent Developments” by Krypotos et al. (2015), they take a psychological approach towards fear and avoidance. They mentioned a study by Rescorla and LoLordo which found that when confronted with shock stimuli dogs learned defensive behaviors (i.e. avoidance) in order to not have to deal with the shock stimuli presented. The authors also mentioned that “The most recent avoidance learning theory to include informational factors is the expectancy model of Lovibond…” which shows, along with other theories, that “during the instrumental phase, knowledge is acquired about the effects of avoidance (e.g., the omission of an expected unpleasant event)…” (Krypotos et al. 2015:8). This can be compared to students faculty and staff wishing to avoid active harmer training, much less seek them out on their own, which is a phenomena that is shown in the data for this thesis.

In Lawrence M. Zacarese’s 2015 article “Run, hide, Fight… re-evaluate” he touches briefly on the history of shootings in schools and explains that “If we do not learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it”. He goes on to speak about active harmer preparedness at his own school and the difficulties of issuing drills on such a large campus (Zacarese 2015). At a small lecture requested by people who had witnessed an active harmer situation on campus, Zacarese
found that despite his opinion that his school was prepared, there were things that could be done to prepare people even more,

We could update some of the pictures and videos we use for demonstration... allow more time for questions and answers during training and enhance the practical aspects to some of the classroom training we offer for students, faculty and staff... add more time for tactical training drills during semiannual firearms qualifications for our patrol officers (Zacarese 2015:5)

Finally, he ends the article by driving home the fact that schools need to have training sessions that are taken seriously and are relevant to the potential threats the students, faculty and staff could be affected by. He goes on to say that the trainings must be diligent and effective because, although it may not be today, sometime your life and the lives of those around you will depend on it (Zacarese 2015).

In Patten, Thomas, and Viotti’s article “Sweating Bullets: Female Attitudes Regarding Concealed Weapons and the Perceptions of Safety on College Campuses” they discuss a study that was conducted on students attending California State University, Chico. They indicated that the concealed carry policies on campus did not make the women in the study feel safer, pre or post a dangerous event occurring, and that in all reality it made the majority of the women surveyed on campus fell more fearful.

Overall, the survey indicated that the overwhelming majority of female respondents (82 percent) did not want qualified individuals to be allowed to carry a concealed gun on campus, 83 percent would not feel safer with more concealed guns on campus, even when carried by qualified individuals, and 83 percent did not think armed faculty, students, and staff would promote a greater sense of campus safety (Patten, Thomas, and Viotti 2013:9).

The authors also speak about the higher likelihood of sexual assault to take place, and the fear that generates in regards to being the victim of other types of crime as well. Something else
of note was that they found that women were very likely to be against the notions of having and using firearms, and “reveals that women's attitudes toward arms on campus actually became more negative after the crimes” occurred (Patten et al. 2019:14).

Rape Culture in a University Setting

In Meredith Minister’s book on rape culture she explains that many universities have come under fire due to the prevalence of rape on campus. Minister also says that “the new narratives and the new policies depend on individualistic assumptions about rape instead of considering how rape culture might be built into the foundations of the institution in the form of curriculum, employment, and athletics” (Minister 2018:50). The way rape culture and victim blaming is so deeply ingrained in society has certainly bled into college campuses and the atmosphere most female college students and female professors, counselors, etc., including my participants, have to deal with on a day to day basis. Minister also talks about the daily limitations that women face due to their constant vulnerability to instances like sexual assault. She explains that women have to make copious amounts of choices on a daily basis due to this fear of assault. Even things like what kind of shoes to wear are taken into consideration when going to events or even about daily life.

In the article “The Role of Institutional Factors on On-Campus Reported Rape Prevalence” by Stotzer and MacCartney, they discuss the many factors that may be related to rape prevalence on campus.

This examination of a nationwide sample of 524 colleges and universities found that, consistent with RAT [routine activities theory], variables related to availability of victims (campus residentiality), motivated perpetrators (NCAA Division), and a lack of capable guardianship (campus alcohol policy) were significantly related to the reported counts of sexual assaults on college and university campuses… (percent of men involved in fraternities, percent of women on campus, and presence of law
enforcement) were found to be predictors of sexual assault. (Stotzer and MacCartney 2015:2,697).

The author mentions throughout that it is important to note that the statistics we see are likely to display underrepresentation of the actual amount of sexual assault victims on campus. They touch on the fact that they found that the presence of athletes can affect sexual assault rates on campus, as well as the presence of alcohol. “Those schools that had an alcohol policy that allowed students of legal age to possess alcohol reported a greater number of sexual assaults on campus than those that had stricter alcohol policies (Stotzer and MacCartney 2015:2,697).
METHODS

Matching Research Questions To Methods

This project explores the perceptions of students, faculty and staff at Mountain Town University regarding levels of danger, threat, anxiety, and preparedness specifically in regards to the possibility of an “active harmer” situation. As school shootings and/or media reports of shootings have been steadily increasing (Bonanno and Levenson 2014), how this impacts university community members is an important social and sociological topic. Therefore, this study will be focusing mainly on what the perception of risk is on campus, as well as the perceptions of how prepared students, faculty, and staff are for an active harmer occurrence. As this research question focuses on perceptions rather than behaviors, as well as in-depth exploration of feelings, neither participant observation nor surveys would have gotten the most useful data (Chambliss and Schutt 2015). It was decided instead that semi structured interviews were best suited to answer these research questions because it allows for the participants to explore and describe their feelings and perceptions of the topic at hand, as well as allowing for new lines of inquiry to emerge and encouraging respondents to go into detail to ensure the most in-depth and fruitful information (Chambliss and Schutt 2015). When looking for participants, convenience sampling, availability sampling, and finally snowball sampling were used.

The Institutional Review Board process

In order to ensure that I was able to conduct in-depth interviews and begin to recruit my participants, it was crucial that I obtained the consent of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Mountain Town University. The IRB’s top concern is the safety of human subjects involved in studies such as this, and that the researcher is meeting and upholding their ethical principles
(Chambliss and Schutt 2015). Therefore they have a long and meticulous process of reviewing and approving each of the research studies submitted to them. This process involved writing a protocol detailing exactly what would take place within my study, including a rigorous depiction of how participants would be recruited, the types of questions that would be asked in the form of a semi-structured interview guide, the criteria necessary to be able to be involved in the study, and background information regarding other studies done on the same or similar topics. The protocol also included recruitment methods and support resources used for this study. After a careful and thorough review of my protocol, I was elated to find that I had been approved by the Institutional Review Board on September 27th, 2018 and that my protocol met their extremely high and particular standards. After receiving approval from the IRB I was then able to begin recruiting my participants using the methods mentioned previously.

Sampling

Availability sampling is “sampling in which elements are selected on the basis of convenience,” (Chambliss and Schutt 2015:23) therefore this involved conducting interviews with individuals from my social circle and my contacts within an office on campus frequented by students. As I have been attending Mountain Town University for a few years, it was also an easy task to reach out to previous professors who might be interested in being interviewed for this project. All of the participants mentioned were easy to find, and seemingly less hesitant to be interviewed than a few of the participants I found using the second method of recruitment, snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling followed my convenience sample and entailed asking my participants, (in this case those from my availability sample) if they know of anyone who fit the
criteria might be available and willing to partake in the study. If you are able to get new participants using this tactic, you may then do the same with your new participants, and so on creating a snowball effect (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011). Due to the type of recruitment exercised in this study most of the participants were friends, colleagues, and friends of friends/colleagues, however, all must be affiliated with Mountain Town University. Although the sample pool was somewhat concentrated, the participants in my study varied greatly in their age, political, religious, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds.

Despite the wide range of participants involved in this study, it is important to note that these findings are not generalizable to the university as a whole. Generalizability entails that, under certain specified conditions, findings will be applicable to the entire population that we are studying, including sub populations, groups, etc. (Chambliss and Schutt 2015). Due to the limitations of snowball and availability sampling, as well as the time constraint of this thesis, I was unable to get a completely random sample of students, faculty, and staff from the university. However, the sample is comprised of people with varied positions, backgrounds, experiences, and involvement within the university (Saldaña and Omasta 2018). Although as noted and discussed later there is a distinct lack of gender representation in my sample.

Out of all people solicited to participate in my interviews only women consented to participate. My sample is made up of 12 women affiliated with the university in some way. The majority of participants were people of color who self identified as ‘mixed race’ and Mexican, however there were a few women who indicated that they identified as caucasian/white. There were three women who self identified as mixed race but predominantly Asian. Four women identified as Mexican (some also identified as Mexican/Latina). The five remaining women
identified as caucasian/white. After asking about demographic information I found that a majority of my participants identified themselves as democrats, and few self identified as religious. The ages of those interviewed ranged from twenty to sixty three. It is also important to note that the positions of authority amongst my participants varied greatly. There was a mixture of students, four of whom either did not work or did not work at the university, as well as three who were student employees, along with one instructor, and four staff members.

**Building rapport**

Before conducting the main portion of the interview I wanted to ensure that my participants felt comfortable and that they were able to trust me. As Hennink et al. (2011) recommended, I was sure to establish rapport before jumping into the interview itself. I always allowed them to choose our interview location, and if it was an establishment that served food or beverages we would usually engage in small talk while we purchased drinks and snacks. Before the interview began I would talk to them about their interests, mutual friends or acquaintances, and I would always ask if they had any questions or concerns before the interview started. I also noticed that making jokes tended to make the interviewees feel more at ease. Once we were ready to begin interviewing, I made a clear effort to try and keep the same level of comfort and feeling of ease throughout the interview. I always made a healthy attempt at building rapport before I began asking any questions that had to do with active harmer training and preparedness.

According to Weiss (1994) the interviewer-interviewee partnership is crucial to the success of an interview. A relationship where trust is established will likely allow the participant to feel more at ease and will leave them more willing to divulge information they may not have, had the element of trust not been included. It also tends to increase the likelihood that the
participants responses are truthful. At other times, when the partnership is not strong or when an interview is failing, the interviewee may be brief when answering questions or may not want to divulge useful information. Due to my knowledge of this I made it a top priority to attempt to build a strong partnership with those that I was interviewing.

While conducting interviews, when there was a tangible sense of rapport and a strong interviewer-interviewee partnership, I found that the interview process went smoothly and the participant was able to move effortlessly from question to question. There were multiple occurrences where the interviewee would actually bring up topics that had to do with future questions, or where they partially answered unasked questions, making it very easy to segway into our next topic of conversation. Others with whom the sense of rapport was not as evident or the relationship between myself and my interviewee was not as strong were a bit more difficult to keep on track. I attempted to fix this by spending a bit more time getting to know one another and becoming comfortable. I also let them know that any questions they did not feel comfortable answering, they did not have to answer. Making them aware of this helped a few participants feel more at ease. Interview notes taken during and after the interviews mentioned feelings of ease when speaking to most interviewees, a sense of comfort on their part due to body language, information given etc., and every interview ended on a good note.

Aside from building rapport and attempting to create a strong interviewer and interviewee partnership, I wanted to ensure that the participants were ready and comfortable enough to begin the interview process. I allowed them to be interviewed in a setting of their own choosing, at the time of their choice, and I also allowed them to pick their own pseudonym as another attempt to make them feel more comfortable. As participant safety and confidentiality are a few of my
utmost concerns, I was sure to let them know that any identifiable information such as names, background information, and other specific characteristics would be changed or left out of my thesis. In order to be an ethical researcher as Neuman (2010) suggests, I chose to increase participant protection by offering them a copy of my findings as well as a copy of the consent form they signed. Along with this they were also made aware of the ways in which the information will be used and shared with others. The participants were made aware multiple times before the interview commenced that they were able to pause or stop the interview at any time with no repercussions, during the interview the participants were reminded of this.

Semi-Structured Interviewing

The interview itself was semistructured. I tend to prefer an interview with “some level of flexibility” while also “maintain(ing) some structure over its parameters” (Bailey 2007). I felt that this type of in-depth interview was best suited to the needs of my participants and myself. It allowed them to maintain focus on the overall subject of active harmer preparedness on the Mountain Town University campus while also giving them the freedom to elaborate on and explore their opinions and experiences regarding the subject. As mentioned previously many of my participants were able to respond to my questions in such a way that their responses lead into my next question effortlessly. The fact that this was able to occur made me even more sure of my choice to conduct semi structured interviews. The question guide I made was grouped into four different sections, Student, Student Employee, Faculty, and Staff. In each category there were specific questions depending on the role of the participant on campus, and the questions were also grouped together by the topic they covered. According to Weiss (1994) the evidence of
rapport and the construction of a good interviewing partnership aided the participants willingness to be truthful.

The strengths of this type of interview allowed me to better understand the feelings, experiences, and concerns of my participants, and allowed me at times to ask more probing questions about information shared by the interviewee that I may not have considered before. The limitations include the flexibility with which an interviewer is able to follow the flow of the interview and its changing topics, as well as the amount transcription needed (Hennink et al. 2011). In order to combat these limitations I made sure to practice honing my interview skills before actually interviewing any participants. This involved me doing mock interviews with members of my family in order to try and become more comfortable conducting interviews. During these practice runs, I was able to become much more comfortable moving from topic to topic at the interviewees pace and I was also able to practice building rapport.

The interview consisted of the interviewee being asked general demographic questions which lead into questions about active harmer preparedness on campus. The skeleton of topics addressed in most interviews is shown below:

- Active harmer preparedness on campus
- The perception of fear on campus
- Whether or not study participants feel safe on campus on a daily basis
- Past experiences of themselves or a loved one with active harmer situations
- The responsible authority figures; whether that be professors teaching a lecture, counselors in meetings with students, or student employees in charge of open and populated areas, Mountain Town University Police Department (MTPD)
• Whether or not individuals have a plan for active harmer situations on campus
• Whether or not individuals are familiar with active harmer training, specifically the one offered by the university
• Opinions on the alert system used by the people of authority on campus for active harmer situations
• Concealed carry policies on campus
• Whether or not their office has a plan of action for active harmer situations

The interviews ranged in time from thirty seven to sixty minutes but generally took about an hour to complete. The structure of the interview also allowed for other subjects to be explored that were not mentioned as part of the question guide which provided some very insightful and useful information. Once the interview was complete I made sure to take note of anything of importance the interviewee said in my field notes after the audio recording device was turned off. I also made sure to include anything I was able to “remember about the context of the interview: where it took place, how the respondent was dressed, looked, and behaved before, during, and after the interview, and any body language that would not be captured on tape,” along with my own interpretation “of the respondent's appearance, demeanor, and body language” (Warren and Karner 2005:151). This method worked well and allows me to be able to look back at my data and remember key elements of the interviews that I may not have remembered otherwise.

After I had begun recruiting my participants, I was able to begin scheduling and conducting interviews. I conducted twelve interviews over a period of three months, concluding interviews in November of 2018. Interviews pertaining to active harmer preparedness on Mountain Town University’s campus had not yet been conducted and therefore the potential
information to be gathered about student, faculty, and staff preparedness and competency in such situations was important to gather and included rich and useful information. When asked to participate and given a general overview of what the study was about, many people jumped at the chance to be interviewed. Multiple participants relayed their feelings of relief and happiness that this subject was being spoken about and also mentioned the urgency with which something needs to be done to better prepare individuals on campus for an active harmer situation. One person in particular spoke about their experience with active harmer situations on The University of Mountain Town’s campus and how the lack of preparedness they perceived from both classmates and professors deeply frightened them. Many other participants indicated that this interview made them more aware of their own lack of preparedness and ability or inability to handle active harmer situations. As this can be a frightening topic, I made sure to have handouts with information about what to do in active harmer situations as well as mental health resources.

Data Collection Successes and Limitations

There were many successes as well as a few limitations within my data collection. One major limitation was that all of my interviewees identified as women. When I asked men friends or colleagues about being interviewed, many responded that they did not feel as though they would add anything beneficial to this project. Although I wholeheartedly disagreed, I did not badger any one of them to take part in this project. Aside from all of my participants identifying as women, they were diverse in their families socioeconomic background, religions, political views, and views on issues such as gun control. Another limitation was the time constraint of being able to conduct interviews. Once my application to the IRB was complete and I was able to
commence the interviewing process, I only had three months to recruit and interview participants.

Another limitation of my data is that there were no African American individuals interviewed, nor was there anyone who had a physical disability. As the opinions, ideas, and feelings of these groups of people are very relevant and important it is obviously a large limitation that I was unable to interview anyone from either of these groups. This project was also conducted in a town where many people identify as white and liberal. As about half of the participants I interviewed identified as white, and more than half identified as liberal or left leaning, I have to wonder if this had any affect or limitation on my data.

Much of the data I collected was rich and full of valuable insights. The participants answers seemed honest and were varied with some common themes. Many participants also touched on topics and ideas that were not thought of or mentioned in the question guide which allowed for my project to be taken in different directions, and also for me to expand the question guide to include topics that were fruitful in other interviews. Another success is that all of my participants seemed comfortable enough to share personal stories and opinions on the topic at hand, as well as give long and detailed responses to almost every question. One of the biggest successes that I’ve had is that one of the interviewees mentioned that they actively sought out information on active harmer training and how they can be better prepared in the future for those types of situations.

Data Analysis

I was able to use various analytical techniques in order to review my data. Data analysis took place at various times throughout the interview process. I utilized multi-staged coding,
meaning I spent time transcribing and analyzing my data while still interviewing other participants. Although I did transcribe most of the interviews myself I was also able to utilize a transcription service where other people transcribe your interviews for a certain rate per minute. J. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and L. Lofand (2009) indicated that if you are unable to transcribe the interviews yourself you must “review the transcript while listening to the tape so as to correct the errors that are likely to occur when the transcribing is done by a person who is not present for the interview” (Lofland et al. 2009:107) which is something I was sure to do. Fortunately this service proved to be extremely helpful as it allowed me to focus on other things aside from transcription, and it also saved me time. In the cases where I was not the one who transcribed my interview I made sure to review the transcripts done by others to ensure that any errors made were corrected. I, as well as the people I hired, transcribed the interviews word for word and included things like laughter, long pauses, murmurs, etc. During the transcription process we also made sure to eliminate any and all information that may have made the participant identifiable to those reading the study.

Once step one was complete and the interviews were transcribed, I immersed myself into the data in order to try and identify any recurring themes or experiences that my participants shared. I also reviewed my transcriptions multiple times making notes in the margins when something of interest would come up. Through this process I was better able to study and understand different behaviors and feelings, as well as the meanings attached to them. This allowed me to connect these to theories which explain why some of these things take place (Hennink et al. 2011). Once I gathered these findings and continued to compare interviews to one another it was apparent that there were various themes and similar beliefs on many topics
covered in the interviews that proved to have fascinating implications. This included but was not limited to, lack of preparedness among the interviewees, a fear of the potential lack of preparedness within the university and it’s student body, a general fear of walking alone on campus at night, an ‘every man for themselves’ mentality, and strong anti-gun beliefs.

After completing the interview process, I was able to take the data I had gathered and contextualize it within cultural and social contexts in order to make sense of the different themes revealed (mentioned above), and better understand them in regards to human behavior and cultural norms. After finding information on this I began to develop other codes and linked them to the themes that were becoming apparent within the data. An example of this is the ‘Fear Of Assault’ code developed from different experiences my participants had. This was mentioned in a majority of the interviews conducted and seemed to be something that these women thought about on a frequent basis. Later on in this thesis I will explain what this means on a sociological and societal level.

Limitations and Considerations

It is important to note that there were limitations within this project. Some were mentioned previously, like the time limitation faced as well as the lack of certain groups of people. It is also important to consider that the findings in this project are not generalizable to the greater population of Mountain Town University. Along with this, also note that this is the first study I have ever conducted, and the first time I have formally interviewed participants outside of class projects. According to Chambliss et al. (2015), things like the lack of a representative sample, small sample size, limited range of questions, and time constraints are all normal and
expected in exploratory studies. These limitations do however leave room for further research to be conducted where things like sample size and generalizability could be improved upon.

All of the participants within the study were female which could have potentially skewed the data. Along with that a majority of the participants identified as liberal or left leaning on the political spectrum. This could affect their religious beliefs, beliefs on gun control, the types of news they consume, and much more. Along with this there were people of color, however many groups were missing who may have been able to offer different experiences and opinions about any of the topics covered in the interviews. All of my participants were also generally able bodied. One participant who was older mentioned that she may have a hard time running, but if she had to she could to save her life. While this is great for her, it may not be possible for others. I did not have someone with a physical or mental disability participate in my study. This marginalized group of people may potentially have great insight into the topic at hand, and may have been able to bring up new topics and ideas that would never have been brought up if they had not participated. Therefore it is important for future researchers to include these people in their studies as they may have invaluable information and opinions to share.

Although it is important to take into consideration the limitations of the project, it is clear that through the careful steps taken above and the different tactics and methods used to recruit, interview, and analyze participants and the data they shared, the methods used were the best possible for what the study consisted of. The methods and analyzing techniques used are accepted and used by the general sociological community. Any possible shortcoming or oversight in the methods portion of this study were addressed in such a way that showed that
other techniques or practices were put in place in order to try and minimize or eliminate any weakness of this exploratory study.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A Failed Moral Panic

The first theme to become apparent within my data was A Failed Moral Panic. In order to analyze the data to discover common themes, I had to work through a process called transcription. The transcription process is long and tedious however it is doable and fortunately I was able to utilize transcribers. Transcribers are people who are paid to transcribe different documents which one must pay for. Although paying for transcriptions was costly, it was well worth it and allowed me to clearly see repeated themes throughout the data. When analyzing my data, three main codes became apparent. In this chapter I will be focusing specifically on the first code, which I classified as A Failed Moral Panic. A moral panic is something that is meant to generate fear within a society even if the possible threat is really not as prevalent as some may believe. This usually occurs when a group of people has a strong reaction to something taking place in society, which then creates a fear around that subject and possible misconceptions about the actual validity and frequency of a threat (Burns and Crawford 1999). An unsuccessful moral panic simply indicates that the moral campaign did not generate fear as it was meant to.

The media plays a large role in creating reactions to social problems because media coverage of things like school shootings are easily accessible. It is also important to keep in mind that ratings are huge within the media industry, and if a news story is not getting the amount of attention desired, it is very possible that the news outlet may make changes to their story in order to fix that issue (Best 2017). It is clear that this type of manipulation and trying to create a possible ‘clickbait’ article to garner more attention may add to the fuel of a moral panic, and exaggerate the real possibility of the threat taking place. Barry Glassner, author of The Culture of
*Fear* notes that he too feels that at times we as a society are too caught up in media portrayals of ‘big issues’. Burns and Crawford (1999) note that children are more likely to be killed by their parent or guardian than at school, and Glassner also believes that children are more in danger elsewhere, like being killed in a car accident rather than at school. The trend of perpetuating this cycle of fear was even being used by insurance companies that are trying to take advantage of the perceived societal moral panic. One group in particular, the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, used statistics about things like child abduction to strike fear into people in hopes that they will purchase their insurance, saying things like “‘It’s hard to think that these things could happen to you and your family. Yet these unthinkable crimes punctuate television news coverage, and highlight the pages of newspapers, magazines, and websites every day.’” (Glassner 1999:xiii).

Bonanno and Levenson (2014), Ahmed and Walker (2018), and Pittaro (2018) argue that school shootings have been on a rise in the past few years, particularly since the 1999 Columbine high school shooting. Clearly through other avenues (ie. social media and news channels) as consumers we too have seen frequent and at times deadly school harmer instances take place. The deadly shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Stoneman Douglas High School, and Marshall County High School are three of many that come to mind. Burns and Crawford (1999) argue that some of society’s typical reactions to these types of occurrences can be chalked up to the fact that we are experiencing a moral panic in regards to active harmer instances on school campuses. The authors argue that the media and politicians use things like school shootings to create fear among the masses to support their own private agendas. Although they argue that society does fear that these instances will take place, and that when they do the public overreacts
to them creating more panic and fear, the bulk of my data shows just the opposite. Many participants indicated that they were not thinking about potential active harmer occurrences on a frequent basis. In fact, some try to avoid thinking about the subject altogether unless it is brought up by another person or the media.

There were really only two people who mentioned thinking about possible active harmer occurrences frequently. Maria White explained, “usually if I’m thinking about it I’ll try to make a plan of action, you know? Like... I’ll look around the room to see what exits I’d use, um, or I’d see if there’s a good place to hide somewhere that is hopefully somewhat bullet proof”. The rest tended not to think about this possibility often, or even at all. This data indicates that the perception of active harmer related fear on campus is small or nonexistent showing that this is a failed moral panic. Despite the information readily available to my interviewees via the media etc., as well as our discussions before, after, and during our interviews, most interviewees did not show a sense of day to day fear surrounding the subject of active harmer situations. The general consensus when asked something along the lines of “Generally, do you feel safe on campus?” was yes. Many interviewees indicated that their main concern was being assaulted on campus, but none immediately mentioned a fear of an active harmer occurrence taking place. Skylar Harrington, a student on campus explained that “It’s not something I really think about until it's brought up like right now (laughter). I mean you know you like hear about these things in the news but you can’t let it get to you or else you’ll be consumed by it”. This quote perfectly exemplifies the fact that these women are not thinking about this subject on a regular basis. They clearly have other more prominent concerns that consumes more of their time. This concern is touched on later in the Fear of Assault portion of this thesis.
Safety procedures for an active harmer are common things that are taught from early education, usually up until the end of high school in the United States (Bald 2018). Having student employees as well as faculty and staff in my interview pool, I wanted to see if active harmer training was something that was enforced in higher education, and whether or not the possible presence of this altered their feelings and or perceptions of fear on campus. Maria White, mentioned earlier, is a senior and student employee at Mountain Town University stated that:

I was working at my job for like, two years before I was told anything about active harmer training. I wasn’t working when the active harmer thing on campus happened, but right after I asked if we could, um, get training for that type of situation. At our job… we are um, the first people you see walking into our office. We handle, like, super sensitive information… which can make people really emotional and easily upset, so it always kinda freaked me out because some crazy person could just walk in with a gun and I mean, we can like lock the doors so no one can get in our office but that might not even help, you know? Like there’s also locked doors to get into our office itself from our lobby and we as employees can get in, but like what if there’s customers or what if the guy is already in our lobby you know? Then what? So… I asked if we could get active harmer training and eventually we did um, a few months later.

This is an example of as student who took a individualist approach by trying to secure her safety and the safety of others. She went out of her way to push for a safety procedure seminar and then escalated that up to her superiors who had to take it upon themselves to set one up. As mentioned previously this is something that Maria thinks about frequently, but other students did not feel the same way. When asked if their office had safety procedures, another student employee, Beatrice Alexander said “I don’t think we have any, if we do I was never made aware of it in my hiring process… they never like said anything… yeah like radio silence on that note”. When asked how this lack of preparedness made her feel she replied, “I think I don't think about it a lot, it's not something I’ve really reflected on… I think with you bringing it up now it makes me feel
a little… wary about it… but I also think that that's probably not unique, like that's probably not a unique situation”.

Lacey Williams, a counselor on campus explained that she’s never been particularly preoccupied with active harmer situations, even when they’re frequently portrayed in the media.

I went to Columbine High School and that was one of the first… mass school shootings and I never thought about it when I was a student there. I didn't walk in every day like ‘oh my God this is where… thirteen people were murdered and two people committed suicide, the shooters’, but it’s not something (now) that I think about every day like on campus.

Another counselor who works on campus, Olivia Knowles noted “I don't really think about it. Now that you hear so much about it it’s turning into this thing where its like normal, it’s being desensitized”.

This contradicts Burns and Crawford’s (1999) argument regarding levels of concern and attention in a moral panic. These women clearly feel desensitized to these types of events, and they do not think about the potential threat of an active harmer on a regular basis. The attempt at creating a moral panic through media coverage and scare tactics like blowing situations out of proportion has not taken hold at Mountain Town University for these participants. It is important to keep in mind that this data is not generalizable to Mountain Town University or society as a whole. The information gathered by these researchers may have garnered different results, however for this research project, this notion has proven not be true. When taking into account the number of on campus active harmer related deaths and injuries that occured in 2018 which according to the BBC was 113, (Coughlan 2018), versus the number of individuals currently attending school in the United States, it is easy to see that some people may feel that these occurrences are not as common as we think and that the situation is being blown out of
It is also important however to keep in mind that it is easy to look at statistics, but that any person going to school from elementary to graduate school should not have to worry about this type of event taking place on campus.

Possible Explanations for Failure of Active Harmer Moral Panic

There are a multitude of reasons as to why the data shown has proven that generally among my interviewees there was not a sense of a moral panic taking place. The amount of individuals interviewed, their ideas and belief systems, and where they live could all be factors as to why this can be constituted as an unsuccessful moral panic. In fact, I think it is important to note that the town in which this exploratory study was conducted is known for being ‘different’ than other towns close in proximity. It’s called the ‘Mountain Town Bubble’. Big events such as school shootings don’t tend to take place in this area. In fact, a large crime to the point where the entire town is aware of what's going on seldom if ever happens. Lacey Williams indicated that “I’m kind of, like, naive and oblivious that like [horrible] things happen everywhere, but I just kinda don't think that they’re gonna happen which is stupid. But I mean like, its [Mountain Town], stuff like that doesn’t happen here”. Even given the reality of shootings in a nearby metropolis that received national attention, Mountain is viewed and experienced as distanced and protected from such nearby occurrences.

As Lacey described, she feels that Mountain Town is safe and that nothing bad could ever happen there, this can transfer over to on campus places frequented by students, faculty, and staff as well. Beatrice Alexander mentioned that the machete active harmer situation in 2016 was “jarring news.. and it was something that [she] thought about all day but it wasn’t something that, like consumed [her] day...”. She indicated that because she does not frequent the place
where the machete active harmer incident occurred, it did not scare her as much as when the potential gunman event took place later on that day because she goes there very frequently. We as people tend to gain a feeling of trust and familiarity in places we go to on a regular basis, and therefore it can be argued that our perceived sense of safety may cloud the very real possibility of this kind of thing taking place. In Beatrice’s case we see that taken to the extreme, even though there was an active harmer on campus she was not as scared as when a potential active harmer was in an area she wasn't in at the time, but goes to frequently. It is possible that her perceived sense of safety is clouding her thought process to the point that a dangerous person on campus is not as upsetting as the possibility of a potential active harmer being in a place she feels is safe.

Mountain Town is also a place that is known for being white and liberal, this too may affect the data being gathered here. With everyone being very similar, it may be hard to recognize that the person who may be a potential threat looks just like everybody else. Being able to recognize that someone who looks like they could be your brother, father, sister, or cousin is actually a dangerous person is hard and may be a reason as to why we do not see a folk devil created for this moral panic. White perpetrators are usually constructed in the media as people who have issues, or that they are the one bad apple. Meanwhile people of color who commit similar crimes are painted as villainous people within the media. This, paired along with the ‘it will never happen here’ mentality create a little bubble in which everything should be safe and any indication of it not being safe must be wrong. Maria White, a long time resident of Mountain Town explained her take on the safety of this town. “I mean I grew up in [Mountain Town] and I know it's pretty safe. I think it's always smart to be prepared but in general nothing
ever happens here, the last big thing that happened here was in like, um, 1996 I think, like even before I was born”. It could be argued that this study showed a lack of moral panic because it has not yet permeated these people’s consciousness’ that active harmer instances do in fact happen everywhere.

The frequent exposure to things of this nature in the media may also, as Olivia Knowles mentioned, desensitize it’s audience to these horrific acts, so their response is not as strong as it may have been when they initially started learning about active harmer occurrences on campuses. Sierra Carter who is both a student and a student employee noted that the frequency with which she sees things like school shootings in the news makes her feel like its ‘normal’. She said, “I just see it all the time, it's so frequent that it doesn't really phase me anymore, I mean, obviously it’s awful, but it’s not uncommon”. These are just two pieces of evidence that may support the claim that this type of exposure numbs people to the actual severity of the situation.

Fear of Assault

The second code that became apparent during the interview process was Fear Of Assault. This was mentioned in 11 out of the 12 interviews conducted for this project. When asked “In general, do you feel safe on campus?” one of the most common responses was that in general, yes, they do feel a sense of safety on campus. However this was dependent on multiple factors, all but one participant in this group mentioned that they were scared of walking on campus at night, either by themselves or in a group. Participants also mentioned fear when using things like public transport going to and from campus at night. One participant, Maria White, mentioned that her professor “was walking on the sidewalk late at night on campus. A guy was jogging behind her and she got so scared that when he got closer she literally jumped into the bushes to
try and get away”. Another interviewee, Gale Rodgers, mentioned that she is “constantly alert to those types of things… what I will generally do is stop or, step aside for a minute, as if I’m going through my bag or something like this and just let that person get in front of me where I can see them”. It was extremely intriguing to me that, although all of these women at this point in the interview understood that the interview had to do with active harmer situations on campus and not necessarily assault/ sexual assault, they all mentioned it and some even went more into detail of times they have felt unsafe. It could be argued that this constitutes as evidence that women today are more concerned with being assaulted/ sexually assaulted on campus than an active harmer situation because this is a daily threat that most women have to deal with.

Upon finding this data in my research I was intrigued but not surprised. According to Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth (1993) “The most conservative figures show an 88 percent increase in the rate of forcible rape per 100,000 habitants…” and that “there are a minimum of 105,000 rapes annually in the United States”. It is clear through these statistics that rape is an extremely prevalent occurrence in our society, and it makes sense that this may be reflected on college campuses. Melissa McEwan, a blogger, wrote a blog entitled “Rape Culture 101” which Meredith Minister mentions in her work. Within the blog post McEwan lists hundreds of instances of rape culture that take place and perpetuate these ideas even further every day. A few examples are as follows:

Rape culture is the way in which the constant threat of sexual assault affects women's daily movements. Rape culture is telling girls and women to be careful about what you wear, how you wear it, how you carry yourself, where you walk, when you walk there, with whom you walk, whom you trust, what you do, where you do it, with whom you do it, what you drink, how much you drink, whether you make eye contact, if you're alone, if you're with a stranger, if you're in a group, if you're in a group of strangers, if it's dark, if the area is unfamiliar, if you're carrying something, how you carry it, what kind of shoes you're wearing in case you have to run, what kind of purse you carry, what jewelry you wear, what
time it is, what street it is, what environment it is, how many people you sleep with, what kind of people you sleep with, who your friends are, to whom you give your number, who's around when the delivery guy comes, to get an apartment where you can see who's at the door before they can see you, to check before you open the door to the delivery guy, to own a dog or a dog-sound-making machine, to get a roommate, to take self-defense, to always be alert always pay attention always watch your back always be aware of your surroundings and never let your guard down for a moment lest you be sexually assaulted and if you are and didn't follow all the rules it's your fault (McEwan 2009)

These are just a few of the things many women have to account for every day in order to try and ensure their best chance of not being assaulted. Preparing for situations such as these has become so ingrained into most women’s everyday lives that it becomes almost second nature. This is most likely due to the frequency with which sexual assaults take place. In Minister’s novel she reveals that “…the statistics… suggest that one in four female students are raped while attending college” (Minister 2018:xxvi). Clearly this is a very prevalent topic for female students, and even faculty and staff, on campus and in day to day life. This is much more of an epidemic than a panic which may explain why the fear of assault for some is more threatening than a potential active harmer attack. Active harmer events do not take place on a day to day basis, nor did any of my participants know anyone affected by an active harmer event (not including the 2016 active harmer event). Many of them mentioned knowing someone who has been sexually assaulted on or around campus. For these women the potential of being assaulted is much more realistic therefore it is clear that they spend more time worrying about this threat than one they don't believe could happen in their small Mountain Town bubble.

When Sierra Carter was a freshman at Mountain Town University, she was walking home alone after having some drinks with her friends. “I was alone, and mostly sober… all of a sudden I realized that there was a guy behind me. It was dark, and I like, couldn’t really see well but I
could tell he was big. He ended up getting so close that I almost, um, took off my heels so I could be ready to run away, but then he passed me”. Not only is this evidence that rape culture on campus is extremely prevalent and affects women’s day to day lives, but is also supports McEwan’s argument. Ms.Carter had to think about the amount of alcohol she had consumed before leaving, she was very aware that she was walking alone at night, and also had to be conscious of the fact that she might not have been able to get away in heels. Beatrice Alexander, a student at Mountain Town University also mentioned her feelings about campus safety in regards to her fear of assault. “I don't like walking by myself at night [on or around campus]… obviously I don’t wanna get like, sexually assaulted… and other more minor things like being yelled at by like dudes, like if I'm by myself that’s just a reality that’s going to happen… like it makes me feel really uncomfortable”. This also supports McEwan’s claims because Miss Alexander did have to take into account where she was walking, what time she was walking, with whom she was walking, and she also felt that being yelled at by men was something that was inevitable.

As I began to analyze this data, many questions arose with regards to a possible connection to one's perceived preparedness for an active harmer situation, or lack of preparedness. One question in particular that is intriguing is, ‘are women not preparing themselves for active harmer situations because they are already preoccupied with preparing for a more real threat’? Unfortunately due to the limitations of this study I was unable to ask this question at the time of the interviews with my participants. It was not until after the interview process had finished and I reviewed and analyzed my data that this question was formed. Therefore in future studies asking a question such as the one mentioned above may be of some
interest in order to gauge the possibility of women being more concerned with an immediate day to day threat than one they only hear about in the news.

An article written in 1976 by Doctor Lindsay R. Curtis indicated that at the time rape was becoming more prevalent, he believed that the way and frequency with which rape was portrayed in the media made people become more preoccupied with rape on a day to day basis (Curtis 1976:1). According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center “In the U.S., one in three women and one in six men experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime” (National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2018). In regards to sexual assault on campus “20% - 25% of college women and 15% of college men are victims of forced sex during their time in college…” and it is important to keep in mind that “More than 90% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do not report the assault” (National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2018). The statistics may be considered proof that women are very preoccupied with a very plausible threat, maybe so much so that it is unrealistic and or unimportant to prepare for a situation that may never arrive.

A senior at Mountain Town University, Maria White, explained that “usually the only time I think about being unsafe on campus is when I have to walk home alone at night, I try to avoid that at all costs though. If I can I pick classes at the beginning of the semester that don't end too late I will. I usually plan ahead so I won’t have to deal with it”. When asked about what they would do if they feel threatened when walking home, Audge Padilla, another student at the university stated, “I try to call someone, or at least pretend to. I feel like, at least I have someone to talk to in case something happens. They know, like, where I was and what I was doing. There’s so many rape cases on our campus, so just in case like anything like that happened”.

47
When I was interviewing another student, Luna Sailor, I asked if being assaulted or sexually assaulted was something that she thought about on a daily basis. She explained that “it depends, I mean, I know people, a lot of people who’ve been raped… so yes from hanging out with people who I know have been assaulted I do think about it more”. These are just three of many examples that support this notion perfectly. Women are very preoccupied with their day to day safety in terms of sexual assault to the point that they may not find it necessary or relevant to think and prepare for other potential threats.

Rape culture is extremely prevalent in today’s society and contextualizing the data I found about rape and sexual assault within today’s rape culture was very interesting. In Minister’s novel she explains that the prevalence of rape on campus is increasing (Minister 2018). She also goes into detail saying that universities allow for an environment where things like rape culture are prevalent. One of the most interesting portions of her reading was that women have to take into account things that men perhaps would never think twice about. Everything from answering the door, to walking home, to what outfit a woman decides to put on, and more is affected by the culture of one's campus. It also shapes how women must act and are treated by those around them (Minister 2018).

Many of my participants indicated feeling a sense of danger and or fear when doing things like walking home from school, walking home from a party, going to football games, or being alone on campus especially at night. These are all things that women are forced to deal with on a daily basis. They take into account what to wear, who to spend time with, when the latest class they can take is while still being safe walking home, who they answer the door for, and countless other things on a daily basis. With all of this at the forefront of their mind it is no
wonder that women have less time and motivation to focus on other potential and maybe less likely threats because they are already dealing with enough as it is.

It is important to note that the typical response when a woman has a concern for her safety in regards to being sexually assaulted is that she is responsible for her own safety. This is a very neoliberalist response. Women must watch what they wear, what they drink, who they drink with, many women carry around pepper spray or brass knuckles just in case, because they are shown that they are responsible for their own safety. This response is similar to the response from Mountain Town University in regards to active harmer events on campus. Students, faculty, and staff are expected to seek out safety procedures, teach the protocols to themselves, and put them into action if need be. Once again the individual becomes responsible for their own safety.

**Neoliberalist Responses to Perceived Threat**

One of the most apparent themes within this research project was the neoliberalist response to perceived threat. Neoliberalism has multiple meanings depending on the topic at hand. In this research project Neoliberalism means “eliminating the concept of ‘the public good’ or ‘community’ and replacing it with ‘individual responsibility.’” Pressuring the poorest people in a society to find solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security all by themselves -- then blaming them, if they fail, as ‘lazy” (Martinez and Garcia 1997:1). This can be taken into account when looking at the way Mountain Town University approaches preparing their students, faculty, and staff for an active harmer event. Instead of ensuring that everyone has access to the training offered by the university, they shift the responsibility to the individual who, in order to get the training, would need to go out of their way to receive it. On top of that, there have been complaints of the training being difficult to access and at times it even being
unavailable (Knowles 2018). Also, when taking this into consideration in terms of concealed carry on campus, it is safe to assume that this too is a neoliberalist response to potential threat.

In a study conducted by Patten, Thomas, and Viotti (2013) they found that “over 80 percent of the entire sample...did not think qualified individuals should be allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus” (Patten, Thomas, and Viotti 2013:9). When I asked my participants about their views on concealed carry on campus, Rachel Soka, a student attending Mountain Town University, said “the fact that [concealed carry] is a possibility scares me, because I don't like people having guns, because it's like ‘Oh, a good guy with a gun can beat a bad guy with a gun,’ but like that's not necessarily true, what if just neither of them had guns? That'd be good”. Lacey Williams, a counselor on campus also mentioned that “a student sitting down in my office… [with] a gun... freaks me out. Who fucking knows if they're gonna whip that gun out? So I have mixed feelings, but I sure as shit don't want someone coming into my office with a gun in their pocket”. Both of these women's feelings towards the concealed carry policy on campus support Patten et al.’s claim that the concealed carry weapons would not make them feel safer on campus.

Something else interesting that was mentioned in the Patten et al. article was another finding in which they stated, “that women are the most likely targets on sexual assault on college campuses, and that they have higher fears of being victimized in all types of crime” (Patten et al. 2013:9). The portion that mentioned sexual assault on campus was particularly interesting. In my research I was looking at the concealed carry policy in regards to feelings of safety on campus in an active harmer situation, but the negative feelings some of my participants have shown may also be due to the fact that they are worried a concealed carry weapon could be used against them
in an assault. Mrs. Williams did not mention this type of situation in particular, but she did state that she has “thought about getting [a gun] for protection”. While this was not mentioned by any of my participants it is an interesting proposition. I also go further into detail about the fear of assault on campus in data chapter three.

In the article College Student Perceptions of Campus Safety Initiatives written by Schafer, et al. (2016) which looks at Illinois college students perceptions of campus safety initiatives, they explain that “in the context of concealed carry policies, legislative bodies (which often have the initial authority to either allow or disallow campuses from permitting concealed carry at a specific institution) would do well to recognize allowing firearms on campus, while often a subject of political and advocacy rhetoric, appears to have limited student support” (Schafer et al. 2018:335). This is further supported in my study by students, faculty, and staff.

Before mentioning her fear that guns are easily accessible and could very possibly fall into the wrong hands, Beatrice Alexander stated, “guns are an extremely destructive weapon… I truly don’t think that there is any need for like, anyone to have a gun... I’m not gonna blame everybody for like, a mistake that they make but with a gun, a mistake is something like you can’t repair, and something that you can’t like fix and take back”. Mrs. Rodgers mentioned that concealed carry weapons make her feel very uncomfortable, not only from a potential active harmer standpoint but also “because the likelihood of accident or suicide [she] think[s] is probably greater than having an event where you would use [a concealed carry weapon]”.

At Mountain Town University, there are active harmer training courses available to students, faculty, and staff, however they are not required for any of these groups. Depending on the department, one may also have to request an active harmer training session for their office
which can be a difficult and timely process (Knowles 2018). Once requested, the on campus police department will train a group of people on Mountain Town Universities preferred active harmer response which is the Run, Hide, Fight method, which, again according to Bald (2018) may be dangerous in the event of an actual active harmer attack. I feel that this is a neoliberalist response to potential threat by the university. They offer the training, regardless of how difficult it is to receive, which then shifts the responsibility onto the students, faculty, and staff. Simply by having the training available, they may be able to shift blame onto these individuals if anything were to ever happen on campus.

My participants were also able to share their feelings about the active harmer training policy. Gale Rodgers, an instructor on campus stated “I don’t think it should be optional, I think that everybody should have it… so I have taken the online course… I felt better prepared but I don’t know that I would say it’s sufficient”. When asked about Mountain Town’s active harmer training a student and student employee on campus Maria White explained that “I think it should be mandatory, for me as a student, the people in the department I work for, everybody should be prepared. In high school my teachers had, um, a yearly three day long training session with the local police… I think that worked well too, we always passed every drill”. When Mrs. Rodgers was asked if she and her colleagues might be willing to come in for a similar training she replied “Absolutely… I think that would be very important’ (Rodgers 2018:2). Canela Bermudez and Isabella Mar both mentioned that their offices would request active harmer training, and then make it mandatory for all employees to attend (this did not include student employees). Canela then went on to say that after the office had its first training, “then you had your active harmer training number two, and then the next one… I never got to this point…[was] where like you
actually act it out and go through scenarios, I wish we would have went through that”. Miss Mar also mentioned that their office never even made it to part two.

These examples support my claim that the university is taking a very neoliberalist approach in regards to active harmer training. Not only do offices on campus have to go out of their way to request a training, which is not offered at all times and can take months to set up (Knowles 2018), but they are then responsible for making it mandatory, as well as requesting additional times and places for part two of the training and so on. The way this is handled may leave the university partially liable or totally free of blame when it comes to protecting students, faculty, and staff in this sort of situation. There was only one student who supported this neoliberalist response to potential threats. Skylar Harrington mentioned that she does not feel that anyone should be responsible for another person's safety. “Like, if I’m in class or at [a popular hang out spot on campus frequented by many students] I don’t feel like anyone should go out of their way to protect me… I don’t expect my teachers to be human shields for me”.

Many students, faculty, and staff felt differently. Both Isabella Mar and Canela Bermudez felt that they were not only responsible for students that come in for help, but also for the student employees in their offices. “It’s a caring instinct for me…” Bermudez explained, “these [student employees] are my responsibility, I see these [student employees] as my kids… the minute one of [them] walks… into this office I feel responsible for them and I want them to be safe”. Isabella Mar felt that during the 2016 active harmer incident on campus her entire office was instinctively trying to make sure that the students and student employees were taken care of. “No one was very much like ‘I’m gonna leave I’m taking care of myself, bye’. It was very much are [the student employees] all accounted for, are [they] okay… and then we went from there”. Mrs.
Rodgers explained that instructors/professors need to take on a leadership role in these types of situations. “I think that people will look to us for, for guidance and I think that we should be prepared to do something”. This sentiment seemed to ring true for many of my participants. All but one felt that there should be some sort of safety measures taken by those in power in an active harmer situation, i.e. counselors, professors, etc.

I feel that it is also important to include a section here about people who may not be able to fend for themselves, or perform the Mountain Town University’s approved policy of ‘Run, Hide Fight’. Unfortunately due to the constraints of this research project I was unable to interview anyone who had a permanent or temporary mental and or physical disability. In future studies, I believe it would be extremely important to try and target these populations for interviews because they are seldom thought about. Someone who is disabled, let's say in a wheelchair perhaps may not be able to run, hide, or fight. Mrs. Rodgers who is 63 stated “I’m an older person and running is not so easy for me, if my life was at stake I suppose I could but yeah just the run part, no”. This is something that needs to be considered in all aspects of an active harmer situation and preparing for it. Mountain Town University’s current protocol of ‘Run, Hide, Fight’ is very ableist and may not be a viable option for some of the students, faculty, and staff on campus.

The neoliberalist response by the university clearly shows that students, faculty, and staff are meant to fend for themselves and to be responsible for their own safety. The concealed carry policy on campus indicates that students are meant to take their protection into their own hands, again leaving them responsible for their safety. Additionally in order to learn about active harmer policies and procedures within the university one must first look the information up themselves,
and read through the one existing webpage. There are also videos which show clips of the ‘Run, Hide, Fight’ method. In these clips it is mentioned that if you are trying to escape and your colleague, friend, etc. refuses to leave with you that you should leave them behind and fend for yourself. This is yet another example of a neoliberalist response to threat. Someone who may not have the ability to run, hide, or fight cannot follow any of these procedures and there no other plan of action available for these individuals.
CONCLUSION

The original goal of this research project was to test the level of preparedness for an active harmer situation for students, faculty, and staff on campus. As I began the interview process, it was clear that this was going to change. This thesis became more so about women's perceptions of fear and safety on campus, as well as how the campus responds to potential active harmer threats, and whether or not active harmer situations should be considered a moral panic or a danger to be dealt with at a structural level. It is clear that Mountain Town University has chosen to take a neoliberalist response to the potential threat of an active harmer situation by making it the individual's responsibility to seek out active harmer training themselves. Additionally, if they want to protect themselves and or others they are expected to apply for a concealed carry license. The same is true of “rape prevention” as well. This allows the university to place the blame on the potential victims of one of these heinous crimes instead of taking responsibility for properly training and preparing their students, faculty, and staff for such an event. Additionally, they do not have to worry about the time and money that would need to be spent in order to provide everyone on campus with proper training which one day could save their lives as well as the lives of others.

Furthermore this study has shown that according to the participants interviewed, society has been unsuccessful in creating a moral panic on this campus specifically about active harmer occurrences. Many participants tended to distance themselves from the potential threat by stating that Mountain Town University is a safe place, things like that don’t happen here, etc. Despite their exposure to news and social media they still do not feel a sense of fear that is usually generated by a moral panic. In fact, many mention that they hear about these things occurring,
think about it for a while if at all, and then go about their day. I believe that their response can arguably be affected by the fact that all of my participants were women. As women they have many more things to worry about on a day to day basis than an active harmer occurrence that they don’t feel has the potential of taking place.

The most surprising thing to come out of this study was the overarching theme of fear of assault on campus. Despite their knowledge of the overall interview topic almost every single person mentioned having a fear of being physically and or sexually assaulted on campus. Although this is something I as a woman hear and think about on a regular basis, it had never been so real as when I was looking over my data and seeing these trends. The prevalence of sexual assault on campus only continues to rise (Minister 2013), and it is clear through this study that my participants are well aware of the potential danger they are in on a day to day basis. It only makes sense that being so preoccupied with everything else going on, they do not have time to worry about the ‘what ifs’ of a potential active harmer occurrence when they feel much more at risk simply walking home from school day to day, or opening the door for a pizza delivery man.

Future researchers should include people with mental and physical disabilities within their sample. They should also include men and women of all backgrounds who fit other study criteria. When I attempted to recruit men into this study, one of the most common responses was along the lines of, ‘There is nothing I could contribute to this topic’. This begs the question, why? Is it because this subject deals with fear and fear may come off as more of a ‘women's issue’? Are these men worried that speaking about the fears they have surrounding this topic will somehow lessen their masculinity? Getting the male perspective on things like concealed carry
and rape culture on campus would also be interesting to study. What is it like being painted as the possible perpetrator in relation to rapes on campus? If a male were to conceal carry a weapon what are the reasons behind it? The protection of others or perhaps the protection of themselves because they do not want to be a victim? These subjects would all be fascinating to read about in future studies.

The university may also want to take a look at other potential responses and policies around the topic of active harmers. There were many great suggestions made by other authors on how schools can better themselves and take preemptive measures to try and ensure that an active harmer event will not take place on campus. Something as simple as passing on information from Evie Bald’s article during a freshman seminar class may be beneficial. Telling students things like it is important to try and run in a zig-zag pattern when fleeing from an active harmer, or that they can use items found in classrooms to throw at the active harmer in an attempt to distract them. Trying to stop the problem from the root is important as well, and may be the most beneficial. Mountain Town University allows students to attend six therapy sessions per semester in various places on campus. Making this known to students could have a huge impact on a lot of people who need help. Additionally, having a greater sense of community may also aid in creating a good school climate. Holding small classes like freshman seminars may allow students to become close to other students, faculty, or staff. Having a sense of community and people to talk to can help if they are having potentially harmful thoughts is a great way to try and prevent an issue from arising later on. This also may help some students to feel more comfortable going to a person of authority if they hear that their classmate is having these thoughts (O’toole 1999, Madfis 2013).
This research project was extremely fruitful in its findings and ended up in an entirely unexpected place. Through hard work and dedication I have thoroughly discussed and analyzed the previous literature related to my topic, the various findings within my data, and their implications. My participants provided comprehensive and valuable information that may hopefully help the university to see that there are issues on this campus that many want addressed in regards to not only active harmer training and their stance on the preparation for that, but the prevelancy and fear of assault and sexaul assault on campus as well. I conclude that currently Mountain Town University is not prepared for an active harmer attack to take place. Many students, staff, and faculty would have no idea what to do in this instance, which could be potentially life threatening. I feel that it is important that the university takes a look at how they are offering training to their charges, what measures are in place in the event of an active harmer attack, and what can be done to improve their preparedness in case this type of event were to occur.
References

Ahmed, Saeed, and Christina Walker. 2018. “There has been, on average, 1 school shooting every week this year,” CNN, May 25, pp. 1.


Kosmider, Nick. 2016. “Police fatally shoot man with machete at CU Boulder after he ‘was not following commands’,” Denver Post, October 5, pp. 1.


Siemens, Jordyn. 2016. “False report of active shooter at UMC now believed to be hoax, CU alert says; separate man detained near campus,” CUIDEPENDENT, October 5, pp. 1.


