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Teachers and School Administrators Who Carry Concealed Handguns at School

by

Patrick Scudder

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Fifteen states in America have laws that allow schools to arm their workforce and legislation to allow teachers to carry a concealed weapon is pending in at least nine other states (Owen, 2018). Still, no studies were found in the literature that listed the challenges and experiences of educators who carry concealed handguns into school buildings. Therefore, it is desirable to conduct research that examines the perspectives of these teachers and school administrators in order to provide information that may be of interest to educational leaders and the wider community.

This qualitative study conducted interviews with six classroom teachers and three school administrators from two schools in a rural district in Colorado. The study results revealed that most of the study participants were concerned about school security before their workforce was armed. They were worried about not having any armed guards at their schools, and the amount of time it would take for the police to reach their campuses in the event of a mass shooting at school. The participants felt that an armed workforce could respond in a timelier manner in the event of a shooting incident at their schools. The participants also indicated that their main challenge carrying a concealed handgun at school was selecting the right clothing to ensure that their weapon remains hidden.

All nine participants had to complete 26 hours of initial firearms training, target practice and three days of classroom evaluations before they were authorized to carry a concealed handgun. They must also attend re-current training each year to be certified to continue carrying a concealed handgun. More than half of the participants had prior experience with guns as three teachers were former members of the military and five others either had experience with firearms or had permits to carry a concealed handgun.

Acknowledgments

I am aware of how fortunate I am to reach the pinnacle of my educational ambition, regardless of how hard I worked. In life, one must be lucky *to be able to study*.

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I would also like to thank all of my colleagues, and all of my family and friends for their everlasting support, encouragement, and belief in me.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the woman who introduced me to books. My mother, Yvonne.

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Chapter I: Introduction

There has been an increase in the frequency of mass shootings in schools in the country within the last 50 years (Paradice, 2017). This information came from an analysis of American school shooting data covering a 175-year period. The study reported that there had been 343 shooting events in the country between 1840 to 2015 in American schools. The shooting events were described as incidents where a firearm was discharged regardless of whether death or injury was reported. The study reported that most of the shootings have occurred on high school campuses, “even though relatively speaking, there have been few mass murder events in American campuses”, according to Paradice (2017, p. 135).

In addition to the uptick in the frequency of mass shootings at schools, Warnick, Johnson and Rocha (2010) have reported that school leaders and law enforcement are concerned about the increase in targeted shootings on school campuses. Warnick, Kim and Robinson (2015) stated that these shootings are committed by a current or former student who deliberately selected the school as the location to carry out his or her attack. Warnick et al. (2010) reported that there were four cases of targeted shootings in the ‘70s; five in the ‘80s and 28 in th’90s. In the previous decade, there had been at least 25 reported cases of targeted shootings in schools in America (Warnick et al., 2010).

One of the most publicized targeted school shootings in the country happened on December 14, 2012, when a 20-year-old man armed with a semi-automatic rifle and a handgun walked into the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut and opened fire, killing 20 children and seven teachers (Wombacher et al., 2018). Zavaletta (2017) pointed out that though a senior student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia killed more people in two separate attacks 5 years earlier, never before had a school

shooting suspect taken the lives of so many children who were only 6 and 7 years old. The shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary is “arguably the most senseless and brutal attack on a school in U.S. history” and that the shooting “confused both media and authorities” because the suspect never explained his motive for killing his mother and then driving to the Sandy Hook Elementary school to engage in a shooting spree against so many children (Zavaletta, 2017, para. 29).

Reflecting on the number of children that died at Sandy Hook Elementary, Duplechain and Morris (2014) lamented the following:

These figures are staggering even though violent deaths at our school account for less than one percent of homicides and suicides among children ages five to 18 in the United States. These types of tragedies touch the hearts of every American and it’s time to better understand the particulars of the most horrible forms of school violence, school shootings. (p. 145)

Another targeted school shooting occurred on February 14, 2018, when a former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida shot and killed 14 students and three teachers. The school killings at Parkland once again “intensified the nation’s ongoing debate over campus safety and gun control” (Kennedy, 2018, p. 22). Like the aftermath of the Sandy Hook mass shooting, one specific recommendation to protect schools dominated the public discourse: whether to give teachers guns to defend themselves and their students against armed intruders (Rajan & Branas, 2018).

Many school districts in Utah and Texas had taken steps to arm their teachers after the killings at Sandy Hook Elementary school in 2012 (Owen, 2019). After the school shooting at Parkland, the governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, signed a bill into law that made Florida the 15th state to allow staff members in schools to carry concealed handguns (Mettler, 2019). For the first

time in its history, the Department of Education announced that it would cover the cost of firearm purchases made by states in 2018. Helfling and Stratford (2018) reported that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced that her department would not block efforts by school districts in any state that wishes to use federal grants to purchase guns for their teachers. The Education Secretary said that schools have a lot of flexibility over how they use the Student Support and Economic Grants program valued at over \$1 billion (Helfling & Stratford, 2018).

School leaders in education have criticized the decision by a growing number of states to pass laws to allow teachers to carry guns, calling it bad public policy (DeMitchell and Rath, 2019). Many leaders in education contend that we do not have enough data to arm teachers. Minshew (2018) said there were not any “empirical studies published on whether or not arming teachers is an effective approach to school safety” (p. 132).

Statement of the Problem

Fifteen states in America have laws that allow schools to arm their workforce and legislation to allow teachers to carry a concealed weapon is pending in at least nine other states by the beginning of 2020 (Owen, 2018). Still, no studies were found in the literature that listed the challenges and experiences of educators who carry concealed handguns into school buildings. Therefore, it is desirable to conduct research that examines the perspectives of these teachers in order to provide information that may be of interest to educational leaders and the wider community.

This qualitative study consisted of interviews with six classroom teachers and three school administrators from rural Colorado who carry a concealed handgun at school. The study employed the use of the qualitative research method. Roberts (2010) made a useful definition of the qualitative research method. The author observed that the “qualitative approach is based on

the philosophical orientation called *phenomenology* which focuses on people's experience from their perspective" (p. 143). The qualitative study included face-to-face interviews and written responses from the participants about their perspectives on the challenges and positive aspects of carrying a concealed handgun at school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the perspectives and experiences of six classroom teachers and three school administrators in rural Colorado who are authorized to carry a concealed handgun into school buildings. There are anecdotal incidents about experiences of armed teachers in media interviews, but such reports were not found in the literature. The documentation of the experiences and perspectives of armed teachers and school administrators should add to the body of research on this topic especially for school districts that are still considering whether to arm their workforce.

Assumptions of the Study

According to Simon (2011), the author does not have control over assumptions in a body of research but that the inclusions of assumptions make the study relevant. For example, throughout this study, this researcher made assumptions about the teachers and school administrators who carry concealed handguns into school buildings. The assumptions for the study included:

1. That the participants in this study responded to the questions in a frank and truthful manner,
2. and that the participants in this study represented the total populations of the armed teachers and school administrators employed at the two schools in the district.

Delimitations

This is a term that defines the limits of the topic being examined. Roberts (2010) said, “it is the way to indicate to the reader how you narrowed your study’s scope” and that it is the researcher that controls the delimitations that is “what will be included and what will be left out” (p. 138). The following delimitations will apply to this study:

1. Those interviewed in this study consisted of employees who are all in their first year of carrying a concealed handgun at school.
2. Only two schools in a rural school district in Colorado were included in this study.

Research Questions

1. What perceptions related to school security do select classroom teachers and school administrators report before the district gave approval to arm its workforce?
2. What levels of training and support do select teachers and school administrators report to prepare them to carry a concealed handgun into school buildings?
3. What did select classroom teachers and school administrators identify as challenges and positive experiences while carrying a concealed handgun at school?

Definition of Terms

Assault rifle. The AR-15 is normally referred to as an assault rifle. The weapon does not fire automatically, but it is semiautomatic firing one shot after each pull of the trigger.

Although handguns have been used in most school shootings, this kind of semi-automatic weapon has been used in a few cases (Woytus, 2018).

Bump stock. This is a replacement gunstock that enables a semiautomatic rifle to discharge bullets at a much higher rate of fire, nearly that of a fully automatic machine gun (dictionary.com, n.d.).

Concealed handgun. That is a handgun that is concealed and carried by an adult who has passed a criminal and mental health background check, completes the required training and pays a modest fee for the license as required by state law (Cramer, 2014).

FASTER Colorado. This is Faculty/Administrator, Safety Training and Emergency Response. It is a non-profit group established to provide initial training of handguns for teachers and school workers in American schools (Whaley, 2017).

K-12 schools. This is a term used to describe schools for students in kindergarten to 12th grade (Collinsdictionary.com, n.d.).

Mass shooting. The literature defines this type of shooting as an incident in which four or more persons, not including the shooter, are injured or killed (Paradice, 2017, p. 135).

National Rifle Association (N.R.A.). An influential gun lobby group in America that opposes most legislation that restricts access to guns (Medlock, 2005).

School Resource Officer (S.R.O.). These are uniformed, armed police officers assigned to work directly in schools. Their duties “generally include law enforcement, patrolling and investigating criminal complaints” (Counts et al., 2018, p. 407).

Straw purchases. The student gunmen who carried out their mass shooting at Columbine High school bought their guns through a straw purchase. McQuiller (2019) noted that “while these sales are sometimes harmless transfers between friends and family members, their prevalence leaves plenty of room for questionable and dangerous firearm sales to occur.” This is because “Federal law does not require private sellers to check the identification of buyers, allowing a gaping hole for minors or those with felony records to purchase a firearm” (McQuiller, 2019, p. 15).

Targeted shooting. These shootings are committed by a current or former student who deliberately selected the school as the location to carry out his or her attack (Warnick et al., 2015).

Organization of the Study

This qualitative study will have five chapters. The first chapter outlines the reasons that led policymakers and educational leaders to take steps to arm classroom teachers. This chapter also highlights the purpose and significance of the study and notes the scarcity in the research regarding the experiences of teachers and school administrators who carry concealed handguns on school campuses.

Chapter II provides a literature review of gun violence in American schools and the political history that influenced the debate over whether teachers should be armed or not (Siegal, 2008). The chapter also examines the growth of school resource officers (S.R.O.s) in schools and some of its limitations in school security. There is an examination of various non-lethal suggestions to deter mass shootings on school campuses and there is a brief look at gun violence in schools in foreign countries.

Chapter III is dedicated to methodology. This will include a description of the participants in the study, instruments for data collection and the treatment of the information; research design and human subject approval, and a recap of the chapter.

Chapter IV reports the findings of the research and will have a discussion and analysis of the data.

Chapter V looks at the conclusions of the study and provides suggestions for future research and practice.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

While the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers who are authorized to carry concealed handguns into school buildings, this review of literature begins with material relevant to this issue. The review looked at the history of gun violence on American campuses, especially within the last 25 years. This chapter also chronicled the political fight between Liberal and Conservative politicians and their supporters in Washington D.C. and other parts of the country. It was important to review decades-old political battles over guns because it influenced how policymakers and school leaders have responded to the debate over the decision to arm teachers (Siegal, 2008).

There are two major themes that emerge from this review. The first one is the political divide over guns: those who use political and legal tools to provide easier access to guns in the country and those who use the same machinations to thwart those efforts. Those fights between political rivals in Washington mirror the same debates that take place on campuses over whether teachers should be armed at school. The second theme in this review is the search for non-lethal solutions to deter mass shooting incidents in schools.

Gun Violence in American Schools

Occurrences of gun violence in American schools have become a tragic reality (McQuiller, 2019). According to data that tracks incidents of school shooting events or guns being discharged on American school campuses, there have been 357 such incidents since 2013. The cases of guns being discharged on school grounds stood at 53 in 2016. That went up to 65 reported cases in 2017 and there were 69 cases of gunfire on the nation's school grounds in 2018 (McQuiller, 2019, p. 1). School shootings in America can be described as a shooting event in which a "firearm is discharged; regardless of whether an injury occurs" (Paradice, 2017, p. 135).

Paradice (2017) stated that when four or more people were killed, not counting the shooter, one researcher defined this as a mass shooting event.

In a separate study, Musu, Zhang, A., Wang, Zhang, and Oudekerk (2019) stated that the country had 37 active shooter incidents in elementary and secondary schools between 2000 to 2017 while there were 15 similar incidents in post-secondary buildings during the same period (p. 22). Musu et al. (2019) found that one gun was used in most instances and that two-thirds of the guns used were handguns. Katsiyannis, Whitford and Ennis (2018) stated that “gun-related violence in the United States has been characterized as an epidemic and a public health crisis with a substantial financial burden estimated to be around \$174 billion in 2010” (p. 2562).

Welsh (2016) reported that more school shootings occurred between 2013 and 2015 when 154 school shootings were reported. School shootings reported in 2013 were 35 while the number went up to 55 in 2014. There were 64 school shootings in 2015, Welsh (2016) reported. The study was based on media coverage of a firearm discharged inside a school building or on school grounds in the absence of an official police report (Welsh, 2016). The report also examined local factors when looking at these numbers. Those factors include spending on public school education (K-12), mental health expenditure; the level of gun ownership, and gun control laws such as mandatory background checks for gun sales (Welsh, 2016, para. 2). Welsh (2016) reported that the authors of the study discovered that many factors were connected with “a lower risk of school shootings” (para. 2). According to the analysis, states with required background checks for gun purchases, increased expenditures on mental health and K-12 education reported lower cases of school shootings (Welsh, 2016).

Welsh (2016) noted that between 2013 and 2015, 39 states had one school shooting and that 11 states did not report a single shooting. They are Alaska, Connecticut, Hawaii, New

Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. According to Welsh (2016) most of the states in which experienced shootings had fewer than 10 incidents between 2013 and 2015 but that there were five states that had more. The state of Georgia had the most number of school shootings with 15 followed by Texas and Florida with 14 each. North Carolina had 12 and Tennessee had 10 reported cases of school shootings (Welsh, 2016, para. 6).

Welsh (2016) reported that “more than half of the shootings (nearly 55%) occurred in K-12 schools while 45 percent happened at colleges” and that “nearly all of the shootings were carried out by males” in urban areas (para. 7). Eighty-four people—including the shooters—died during the period covered and about 136 people were injured (Welsh, 2016, para. 8). In Minnesota, the worst mass shooting at a school in the state was at Red Lake High School in March 2005 (Enger, 2015). The killings began at the Red Lake Indian Reservation when a 16-year-old male suspect shot his grandfather and his companion then drove to his school and began shooting, killing five students. Two years before the Red Lake incident, two people were shot and killed at Rocori High School in Cold Spring (Enger, 2015).

Why are schools targeted for mass shootings? Nedze (2014) examined a number of school shootings between 1760 and 1989 to provide an explanation to this commonly asked question. Nedzel (2014) noted that the motives for many of these school shootings before the 1980s were driven by “unrequited love or revenge against a teacher or were the act of a child with poor judgment which resulted in the deaths of one or two people—usually adults, but sometimes children” (p. 429). But it was noted that something different has happened since the 1990s. The author observed that a “different kind of crime has arisen, one exemplified by the Columbine shooting: a mentally unbalanced shooter or shooters” (Nedzel, 2014, p. 429). These

shooters are usually “teenage students of the school but sometimes adults” who come into the school and “shoot a large number of students or faculty often randomly and then shoot themselves” (Nedzel, 2014, p. 430).

The word, ‘Columbine’ has become synonymous with school shootings in America (McMurdo, 2019). On April 20, 1999, two students armed with multiple firearms went on a shooting spree in their school library killing 12 of their schoolmates and a teacher then committed suicide before law enforcement could reach them. McMurdo (2019) observed that the “Columbine massacre occupies a unique space in American history, and indeed in the history of school shootings worldwide, as the center of both a live media spectacle and an ensuing moral panic” (p. 58). Also, there have been studies that suggested that the Columbine shooting may have influenced the shooters in subsequent school shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Sandy Hook in 2012 (McMurdo, 2019, p. 59).

Gumbel (2009) noted that many years after Columbine it was discovered that a lot of the information about the shooting reported by the media was inaccurate and that this was confirmed after the release of thousands of pages of official documents that were previously withheld by local authorities. For example, Gumbel (2009) said most of the reports of the shooting were based on panic and lack of knowledge in the hours after the killings. The author stated that based on a book by a Colorado-based journalist, the two suspects in the shooting “had plenty of friends, did pretty well in school, were not members of a trench coat mafia; did not listen to (Marilyn) Manson, were not bullied, harbored no specific grudges against anyone group and did not snap because of some last straw traumatic event” (Gumbel, 2009, para. 10). L. K. (1999) wrote that many Americans remained confused about the killings because the motives for the shootings

remained unanswered which led critics, politicians, and parents to blame a host of other things: such as the lack of gun control measures, the internet, and violent video games.

One study suggested that there was a connection between masculinity and gun-violence in schools when 17 shooting events between 1997 and 2006 were examined (Watson, 2007). The one common feature in all the shootings mentioned was that the crimes were committed by one or more young males but that the public had not taken notice of this. Watson (2007) wondered if the public would have reacted differently if the shootings were carried out by girls, adding: “Make no mistake about it; the public would immediately connect gender with the crimes” (p. 730). Watson (2007) also asked: “Why are we are not surprised that these crimes have been perpetrated by white males rather than Black males?” (p. 65). Watson’s 2007 study (as cited in Giroux, 1996, p. 66) suggested that the racial component of school shooters must be examined more closely. Said Watson: “representations of violence are largely portrayed through the forms of racial coding that suggest violence is a black problem, a problem outside White suburban America...”

It appears that bullying at school can be linked to reasons behind school shootings, however; scholars in education are divided over the pervasiveness of the problem (Reuter-Rice, 2008). The writer said that “limited research on school shooters found that a significant number of them were adolescents who were targets of bullies and claimed that their shootings were in response to their victimization” (Reuter-Rice, 2008, p. 350). The author said at the moment “there is no profile of a school shooter, although research has suggested that various dynamics contribute to an environment that can predispose a community to a school shooting” (p. 351) Reuter-Rice (2008) said the “lack of research in these areas fosters continued misunderstanding and potential for more school violence” and suggested that “school health administrators and

school nurses who work with adolescents are in an exceptional position” to help identify students who might be prone to commit violence (pp. 357-358).

Case studies conducted of 15 school shootings between 1995 and 2001 have revealed that social rejection played a role in all but two of the cases that were examined (Leary et al., 2003). The case studies suggested that there was a trend that involved bullying, teasing and being ridiculed in 12 of the incidents examined and that six of the shooting suspects had gone through a romantic rejection (Leary et al., 2003). Leary et al. (2003) noted that “several of the perpetrators explicitly explained their actions as a response to being mistreated by other students” (p. 210).

Teasley (2018) said a report from the Center for Disease Control or C.D.C. revealed that about 20% of all students require some form of mental health service for many reasons, but that many of them do not get these services. Teasley (2018) stated that “approximately half of all lifetime mental health disorders start by the mid-teens and on the onset of all major illnesses happen as early as 7 to 11 years of age” (p. 35). Teasley (2018) said the need for greater mental health services for students is being discussed while public schools are faced with budgetary constraints. It was noted that the “recommended ratio of school social workers to students by the National Association of Social Workers is 1:25 general education students or 1:50 at-risk or intensive needs students, but some states have ratios of one school social worker for every 1,000 students” (p. 36).

A survey among mental health professionals in high schools in Colorado lamented the fact that even years after Columbine, many schools in the state had not employed preventative measures such as access to the most effective kinds of mental health intervention techniques but instead implemented mostly security measures (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2005) Crepeau et al.

(2005) said the “vast majority of schools made additional changes in security, discipline and personnel with 62.7% of schools implementing tighter security measures” since the tragedy at Columbine in 1999 (p. 159). These methods such as the use of metal detectors and locking doors are consistent with what is known as reactive practices which do not solve the problem of school violence Crepeau et al. (2005) observed. The survey sent to health professionals from 335 public high schools in Colorado revealed that while most schools now “offer individual and group counseling and that three-quarters have procedures for identifying and intervening with risk-students” only a very tiny minority (actually less than 1%) of schools hired additional mental health experts outside the schools to help them (Crepeau et al., 2005, p. 162). Crepeau-Hobson et al. (2005) said: “only about 40% of the schools in the sample currently provided students with social skills training and a small minority (fewer than 15%) offered family therapy” (p. 162).

Metzl and MacLeish (2015) have warned school leaders and political leaders not to focus on any perceived link between mental illness and gun violence. The authors reported that their “review suggests that connections between mental illness and gun violence are less casual and more complex than current US public opinion and legislative action allows” (p. 246). Metzl and MacLeish (2015) observed that American gun rights activists like to point out that people are responsible for killing others and not to gun itself, but they noted that “neither guns nor people exist in isolation from social or historical influences” and that a growing body of data reveals that US gun crime happens when guns and people come together in particular, destructive ways” (p. 246). Metzl and MacLeish (2015) emphasized that “gun violence in all its forms has a social context, and that context is not something that “mental illness” can describe nor that mental health practitioners can be expected to address in isolation” (p. 246). They agreed that it is desirable to learn about the mental state of a shooting suspect to understand his or her actions,

but stressed that “focusing legislative policy and popular discourse so centrally on mental illness is rife with potential problems if, as seems increasingly the case, those policies are not embedded in larger societal strategies and structural-level interventions” (Metzl & MacLeigh, 2015, p. 247).

Metzl and MacLeish (2015) suggested that “psychiatric expertise might be put to better use by enhancing US discourse about the complex anxieties, social and economic formations, and blind assumptions that make people fear each other in the first place” (p. 247). They noted that “psychiatry could help society interrogate what guns mean to everyday people, and why people feel they need guns or reject guns out of hand” (Metzl & MacLeish, 2015, p. 247). Metzl and MacLeish (2015) stated that “by addressing gun discord as symptomatic of deeper concerns, psychiatry could, ideally, promote more meaningful public conversations on the impact of guns on civic life” and that “it could join with public health researchers, community activists, law enforcement officers, or business leaders to identify and address the underlying structural and infrastructural issues that foster real or imagined notions of mortal fear” (p. 247).

Warnick, Kim and Robinson (2015) have discovered that it was “difficult to find many compelling generalizations” when it relates to shooting suspects (p. 372). Warnick et al. (2015) observed that while most of the shooters were white males who were social misfits from rural or suburban areas, most shooting suspects seem to have very little in common. Warnick et al. (2015) found that some of the perpetrators were bullies while some were bullied and that “some came from obviously dysfunctional homes whereas others had seemingly very concerned and engaged parents” (p. 373). The authors said some of the shooters had mental illnesses while some did not have such diagnosis and that some had particular quarrels with certain people within the school, whereas others wanted to make an expressive statement about who they were, not caring much about who they killed” (p. 373). Warnick et al. (2015) noted that “this lack of

generalizations across the stories is sometimes even apparent within an individual story itself and listed the state attorney's report on the Sandy Hook shooting," noting the "collection of the inconsistent description of the shooter" (p. 374). Based on the report there was "no clear vision of who he was, what he had experienced in his life or why he did what he did" (Warnick et al., 2015, p. 374). The authors were left to conclude that "the only factors that initially seem to draw these events together are (1) easy access to powerful firearms, and (2) a troubled student who interprets a school as an appropriate place to use them" (Warnick et al., 2015, p. 374).

Goldstein (2019) reported that "homicide is the leading cause of death among American youth, but that the vast majority of these deaths take place at home or in the neighborhood" (para. 11). Musu et al. (2019) noted that American schools are still regarded as safe places for American children since only about three percent of youth homicides occurred at school between 1992 and 2016.

The American Culture War and Guns

An opinion poll published in 2018 about how Americans felt about arming classroom teachers had an interesting result. Montanaro (2018) reported that a survey conducted by National Public Radio and Global Market and Opinion Research showed that while 59% of Americans were against training teachers to carry guns at school, most Republicans, men in particular, were in support of the measure. The number of Republicans who favor arming teachers stood at 68% and of that group, 71% of men endorsed arming teachers. Sixty-four percent of Republican women also said they supported teachers carrying guns. Eighty-two percent of Democrats were opposed to teachers carrying guns at school (Montanaro, 2018).

The political divide over the arming of teachers could be seen as an extension of the Culture War between Liberal and Conservative politicians in Washington D.C. and political

activists across the country that heightened during the nineties, however; the Culture War played out within the Republican party before it went beyond conservative politics (Siegal, 2008). It is very rare that a sitting President gets a primary challenge within his party, but the more conservative wing of the Republican Party was upset with George H. W. Bush because he broke his promise not to raise any new taxes (Shesol, 2015). In 1991, a primary challenge from the right came from Pat Buchanan, a former speech-writer for President Nixon (Toner, 1992). While Bush prevailed against the conservative challenger, Buchanan's legacy within the Republican party is significant (Gagnon, 2012). At the Republican convention in 1992, Gagnon (2012) recalled that Buchanan warned that a "culture war was raging in the United States" and that this battle was a war to "define the American people's national identity" (p. 261). Buchanan insisted that there was a religious war in America. He also continued:

It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself.

This war is for the soul of America. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton is on the other side, and George Bush is on our side. (p. 261)

Buchanan's first idea is that the country was being threatened by his political opponents, the Democratic Left, but it was his second idea that actualized his culture war: stop cooperating with Democrats (Gagnon, 2012). The implementation of such political action was soon embraced by another conservative, Newt Gingrich who became Speaker of the House of Representatives after the Republicans took control of Congress in 1994 (Strahan & Palazzolo, 2004). One of Gingrich's first priorities as Speaker was to draft legislation to repeal the gun control laws passed at the beginning of the Clinton Presidency. Siegal (2008) observed that "Republicans turned the 1994 (mid)term election into a referendum on the competence of government and Gingrich appealed to gun rights to express themes about the government and the body politic that had been

echoing since the Johnson era” (p. 228). Gingrich offered to renew the country identifying “gun control as the issue that distinguished liberals and conservatives” and invoked the “Second Amendment as a political right written into our Constitution for the purpose of protecting individual citizens from their own government (p. 229). Seigal (2008) said Gingrich partnered with the country’s biggest gun lobby, the National Rifle Association (N.R.A.) to take the fight against Democrats, raising \$3.2 million in campaign cash to be spent against Democratic candidates who voted for the ban on assault rifles (Seigal, 2008). The Republicans ended up winning 19 of the 24 priority races they had targeted (Siegal, 2008).

Before Gingrich became Speaker of the House, President Bill Clinton signed a bill passed by a Democratic Congress which established a national system to conduct background checks for all firearm purchases (Cole, 2016). The bill was named after James Brady, the press secretary who was shot during the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan (Cole, 2016). The following year, the President signed another bill banning “nineteen different types of assault rifles such as the AK-47,” however; the assault weapons ban had a “sunset clause and it expired ten years later in 2004” (Cole, 2016, p. 3). Gingrich was able to get the House of Representatives to repeal the ban on semi-automatic rifles, even getting some Democrats to support him, but the vote was purely symbolic because the measure would never become signed into law. Clinton had said he would veto the bill if it came to his desk and the Senate’s leader Bob Dole who was busy running for President was not as enthusiastic about the gun bill passed in the House (Hook, 1996).

Regardless, many Democrats thought that Al Gore lost the Presidential election in 2000 because of the N.R.A. and gun control issues (Medlock, 2005). Selecting a well-known Hollywood actor Charlton Heston proved to be very useful for the N.R.A. as Heston’s taunt

against Gore was a top story on cable news outlets (Ellison, 2016). The sound bite with the former actor hoisting his rifle, declaring that the Democrat can only get his gun from his “cold dead hands” resonated with voters (Ellison, 2016, para. 16). Kornacki (2012) believed that Democrats made a decision to change their approach to gun issues in order to win back the support of low-income white voters that left the party after losing the 2000 Presidential election. The political analyst pointed out that it did not mean that the party had surrendered on gun control issues. In fact, in states where gun control does well in polls, they remained in Democratic campaigns, but at the national level, Democrats spent the last decade trying hard to convince gun owners that they were not trying to take their guns (Kornacki, 2012).

Gagnon (2012) thought that the election of Barack Obama should have been a signal that the Culture War was coming to an end since the millennial generation of Americans were less divided on sexual relationships between same-sex couples. But Obama’s election also saw the beginning of a more militant set of Culture warriors who are more determined to delegitimize the first African American President calling him “a Muslim, a socialist, a fascist, and non-citizen by members of the Tea Party” (Gagnon, 2012, p. 272). President Obama has said that the biggest failure of his Presidency was his inability to pass any significant legislation on gun control (Rood, 2018). By the time the Sandy Hook tragedy occurred, “it was not the first or even the second time that President Obama had responded publicly to a mass shooting” and it was determined that Obama’s “recurring claim that the dead should inspire us to recommit to civic values was losing credibility because the violence continued” (Rood, 2018, p. 52). In addition to Obama’s failure to generate support for federal gun control legislation, more bills were signed into law to ease “gun restrictions making it easier for people to carry weapons in public spaces” at the state level (Rood, 2018, p. 61).

Harris (2013) observed that the “vast majority of murders committed with firearms—even most mass killings—the weapon used is a handgun” which is ideally suited to be hidden and taken into a classroom, yet not much can be done to outlaw them (para. 18). After the Supreme Court ruled twice in 2008 and 2010 that banning handguns is in violation of the Second Amendment, Waldman (2014) declared that before “social movements can win at the court they must win at the ballot box” pointing out that the five justices that ruled in the 2008 case were nominated by presidents who were endorsed by the N.R.A. (para. 32).

Before Donald Trump announced that he was running for President, he endorsed a Democratic plan to ban semi-automatic rifles and waiting times for gun purchases (Spies, 2017). But that was during the ‘90s when he was a real estate mogul living in the Democratically-controlled state of New York. He quickly jettisoned his support for gun control and embraced the talking points for the N.R.A. while campaigning to be the Republican nominee (Spies, 2017). Psaki (2018) reported that the N.R.A. rewarded Trump with an endorsement and over \$31 million to his Presidential campaign. After the mass shooting at Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018, Trump promised to take action against gun violence in schools (Rampton & Chiacu, 2018). Then, the president appeared to have supported legislation that would raise the minimum age for gun purchases from 18 to 21 after a meeting with students who survived the Florida school shooting. He soon backed away from that idea after he met with N.R.A. executives (Rampton & Chiacu, 2018). Instead, the plan that the president felt comfortable promoting was a proposal to allow teachers to carry guns into school buildings (Chuck & Siemaszko, 2018).

Many of the students who survived the shooting in Parkland have given liberals hope of relitigating the Culture War on guns, but at least one prominent opinion writer has advised the

Left against polarizing the issue of gun control. Brooks (2018) warned that “the people pushing for gun restrictions have basically done the exact opposite of what I thought was wise” (para. 3). The author suggested that “instead of depolarizing the issue they have massively polarized it and the students from Parkland are being assisted by all the usual hyper-polarizing left-wing groups: Planned Parenthood, Move On and the Women’s March” (para. 3). Miller (2019) wrote that after the school shooting at Parkland, large private sellers of guns such as Dick’s Sporting Goods, Walmart, and Kroger have voluntarily decided to stop selling semi-automatic rifles and guns. In the fall of 2019, Colt announced that it would cease the manufacturing of the AR-15 for the consumer market (Osborne, 2019).

It is not clear what role that the student activists in Florida played in these decisions made by large corporate gun sellers, however; what is known is that the N.R.A. had lost some of its potency due to internal problems (Smith, 2018). It has been reported that the Federal Bureau of Investigations (F.B.I.) and special counsel Robert Mueller had investigated whether the N.R.A. funneled money from wealthy Russians tied to the Kremlin to Trump’s 2016 Presidential campaign (Smith, 2018). Ellison (2016) reported that in 2014, the N.R.A. revealed that \$310 million came from membership dues and that the N.R.A. likes to give the impression that “it has a grassroots operation like the Bernie Sanders campaign” (para. 5). But it has been documented in a study published in 2013 by a non-profit Violence Policy Center, which “a significant part of that money is provided by a small core of large firearms-industry donors” and without those funds, the group could barely survive (Ellison, 2016, para. 5). Jackson (2019) has also reported that New York’s attorney general wants to investigate the group’s tax-exempt status. President Trump’s public warning to the N.R.A. to get its act together should be seen as the biggest indication of the internal leadership struggle at the association (Jackson, 2019).

The Case Against Arming Teachers

The notion that politicians will ignore the wishes of teachers has been clearly stated publicly. Goldstein (2012) recounted what a disillusioned teacher said after posting her resignation on social media:

Everything I love about teaching is extinct. The curriculum is mandated. Minutes spent teaching subjects are audited. Schedules are dictated by administrators. The classroom teacher is no longer trusted or in control of what, when, or how she teaches. (p. 3)

And teachers believe that politicians are doing the same thing about school security: they want to arm their workforce even though most teachers do want to carry guns into school buildings (Brenan, 2018). A Gallup poll revealed that only one in five teachers in America is willing to carry a gun in school (Brenan, 2018). According to the data, teachers were asked if they would be willing to participate in special training if their school gave the approval for them to carry a concealed handgun but only 18% of teachers said they would take part in the training. A large number of them—82%--said they would decline the offer (Brenan, 2018). Seventy-three percent of teachers were against the idea of arming their workforce while 58% of teachers think that arming their colleagues “would make schools less safe” (Brenan, 2018, para. 2). The data is based on an online poll of 497 teachers in grades K-12 in 2018.

In January 2014, the National Education Association, (N.E.A), the largest labor union representing teachers in America, revealed that 68% of its members-primarily teachers, faculty, and education support staff-oppose a proposal to arm teachers (Gates, 2014). The result of these two polls by educators against arming their workforce is consistent with a third survey with a larger sample size conducted by an education marketing company School Improvement Network in January 2014 which revealed that 72.4% of teachers agree that they “would not likely bring a

firearm to school” even if they were allowed to do so (Gates, 2014, para. 4). In this poll, about 10,661 educators were surveyed from all 50 states (Gates, 2014).

The role of the principal would be critical in any plan to allow teachers to carry concealed handguns into school buildings yet there is evidence that principals are opposed to implementing this form of security measure (Weiler & Armenta, 2014). After the mass shooting at Sandy Hook in 2012, a convenience survey of 40 K-12 building principals revealed that these educational leaders did not like the idea of arming teachers (Weiler & Armenta, 2014). Weiler and Armenta (2014) noted that the teachers felt that their school was “relatively safe and that there is little chance of an event such as that” at Sandy Hook Elementary School (p. 118). Weiler and Armenta (2014) noted that the principals “feel that any advantages of having armed school personnel would be outweighed by the disadvantages, specifically the danger of a horrible accident that might take the life of a student or adult in the building, a much greater loss than the monetary loss resulting from an inevitable tort lawsuit” (p. 118). Weiler and Armenta (2014) reported that a number of principals indicated that they would rather leave the profession if politicians or school boards give approval for teachers to be armed. The National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals had issued a joint statement denouncing plans to arm teachers in 2012 (Shah, 2013a). The education groups noted that “it is not reasonable to expect that a school official could intervene in a deadly force incident even with a modicum of training, quickly and safely enough to save lives” (para. 7).

Kirk (2018) reported that a paper written by a Johns Hopkins University education professor Sheldon Greenberg examined the track records of law enforcement officers’ confrontations with armed suspects and the evidence suggests that “police officers do not shoot accurately in a crisis encounter” and believes that teachers who encounter school shooters are not

likely to do better than the police (para. 7). Kirk (2018) said Greenberg is a former police officer who had round table discussions with law enforcement in January 2013 and many of his former colleagues expressed concerns about the policy of arming teachers “including the erroneous assumptions that a teacher would be in proximity to the shooter, the likelihood that an armed teacher and plainclothes police officer would not mistake each other for an active shooter...” (para. 8). Writing in opposition against the Florida bill that allowed school districts to arm their workforce, Minshew (2018) noted there are fears that students of color might also become the unintended victims of the new legislation because minority students are believed to misbehave more than their white counterparts. There have been at least two reported cases of guns going off accidentally by teachers who carry guns at school (Connolly, 2014). In Utah, it has been reported that an elementary school teacher’s gun went off, shooting herself in the leg while in that same month a university professor shot himself in the foot while he was teaching a class (Connolly, 2014).

After the Virginia Tech shooting in Virginia in 2007, more than 12 state legislatures proposed bills that would even allow students to carry concealed handguns on campus, a move that even created opposition even among those who did not mind if teachers were armed (Lipka, 2008). Suddenly, higher education officials lobbied their state legislators not to pass bills allowing more guns on their campuses and for the moment many of these gun bills do not seek to arm students. It was reported that bills to arm teachers and students have failed to pass even in red states that support gun rights such as Alabama, Indiana, and Oklahoma though more states such as Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina were studying similar bills (Lika, 2008).

Thompson, Price, Dake, and Teeple (2012) observed that most of the 4,300 colleges and universities in the United States “currently prohibit the carrying of firearms on college

campuses” (p. 366). They noted that “college campuses have traditionally been gun-free zones, but recently there have been efforts by pro-gun organizations to change existing policies that allow the carrying of concealed handguns on university campuses” (Thompson et al., 2012, p. 366). School leaders are opposed to allowing students to carry concealed handguns on campus. In a survey of 1,125 faculties at 15 randomly selected state universities in five Great Lake states a majority “indicated that they would feel unsafe if faculty, students and visitors carried concealed handguns on campus” (Thompson et al., 2012, p. 371). Thompson et al. (2012) also noted that “most faculty suggested that there are many disadvantages to having concealed handguns on campuses” and that “faculty also agreed that if concealed handguns were present on campus and they used their handgun to defend themselves and shot at someone that they might miss and another person might mistakenly be shot” (p. 372). Thompson noted that this is “a valid concern given that trained police officers often do not hit their targets” (p. 372). Using his credibility as a former marine who now teaches in the classroom, Tyler Bonn said that it is not possible to prepare a teacher to use a gun effectively in a stressful situation because teachers are not soldiers. He made the case against arming teachers after Florida legislators took steps to arm teachers in light of the Parkland shooting (Bonn, 2018).

After the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, the N.R.A. also called for armed security at every school in the nation to stem this kind of violence (Shah, 2013b). But DeMitchell and Rath (2019) insist “there is evidence that knowledge of armed security does not deter shooters” (p. 77). It is a fact that an armed security guard exchanged gunfire with the pair of Columbine shooters in 1999, but this did not stop the murders from happening (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). At Umpqua Community College in Oregon, a student gunman entered the school

and killed nine people then killed himself in 2013 even though there were three full-time police officers on campus at the time of the killings (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019).

During the shooting spree inside the building at Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, it was later discovered that four sheriff's deputies did not engage the suspect and that they "hid behind cars instead of storming" the building (Brown, 2018, para. 1). What was significant about this incident was that "the presence of armed officers on campus did not send the shooter to other targets" (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019, p. 77). Demitchell and Rath (2019) observed that "it is most likely that the selection of the places to attack is related to their reason for rampage and not whether there is a sign out front about it being a gun-free zone for students" (p. 77). The authors stated that "the facile assertion of numbers of armed faculty and staff preventing and repelling rampage attacks needs to be examined as a policy approach to a critically important problem as support for arming teachers appears to be on the rise" (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019, p. 77).

Rajan and Branas (2018) pointed out that there is not enough information to determine the effectiveness of allowing teachers to carry concealed handguns. They noted that as school leaders try to establish a safe school environment; there is a need for understanding what the consequences of taking such actions might be. Rajan and Branas (2018) believed that "although teachers are conceivably capable of appropriately using firearms" there is not any kind of training to help prepare teachers for a mass shooting incident (p. 860). They also insisted that there is not enough information to know if armed teachers would be useful in the event of an armed conflict: "In other words, we are debating whether a new profession that combines the responsibilities of a law enforcement officer and a teacher is even feasible given all these caveats" (Rajan & Branas, p. 861).

A group of public health students said asking “teachers to fire a weapon at a shooter who could be their student and injuring and killing students other than the shooter” could have an impact on the mental health of educators (Rogers et al., 2018, p. 862). Rogers et al. (2018) wrote that a teacher might fire his or her weapon at a suspect but hit someone else could face litigation. This triggered the group to ask: “Is this our nation’s best solution?” (p. 862).

The Case for Arming Teachers

Two days after the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, the killings of so many children created anxiety among educators. Shah (2013b) recalled the mood of teachers in Waco, Texas:

For many educators here and elsewhere, it is no longer a question of whether to take guns to school. Instead, the questions are: how do I carry this thing without anyone noticing? Can I kill someone if the time comes? And maybe the most frightening of all, what happens if I miss? (p. 23)

Many teachers who chose to volunteer to carry a concealed handgun at school said the decision is personal. Speaking to an elementary school teacher in Colorado, Gutowski (2018) observed that teachers feel an overwhelming responsibility to protect the kids in their care especially after some of the worst mass shootings at American schools had taken place. Brudin (2017) reported that one Colorado teacher has admitted that “the question of being able to shoot and kill someone she knows has crossed her mind” and has described it as her “absolute worst nightmare” (para. 9). The teacher has been carrying a concealed handgun to school for two years and hopes that she could handle that situation if it occurs. At the same time, she hopes this will never happen. But she believes “carrying a concealed handgun is worth it to protect her 20 students” (Brudin, 2017, para. 10). Gutowski (2018) reported that teachers who are armed are

normally obligated to participate in advanced active shooter courses every year to meet the requirements insurance companies established to insure districts with armed educators.

Schools with inadequate funds to pay for armed security and are in rural districts far away from the police are forced to consider arming their staff (Shah, 2013a). Harris (2013) believed it would be unwise to believe that the “ability to dial 911 is all the protection against violence a sane person ever needs” (para. 24). Harris (2013) imagined that if a trespasser enters someone’s home to do harm to the occupants, one “cannot reasonably expect the police to arrive in time to stop the intruder” (para. 24). Added Harris: “This is not the fault of the police—it is a problem of physics” (para. 25). Nedzel (2014) reported that a gun expert explained that “a mass shooter with a semi-automatic weapon can shoot one bullet per second” (p. 431). This means that “even if it took only four minutes for the police to arrive, 60 x 4 or 240 bullets could have been discharged in the interim” (Nedzel, 2014, p. 431).

A retired police officer and active-shooter prevention expert, Chris Grollnek has stated that many mass shootings incidents normally end in about six minutes and lamented that that is “not enough time for a typical police response” (Jackman, 2018, para. 10). He suggested that schools should rethink their preparations for mass shootings which must include drills for evacuations. At least one rural school district in Texas has been allowing their teachers to carry a concealed handgun long before Sandy Hook (Shah, 2013b). The superintendent of Harrold district David Thweatt said the decision to arm teachers was made after the shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007 (Shah, 2013b). The school district shares a border with Oklahoma and Thweatt said his town is at least 30 minutes away from the nearest law enforcement office (Shah, 2013b).

Nedzel (2014) noted that while “schools are or have implemented a number of measures to teach students and faculty how to survive the possibility of an armed madman roaming the

halls or to try to stop him from entering a classroom, a better approach is to stop or discourage those who are contemplating mass shootings, not merely to try to stop them once they have entered a school” (pp. 432-433). Pavlich (2018) wrote that the Okay Public Schools Board of Education in Oklahoma gave the approval for schools in its district to allow teachers to carry concealed handguns in school buildings. After the district disclosed the information to the public, a decision was made to erect billboards in front of the schools with a warning that its teachers are carrying concealed handguns (Pavlich, 2018). Superintendent Charles McMahan defended the use of the signs saying they should serve as a deterrent because “we don't want to be soft targets” (Pavlich, 2018, para. 4). Voorhees (2013) reported that a school district in Arkansas decided to make use of its existing state law that allows its staff members to carry guns at schools. The district said parents were worried about the safety of their children after the Sandy Hook shooting.

An ethics professor who carries a concealed handgun to school wrote that “if the government was going to tell us that we can't carry guns into a specific area (thus impairing our ability to defend ourselves) then it must assume a special responsibility of providing for our protection” (Hsiao, 2018, p. 467). The author has insisted that the government must provide the same protection a gun would provide if a licensed firearm holder is able to carry his or her concealed handgun. Hsiao (2018) observed that in the “real world this means that it must maintain a pervasive armed presence in the places in which it has disarmed us” but that “the police cannot play the same role as a gun when it comes to resisting an attack” (p. 467).

Hsiao (2018) described as absurd the push back against allowing teachers to carry concealed handguns because their presence could create confusion among policemen and women who arrive at the scene of the shooting. Hsiao (2018) noted that the police's inability to

determine who the shooting suspects are “would apply to any situation in which the police must encounter a victim who is successfully resisting an attack” (p. 468). The professor stated that “mistaken identity can occur in a host of different contexts and not just those on campus. Hsiao (2018) then added: “so if the mere possibility of police confusion is enough to justify a ban on campus carry, then it would also justify a ban on any kind of forceful self-defense measure. But this would be absurd: it would mean that victims would not be allowed to defend themselves” (p. 469). The writer suggested that maybe the time has come for implementing requirements for gun owners to have training in self-identification and communications with law enforcement and first responders (Hsiao, 2018). Hsiao (2018) also said that it was not true that research has proven that anyone can do well defending themselves with firearms “despite their relative lack of training compared to police officers” (p. 470.) He said that teachers do not need to be an expert with firearms to use them successfully and that “even for someone untrained, guns are still their best bet for self-defense” (p. 471).

Rostron (2014) observed that guns are amoral: that they can be used for both good or bad things, but noted that it was important that legislators craft laws that “promote the socially beneficial uses of guns while reducing the prevalence of their misuse” (p. 454). Rostron (2014) said, “having more guns in schools may be a helpful tactic, especially to the extent that such programs emphasize law enforcement expertise, professionalism and training” (p. 454).

Despite the shooting accident involving an armed teacher in Utah, gun activists like to point out that there has not been a mass shooting in the state since 2004 when teachers have been allowed to carry concealed handguns in schools and do not need to inform school authorities they are carrying a concealed handgun (Schlanger, 2014). Vergakis (2007) reported that teachers who had a licensed firearm were not allowed to bring them on campus until the state legislature

passed a law “expressly saying the university is covered by state law that allows concealed weapons” on school campuses (para. 8). Arnold (2015) noted that “if Utah has had no mass murder attempts at any of its schools and yet guns are permitted to be carried into the schools by concealed permit holders, this provides strong evidence that deterrence can be provided by arming the good guys rather than disarming them” (p. 505).

Arnold (2015) said that most people “do not want to talk about handing out firearms when murderers have used firearms to destroy precious lives” (p. 505). But the author questioned, “what would the victims not have given to have been armed themselves in the very moment they were staring death in the face?” (p. 504). Arnold (2015) suggested that “empowering people to defend themselves against evil is at the heart of the Second Amendment and that right should be sustained” (p. 505-506).

Cramer (2014) has observed that the American view of gun possession is different from what it was over the last several years “because, in most of the United States, a concealed weapon permit is now readily available to most adults who can pass criminal and mental health background checks, complete a training class and pay a generally modest fee” (p. 412).

Waldman (2014) said that a Gallup poll in 1959 revealed that 60% of Americans were in favor of banning handguns, but that number declined to about 41% by 1975 and by 2012, the number of Americans who favored banning handguns fell to 24%. Cramer (2014) noted that eight million concealed carry permits are active in the United States as of December 31, 2011, and that this “astonishing expansion of licensing (starting in 1987) has been accompanied by a dramatic decline in national murder rates” (p. 413). Cramer (2014) concluded that it would appear that “widespread issuance of concealed weapon licenses has not endangered public safety in the larger society” and that a “fairly large fraction of Americans clearly feel that there is some

purpose in having a license to carry a concealed handgun for self-defense” (Cramer, 2014, p. 413). According to Maqbool (2018) by the end of 2018, at least 400 teachers in the state of Ohio had been involved in training programs to learn how to use a firearm. The initial training lasted for three days. Whaley (2017) reported that a large number of teachers in several states have received firearms training by Faculty/Administrator Safety Training and Emergency Response or FASTER.

Hetzner (2011) noted that in light of the Supreme Court decisions in 2008 and 2010 upholding the individual right to own a handgun, state politicians should consider “changes to existing laws that prevent the carrying of loaded firearms within 1000 feet of school grounds” (p. 408). It was observed that “although such laws could withstand most legal challenges, policymakers should pursue reforms to head off any problems while improving the laws in the process” (Hetzner, 2011, p. 408). Hetzner (2011) thinks that “such laws are especially vulnerable should the Court determine that the ability to carry a weapon for self-defense on public property near schools is a right guaranteed by the Constitution and that any law to the contrary must pass a strict scrutiny test” (p. 408). Hetzner (2011) said, “the California and federal school zone laws also are currently hampered in their application by requiring knowledge on the part of armed individuals who enter the zones to be successfully prosecuted” (p. 408). Hetzner (2011) stated that “a change that allows prosecution of individuals who fire weapons within public places in these zones, without providing an exception for whether they knew of their presence within the zone, would likely serve many of the same goals of the original legislation while surviving even the closest look by the courts” (p. 408). Texas is already pointing the way towards allowing more guns on campus when a state law came into effect on September 1, 2019, that allows legitimate

gun holders to store their guns and ammunition in the vehicles in parking lots on school grounds (Fearnow, 2019).

School Resource Officers

Before the idea to arm teachers became a widely discussed topic in public discourse, many school districts had already begun using financial resources to provide armed security for their school campuses Kupchick, Brent, and Mowen (2015). While the executive vice president of the N.R.A. Wayne LaPierre's suggestion to keep armed security in every 12-K school was met with ridicule, the establishment of an "armed security force inside the nation's schools" was quietly becoming a trend even before the mass shooting at Columbine High School in 1999 (Kupchick et al., 2015, p. 1119). Kupchik et al. (2015) said that a federal report of 2012 suggested that nearly 70 percent of 12 to 18-year-old school-aged children said they had armed police or security at their school in 2011. Kupchik et al. (2015) reported that Christine Quinn, the liberal Speaker of the New York City Council had described the N.R.A.'s plan to have armed guards in schools as "stupid" and "asinine", yet New York City public schools have a "dedicated division of the New York Police Department, the School Safety Division, with over 5,000 officers" (p. 1119). Weiler and Cray (2011) noted what are being called School Resource Officer or (S.R.O.) can be seen in 35% of schools in America whether it is an elementary, middle or high school in a rural, suburban or city or enrollment size.

But asking the federal government to guarantee that all 12-K schools have armed security by footing the bill can be a very expensive proposition, especially when there are so many questions about the effectiveness of S.R.O.s (Rajan & Branas, 2018). They stated that such a plan would cost anywhere from \$19 to \$22 billion each year based on a 2013 cost analysis. Rajan and Branas (2018) said the estimate was based on "salary, student population size and the

number of hours worked per academic year” (p. 861). To understand how costly this idea might be, the authors noted that this figure would be “nearly 30% of the current federal education budget” (Rajan & Branas, 2018, p. 862). Rajan and Branas (2018) said the Federal government could face several ethical and political questions about this kind of expenditure in light of the fact that studies have shown that “heightened policing has had a negative impact on students” (p. 860).

Weiler and Cray (2011) said that money to fund the S.R.O. program comes from federal grants, but that these funds are available for only a three-year period. They wrote that after this period, “the S.R.O. program is generally maintained through some combination of local, county and state, school district and private dollars” (p. 161). Weiler and Cray (2011) wrote that “the program cannot successfully insure a safe, learning environment in schools unless it is sustainable” (p. 162). They noted that “failure to secure a commitment dooms the program to failure since the best police officers will not seek positions perceived as temporary or unstable” (Weiler & Cray, 2011, p. 163).

The School Resource Officer or the S.R.O. are generally wearing a uniform, armed with a gun, and are employed to work in schools (Finn & McDevitt, 2005). The use of these special kinds of officers began in Flint, Michigan to reduce gun violence in the community during the 1950s. These special police officers will conduct law enforcement duties, teach and mentor students at the schools they are assigned to and their law enforcement duties normally range from patrolling school buildings but will probably spend most of their time investigating complaints from educators about students and addressing school violence such as mass shootings (Coon & Travis, 2012; Counts et al., 2018; Finn & McDevitt, 2005).

According to Counts et al. (2018) the job description of the S.R.O.s has “evolved over time often without formalized policies or guidelines” (p. 405). “The authors observed that schools have increased their reliance on S.R.O.s to deal with school discipline but that this has created negative, unintended consequences: the arrests of students with disabilities, an increase in the likelihood of student contact with the juvenile justice system and promoted the school-to-prison pipeline” (Counts et al., 2018, p. 405). Counts et al. (2018) reported that over 291,100 students were “referred or subjected to school-related arrest” in the 2015-16 academic year and of that number, 82,800 were students with disabilities (p. 405). Counts’ et al. (2018) research lamented the fact that these figures show that there is “an overrepresentation of students with disabilities” that are being turned over to the police for apprehension (p. 406). It was noted that students with disabilities account for 12% of the school population but that 28% of them make up all apprehensions (Counts et al., 2018, p. 406). The authors noted that “among adolescents involved with the juvenile justice system, the rate of disabilities is much higher than the overall population, especially for those identified with mental health disorders or emotional disturbances” (Counts et al., 2018, p. 406).

Counts et al. (2018) wrote that S.R.O.s require additional training to work with students in educational settings but unfortunately many states do not have any protocols regarding the use of armed police officers while in states that do have them, they have different requirements. Counts et al. (2018) believe that the lack of requirements for S.R.O.s can be linked to the number of school arrests “for behaviors that were once considered to be the purview of school administrative discipline” (p. 426). They have concluded that “the greater numbers of school arrests for school behavior and conduct violations, rather than criminal activity have exposed students to adjudication through the school-to-prison pipeline” (Counts et al., 2018, p. 426).

Counts et al. (2018) think that if the SRO program is to remain viable, there is a need for school leaders to establish guidelines and requirements for their armed guards on campus and the plans must be set up with the consultation of local government and local leaders.

Perhaps as part of the protocol for the use of armed police officers assigned to schools, educators should insist that the legal and civil rights of students are not abrogated. Theriot and Cuellar (2016) noted that armed police on campuses are normally given more “freedom to search students and detect contraband than they would have as a patrol officer on the streets” (p. 367). It is a tough balance to make because the Supreme Court has established a “lower standard for searching students in schools compared to outside of school buildings (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016, p. 368). One is not arguing against school searches when there is reasonable suspicion, however; it would be a gross misuse of the role of the S.R.O.s to arrest a student for violating the school’s dress code (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016, p. 368). The authors said there is also concern about how S.R.O.s “share information between juvenile courts and schools and how students are questioned when they are accused of misconduct” (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016, p. 369). This is why extensive training for S.R.O.s and greater collaboration between school administrators with armed officers are required to sustain and improve the program (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016).

A report from The Center for the Prevention of School Violence (2000) has concluded that teachers and students in North Carolina schools feel safer due to the presence of S.R.O.s, yet the report did not say if crime and violence had declined because of armed security. Brown and Benedict (2005) said that both Hispanic youths who were well adjusted to American society and those not well adjusted “viewed legal authorities favorably which, given the history of tensions between racial and ethnic minorities and the police in the US, is a positive finding” (p. 280). Brown and Benedict (2005) noted that this is important for S.R.O.s to foster a fruitful

relationship with members of the Hispanic community due to the fact that “every major urban riot which has occurred in the US over the past century has been fueled by hostility toward the police among racial and ethnic minorities” including African-Americans (p. 281).

One useful study suggested that S.R.O.s should be integrated with school counselors and mental health teams when considering how to deal with students accused of misconduct. Thompson and Alvarez (2013) said: “developing an intermediary process to review the context surrounding all offenses resulting in arrests before a student is processed into the justice system” and that such mechanism could “reduce the number of students who were introduced to the juvenile system” (p. 134). There is a suggestion that “School Resource Officers with non-lethal force capabilities might be helpful in deterring” violent behavior and misconduct among students (Rajan & Branas, 2018, p. 861). At the same time, the authors said that the “same positive relationship was not found with School Resource Officers armed with a firearm” (Rajan & Branas, 2018, p. 860). The success of this security measure requires two key ingredients, according to Weiler and Cray (2011). They noted that schools require police officers who are skillful in dealing with minors and that these officers should receive “training that includes knowledge of educational settings, juvenile law special education law” and knows how to provide presentations in a classroom (Weiler & Cray, 2011, p. 161). It has also been reported that S.R.O.s must serve as a police force with “arrest powers, counselors of law-related issues” and to direct students to the relevant services that they require (Weiler & Cray, 2011, p. 162).

The lack of guidelines for S.R.O.s has led to teachers and school administrators being unclear about their role and function in the school (Barnes, 2016). In a study examining the perceptions of armed officers on school campuses, Barnes (2016) reported that “officers contended that school officials perceived them as part of the teaching faculty” and that

“overwhelmingly they participate in obligations outside their sets of responsibilities in light of the fact that they are continually requested to help with disciplinary issues” (p. 199). Barnes (2016) cited many cases where officers were asked to “watch the bathroom to search for smokers” or to discipline students for chewing gum or just to be in the classroom so students do not react negatively after grades are distributed (p. 200).

Coon and Travis (2012) observed that it is clear that “not all police officers are well suited for working in a school environment” (p. 27). Those who qualify should have a desire to help young students, should be able to work in a school environment and know how to communicate effectively (Coon & Travis, 2012). In addition to that, they must have supervisors who trust and support them and it has been suggested that principals should play an important role in nominating the S.R.Os that come to work in schools and should also be closely involved in the training for these police officers (Coon & Travis, 2012). Coon and Travis (2012) stated that many of the schools have established security plans and programs for S.R.Os., but many of these measures have not been evaluated.

There was one scholarly opinion that offered a total repudiation of the way school leaders have approached the matter of school safety. Keehn and Boyle (2015) have suggested that if we turn our schools into fortresses paid for by corporations, we should expect that this will have some kind of negative impact on the students. The authors said the increase in security and the use of police in schools, programs to stamp out anti-bullying, zero-tolerance policies and even “mental health policy revisions” cannot “address the root cause of gun violence in schools and at worst, are themselves branches of that root” (Keehn & Boyle, 2015, p. 441). The use of armed law enforcement at schools as “homogenizing corporatism” does more harm than good to schools and that this popular policy can be described as an “invasion of the school setting by

corporate ideologies” (Keehn & Boyle, 2015, p. 442). Employing the framework of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, particularly his views on “possession, violence and negation,” the pair of authors suggested that “the relatively recent sharp turn toward the hyper corporatized school and the concomitant transition of the student from simple (potential) customer to a type of hybrid consumer has rendered it more difficult for students to see themselves as engaged in any type of serious ethical relationship with those around them” (Keehn & Boyle, 2015, p. 441). Keehn and Boyle (2015) said when children are “unable to see their peers as others, this makes it easier for students to perpetuate a specific type of violence against them” (p. 441).

Non-lethal Suggestions for School Safety

In his new Netflix comedy special, *Sticks and Stones*, stand-up comedian Dave Chappelle took a swipe at active school shooting drills questioning their usefulness (Francis, 2019). He began by recounting a conversation with his son, asking how his day went at school. Chappelle said his little boy told him he did not have a class, instead he participated in an active shooting drill. Francis (2019) quoted Chappelle as using expletives to dismiss the effectiveness of these drills and openly admitting to his son that he might get shot if there is a shooter at his school. He then advises his son not to be a hero trying to save anyone, and he should just keep running but not in a straight line in order to avoid being shot (Francis, 2019).

Although Chappelle’s conversation with his son was meant to be a joke, stand-up comedy in America has always used humor to address controversial subjects in society (Waisanen, 2011). And the controversial subject of active shooting drills in schools as a tactic to defend against armed intruders is getting resistance from some educators as one university professor wrote, she felt like she was being “pushed into a gun culture” she does not wish to participate in and described the preparedness drill of run, hide or fight as “absurd” (Van Ingen, 2015, para. 2).

Ford and Frei (2016) have stated that the problem with these videos is the design. They explained that in many cases, school administrators provide information about how to respond if there is an active shooter on campus through a web site, brochure, video or email which means that “understanding proper emergency response behavior is placed on the individual’s motivation to learn this vital information on his or her own time” (p. 439). Ford and Frei (2016) suggested that “if those on campus do not read or are unaware of the material offered then the influence of this information is limited” (p. 439).

Gerstmann (2019) has made the point that there is not any evidence that these drills do any good and can cause a lot of harm and might even be unnecessary. It was noted that “school shooters represent a minuscule fraction of the risk to American children” and that the “statistical likelihood of any given public school student being killed by a gun in a school on any given day since 1999 was roughly 1 in 614,000,000” according to numbers quoted from a *Washington Post* editorial (Gerstmann, 2019, para. 1). Gerstmann (2019) said the *Washington Post* has “identified fewer than 150 people who have been shot to death in American schools since the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, not 150 people a year but 150 in nearly two decades” (para. 1). Gerstmann (2019) said that the “inordinate attention paid to a phenomenon that represents such a tiny proposition of the danger to school kids (a drop in the bucket compared to the danger they face from car accidents for example) can only be justified if one assumes that the psychological impact of these shootings on students is disproportionately great” (para. 2). Gerstmann (2019) questioned whether “these lockdown drills are actually what is creating most of the anxiety?” (para. 2).

According to studies, children face being traumatized by active shooting drills and that drills might also train potential shooters (Francis, 2019; Shockman, 2019). Shockman (2019)

wrote that a pair of criminologists from Minnesota think many school district leaders in the country are implementing ineffective security measures to deter school shootings. Shockman (2019) noted that the researchers suggested that training drills should not include the students since such drills can bring trauma to children and that “most shootings come at the hands of current or former students” (para. 11). Shockman (2019) reported that under state law, schools, teachers and students must participate in five lockdown drills every year which means that children will have experienced this procedure 70 times by graduation. But Jillian Peterson, a criminology professor at Hamline University and her colleague James Densley, a criminal justice professor at Metropolitan State University constructed a database of 160 mass public school shootings in America since 1966 and examined 45 of those shootings that took place since Columbine (Shockman, 2019). The research showed that 91% of the shootings involve current or former students where the violence took place; that many of the suspects had “a history of trauma and risk factors for crime and violence” and that 80% of the shooters had conveyed messages of “suicidal thoughts and had signs of a crisis before the shooting” (Shockman, 2019, para. 8).

Shockman (2019) said these patterns uncovered by the research added with the increase in the frequency of school shootings suggests that the measures implemented to stop these attacks are ineffective. The use of active drills, forcing teachers to watch training videos, providing resource officers in schools, more security at entry points and surveillance cannot prevent a student from bringing a gun to school and opening fire on schoolmates (Shockman, 2019). The study recommends keeping S.R.O.s involved in schools, but that there is a greater need to implement mental health services that provide care for students on an individual basis in order to tackle dangerous threats. The two researchers stated that schools should take threats very

seriously because their study showed that school shooters normally make threats about what they intend to do before they carry them out (Shockman, 2019).

There is a number of research reports suggesting that suspects in mass shooting incidents tend to indicate to someone they know very well of an intent to commit violent acts. The term is referred to as leakage and schools have been advised to examine this issue closely because educational leaders and law enforcement professionals can learn about this concept and implement strategies to deter a potential attack at school (Meloy & O'Toole, 2011). Meloy and O'Toole (2011) described leakage as "the communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target" (p. 514). They noted that third parties are "typically other people, but the means of communication could vary widely, from planned or spontaneous utterances to letters, diaries, emails, voice mails, blogs, journals, internet postings, tweets, text messages, video postings, and future means of social communication that are yet to be invented" (p. 514).

Citing a number of shootings which includes mass shootings outside of school campuses, Meloy and O'Toole (2011) observed that those who provide warnings of their intention to commit a violent act might be intentional or unintentional but that a huge factor depends on "the perpetrator's relationship with the person who hears, reads, or sees the leakage" (p. 522). And the perpetrators might be motivated to leak due to various reasons such as the need to get attention, to create fear, excitement or the need to feel powerful. Learning how to identify and understand leakage is critical to the deterrence of school shootings. It means that school leaders should invest in resources to study examinations of this phenomenon as it can be a very useful non-lethal tool to have against school shootings (Meloy & O'Toole, 2011).

Limiting their review of school shootings that resulted in at least one casualty, Dagenhard, Thompson, Dake, Pescara-Kovach and Rega (2019) reported that commonalities

were found in 24 school shootings incidents that occurred in the country between 1999 and 2014. The most common features in all the shootings events were the fact that shooters who had been victims of bullying had access to weapons and they communicated their intention that a shooting would take place. Dagenhard et al. (2019) recommended a comprehensive plan that is agreed upon and implemented by the state and federal policymakers. The group said both state and federal leaders should “provide more rigor in background checks and availability of firearms as well as for those that own firearms to keep them in safe locations that are not readily available” (Dagenhard et al., 2019, p. 229). They also suggested that schools have a “no-tolerance policy when it comes to bullying and for administrators and staff to follow through with the policies well as educating the community of these policies and risk factors” (Dagenhard, et al., 2019, p. 229). In their review of the 24 shooting incidents, Dagenhard et al. (2019) excluded five of the shooters from the list since they were adults when the shooting took place but that ten of the shooters had indicated that they were victims of bullying in school by their classmates. Dagenhard et al. (2019) noted that “one shooter, in particular, reported the bullying several times to teachers and administrators, yet nothing was done about it” (p. 227).

After the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, the debate over arming teachers resurfaced, but a group of school safety experts thinks that schools can be much safer without the use of guns (Kamenetz, 2018). The school safety experts led by Ron Avi Astor at the University of Southern California and Matthew Mayer at Rutgers Graduate School of Education released a report urging schools to refrain from deploying more guns at schools and should instead improve the social and emotional health of their students. The group said the problem of gun violence, particularly the threat of targeted shooting incidents at schools should be treated the same way that doctors use the public health approach which is not to wait

until people are sick, but to help patients with preventative strategies (Kamenetz, (2018).

Kamenetz (2018) reported that the group suggested that schools should “do their best to lower the background levels of bullying and discrimination” and those school leaders should “track the data and perform what is called threat assessments on potential risks” (para. 6).

Kamenetz (2018) reported that the group’s eight-point plan has recommended a universal background check, a ban on semi-automatic rifles, protection orders which is an order that allows law enforcement to take away guns when a threat might happen. Two hundred universities and school leaders and mental health groups across the country have endorsed the plan and over 2,300 school safety experts have signaled their support for the document (Kamenetz, 2018).

The issue of targeted shootings does have implications for those advocating for arming teachers. Warnick et al. (2015) have noted that these shootings take place at the school because the shooter “deliberately selected the location for the attack” and most likely will not be deterred by armed guards. The school is “not simply a random site of opportunity” and these shootings involve “a student or former student as the shooter with the target being current students or teachers” (p. 371).

Explaining why schools are targeted for violence, Warnick et al. (2015) described schools as “places of symbolic micro aggression and coercion” where force is dominant. But they said schools also create “places for refuge, friendship and romance and when these expectations are not met, resentment flows against schools.” Warnick et al. (2015) noted that in suburban schools students react against social cliques to find out who they really are and “for students who see themselves as having a violent identity, schools become appropriate places to express this identity” (p. 385).

As a result, the writers believe we should ensure that schools are “more student-centered and less coercive” (Warnick et al., 2015, p. 386). They added:

It suggests that the more tightly we try to control schools in order to make them safe, the less safe they may actually be. Metal detectors, video surveillance, and the like support the message that schools are places of domination and control, amplifying the very message that leads to violence. It may also be the case that certain educational reforms, such as intensive testing focused on externally imposed standards, send the messages of coercion and control as well, thereby contributing to the interpretation of violence. (p. 386)

Redding and Shalf (2002) said attempts to stem gun violence in schools will produce a successful result when the best solutions begin and are implemented at the local level. They both noted that while any “federal measures will require cooperation at the local level, and they must leave a fair amount of discretion in the hands of local officials, who will have a better grasp on what works best in their particular jurisdictions” (Redding & Shalf, 2002, p. 327). The authors said that while the “federal government has an important role to play, particularly in federal-state partnerships that are aimed at disrupting illegal gun markets, enforcement could be improved substantially by using innovative programs that are aimed at deterring offenders from carrying guns, and by adjudicating gun cases with a view to reducing guns carried by juveniles” (Redding & Shalf, 2002, p. 327). Redding and Shalf (2002) said that “effective federal solutions will also include incentives and grants for establishing local programs, as well as careful research and evaluation of the numerous different local strategies that are currently in place” (p. 328). They said that “these initiatives could be supported through the development of training institutes for local officials and educators, and the formulation of national standards and guidelines for

enforcement of existing laws; inter-agency law enforcement cooperation and information-sharing (particularly using computer-based analysis); effective school discipline and alternative educational settings for disruptive youth; and psycho-educational interventions that are designed to detect and prevent school violence in the first place” (Redding & Shalf, 2002, p. 328).

Kristof (2017) said gun control advocates should approach the regulation of guns the same way that consumer advocates forced automakers to implement changes to make cars safer and should make the gun issue a public health matter. Kristof (2017) said a public health approach for guns should include the following:

1. Background checks (about 22% of access to guns never received one).
2. Protection Orders (if a man is the subject of domestic violence protection, he should not be able to buy a gun).
3. Raise the minimum age to purchase a gun (some states already have this).
4. Straw purchases (place a limit on how many weapons you can buy 30 days and increase police scrutiny of such purchases).
5. Ammunition checks (people buying ammo are never subjected to background checks, this should change).
6. Invest in smart guns (manufacture guns that will fire based on the owner’s fingerprint or pin code).
7. Ban bump stocks (this has been suggested before in a bi-partisan bill in Senate but fizzled when Obama was President in 2013).

The problem is getting consensus on what policies should be implemented as “the Second Amendment is one constraint while our polarized political system and the power of the gun lobby are other hurdles that might be difficult to get over (Kristof, 2017, para. 30). Instead of

turning schools into arm fortresses, Redlener (2006) suggested schools limit the number of entry into school buildings and staff members should undergo training to learn how to identify legitimate visitors. Schools should also have wireless panic alarms that also alert law enforcement of emergencies at school. Redlener (2006) suggested that school leaders have on-going professional relationships with all the leaders from local law enforcement and first responders before an emergency occurs and that parents should be actively involved in these discussions. After the terror attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, many doors to the flight deck were strengthened to protect against outside threats (Mouawad & Drew, 2015). Schools are now looking to do the same thing to deter the threat of armed intruders. Wash, Riley and Thorbecke (2018) have reported that a school district in South Carolina has given the approval to install bulletproof doors in three schools in the district as part of a 12-month pilot program.

In what must be the most unconventional solution to gun violence in American schools, there was a suggestion to implement a school curriculum that examines human death (Shackford, 2003). Defending this approach, Shackford (2003) noted that reactionary measures such as the implementation of additional security such as armed guards and zero-tolerance policies have only created a false notion that schools are safer than they were, but that teaching students about death is a solution that is preventative and can help children to respond to the difficulties in life. Shackford (2003) said that the topic of death has traditionally been a matter left to the family, but that parents and guardians often do not discuss the facts surrounding death because of various reasons. But Shackford (2003) noted that there was also a time when sex education was considered a topic not to be discussed with children, but that the subject is now widely taught in K-12 American schools. Shackford (2003) stated that “rather than minimizing the reality of

death, integrating thanology into the curriculum provides schools the opportunity to clarify some of the misrepresentations children often associate with death” (p. 38). Shackford (2003) noted that previous studies have “supported the assumption that children will be better positioned to appreciate life by possessing accurate knowledge of death” (p. 38). It was noted that while there is “a lack of empirical support, the presupposition that death education will moderate school violence is worthy of future exploration” but that education regarding the facts of how humans die can “improve overall mental health hygiene” (Shackford, 2003, p. 37).

Another study recommended developing a curriculum that involves life skills and teaching children how to deal with stressful situations and helping them to develop personal goals, decision making, communication, and anger management skills (Chaney et al., 2000). The group said that this curriculum should involve helping children with conflict resolution skills and advice on how to avoid substance abuse (Chaney et al., 2000) At the moment, counselors spend a lot of time developing schedules for students, instead of counseling (Chaney et al., 2000). The authors recommended a halt to this practice so that they can spend more time with children.

While teachers do not want guns on campus, there is at least the admission that guns are a part of American life and it might be helpful if schools offered their students gun safety lessons (Obeng, 2010). About 150 questions were sent to public and private school teachers in preschool and elementary schools in two counties of a Midwestern state asking if they would support this idea and many of them said they would do so (Obeng, 2010). According to the survey, about 62% of the 102 participants said that they supported teaching gun safety while 13% said they were against it (Obeng, 2010). Overall, over 28% liked the idea of teaching “gun safety in grades pre-K through the first grade” while about 54% indicated that police or trained military personnel should do the teaching of this subject in school” (Obeng, 2010, p. 393). Obeng (2010) felt that a

much wider study should be examined to determine whether this topic should be placed in the curriculum in preschool through grade six. The author noted that “gun-related injuries and deaths among children occur at disproportionately high rates in the United States and that “children who live in homes with guns are most likely victims” (Obeng, 2010, p. 394).

But Rosenberg (2018) noted that “the exact causes of America’s rise in mass shootings---and the best ways to prevent such violence--remain uncertain all these years after Columbine because of the absence of credible research” (para. 4). Rosenberg (2018) suggested that the way to “solve this nationwide crisis of firearm injuries and deaths we must pursue the same kind of scientific research that showed us how to save millions of lives from cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure” and “helped us save half a million lives from road traffic crashes without banning cars” (para. 4). Rosenberg (2018) said that “common sense doesn't tell us whether a ban on semi-automatic rifles will reduce mass shootings--that question is too complicated for us to simply work out in our heads” (para. 5). Rosenberg (2018) noted that it is possible that a “well-designed study could and would, in turn, build trust in any resulting legislation” (para. 5).

Rosenberg (2018) pointed out the researchers began to tackle the problem of gun violence by examining credible solutions in the 1980s, but that they were prevented from doing so because of the lobbying efforts of the N.R.A. Walters (2018) argued that this is the reason “we can’t answer basic questions about whether certain forms of psychiatric issues are associated with gun violence, or whether firearm licensing would reduce gun violence. This is a significant problem—for it allows statements connecting school shootings and mental illness to go unchecked and implies that those with mental illness are responsible for the increase in mass shootings” (Walters, 2018, p. 8). Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, and Jimerson (2009) urged policymakers and educators to be cautious when implementing school security measures. They

noted that while readers might be wary of the familiar conclusion that "more research is needed" but that failure for not doing so "poses special challenges when it comes to school shootings" (Borum et al., 2009, p. 35). They argued that the problem of gun violence in schools requires different solutions for each school. Borum et al. (2009) explained: "at the outset, there are problems in defining what kinds of cases should be studied (p. 34). Borum et al. (2009) believe that the words, "school shootings" may evoke "images of an attack committed by a student at school, but there are cases involving attackers who are not students, locations off school property, and weapons other than firearms" (p. 36). Borum et al. (2009) said that "for every homicide, there may be numerous cases of attempted homicide or aggravated assault that also should be studied and that the cases that "receive the greatest publicity are likely to be the most unusual and extreme cases that do not provide a good basis for making generalizations" (p. 35). They noted that "there are also important differences in the motives or purposes of attacks and that suspects who go after a "single, specific victim differ from those whose intention is to shoot as many people as possible" (p. 35). Borum et al. (2009) said "these distinctions make it evident that the search for a single set of warning signs or a psychological profile of a school shooter is futile" (p. 36). They noted that "research on school homicides is needed to educate policymakers and the public alike in order to counter misperceptions and quell unrealistic fears and to guide the development and dissemination of effective violence prevention strategies" (Borum, et al., 2009, p. 34). The writers also said that there was a need to study crisis response methods to help the community recover after a crisis like a school shooting and to find non-lethal ways to avert such tragedies.

School Shootings in Other Countries

Current or former students engaging in mass shootings on school campuses have been seen as an American phenomenon. Since 1999 there have been at least 40 school shootings in many other countries around the world (Bondu et al., 2011). It has been reported that gun violence in other countries has been linked to Columbine (Bondu et al., 2011) Bondu et al. (2011) reported that “investigations of European students who were involved in homicidal attacks at school in the past decade revealed their admiration of the Columbine shooting” (p. 17). The authors also stated that just “one week after the Columbine shooting, a fourteen-year-old Canadian youth who had dropped out of school killed one student and wounded two others in a shooting rampage at his former school” (Bondu et al., 2011, pp. 16-17). The family of the shooting suspect said that he had been the victim of physical violence and bullying and he committed the shooting out of revenge (Bondu et al., 2011).

Although Columbine may have inspired copycat killings in some countries many of these mass shootings occurred due to their own cultural problems as Bondu et al. (2011) pointed to 99 gun-related incidents between 1974 and 2006 with more violence occurring since. The report has named countries such as Brazil, South Africa, Australia, Japan, China, United Arab Emirates, Finland, Sweden, and Austria as countries that have reported gun violence on school campuses (Bondu et al., 2011). Germany has witnessed 12 homicidal attacks by students or former students since 1999, according to Bondu et al. (2011).

One study has suggested that German school leaders prefer the non-lethal approach when responding to gun violence in schools. Leuschner, Bondu, Shroer-Hippel, Panno, Neumetzler, Fisch, Scholl, and Scheithauer (2011) noted that in the last 10 years, Germany had seen more cases of homicidal violence “targeting schools than any nation other than the United States” (p.

61). Leuschner et al. (2011) said 20 teachers and 16 students have died as a result of 12 incidents. But instead of arming their schools with guards, the study said German schools opted “to implement two main types of preventative efforts: (1) universal measures, such as bullying prevention and (2) emergency response plans” (Leuscher et al., 2011, pp. 61-62). Leuschner et al. (2011) noted that while both measures are vital, “there was a large gap between programs for all students and plans for responding to a serious incident” (p. 62). As a result, Leuscher et al. (2011) wrote about two projects, the Berlin Leaking Project and the Networks Against School Shootings Project which are aimed at targeting at-risk students who are likely to commit violence. They are both modeled based on prevention programs developed in the United States (Leuscher et al., 2011).

Germany’s worst mass killings took place at a school in a quiet cathedral town in Erfurt. A student shot and killed 12 teachers, two students, a school administrator and a policeman (Lemonick & Wallace, 2002). The suspect turned the gun on himself after the end of his shooting spree. He was a “former student who was expelled for forging doctors’ signatures on absence-excuse notes” and never fit the profile of a social misfit (Lemonick & Wallace, 2002, para. 1). Wallace (2002) speculated that “one clue to his actions may be that when the shootings took place, 12th-grade students had begun taking the grueling examination known as the Abitur, which is necessary to graduate from high school” and go on to university and it is believed that the killing was an act of revenge for being excluded from this vital school activity (p. 3).

Oksanen, Kaltiali-Heino, Holkeri, and Lindberg (2015) chronicled what happened in Finland after two mass shooting incidents in Jokela in 2007 and Kauhajoki in 2008 which led to the killings of 20 people combined. Oksanen et al. (2015) noted that following the shooting incidents in Jokela and Kauhajoki, students threatened to carry out similar acts of violence. In

response to these threats, education authorities in Finland adopted a zero-tolerance policy on verbal threats and that each one of them must be reported to the police (Oksanen et al., 2015). It was reported that by October 11, 2011, four years after the Jokela shootings, 580 threats were reported to the police but only 57 of them were prosecuted (Oksanen et al., 2015). Oksanen et al. (2015) observed that “school shooting threat became a national phenomenon in Finland and various professionals were trying to find answers and solutions” to reduce the number of verbal threats of violence (p. 146).

In 1996, a 43-year-old man in Dunblane in Scotland walked into a primary school gymnasium armed with four automatic handguns and opened fire on the students, killing 16 of them and their teacher. He then shot himself afterward (Duffy, 1996). But not all the violence in schools in foreign countries involves the use of guns. For example in Denmark, a female high school student was stabbed to death by her former boyfriend whom she had ended a relationship with only 2 days before (Elklit & Kurdahl, 2013). It must be pointed out that although mass shooting incidents around the globe are a distressful situation, it should be noted that they are rare events and make up a very small fraction of violent crimes by their youth population (Bondu et al., 2011).

In making a case for arming teachers in American classrooms, there was a reference about how Israel responded to gun violence on their school campuses. Nedzel (2014) wrote about the violence against Israeli students after they were taken as hostages and later killed by the PLO in the 1970s. Nedzel (2014) said after that incident the government of Israel decided to militarize their schools by increasing security by providing armed guards or arming their teachers even on school outings. Nedzel added: “Israel has not experienced such an attack since” (p. 434). The militarization of schools in Israel might be necessary due to the fact that the Jewish

state is constantly engaged in military clashes with its Arab neighbors, but these measures might not be appropriate for American schools because this country is not facing a war with a foreign country on its own soil, Nedzel (2014) admitted.

Three years before the Columbine shooting, Australia experienced its worst mass shooting in history when a gunman armed with two semi-automatic rifles killed 35 people and wounded an additional 18 more at a Tasmanian tourist location in Port Arthur Penal Colony (Hirsh, 2013). Hirsh (2013) observed that in “in stark contrast to the US, when faced with its own tragic mass shooting at Port Arthur in 1996, Australia seized the opportunity to completely reform its gun control laws” and at least one “quantitative research reveals that the introduction of strict and uniform gun controls in Australia has resulted in substantial reductions in gun violence” (p. 82). Given the success of what happened in Australia, the question had been asked if the Australian model could work in America.

This is what happened twelve days after Australia’s worst mass shooting: Prime Minister John Howard got all its governors from its six states and leaders from all its territories to agree to enact universal gun control legislation which included the banning of automatic and semiautomatic rifles, a licensing and registration of all firearms, proper storage requirements of all firearms and background checks of all gun purchases (Hirsh, 2013). Hirsh (2013) concluded that even though the Supreme Court in the United States ruled twice that banning handguns was unconstitutional, the many states in America could still implement the same policies that went into effect in Australia. Hirsh (2013) noted that “the examination revealed that the US could ban automatic and semi-automatic weapons, introduce a licensing and registration system mandating safety training and prohibiting high-risk individuals from accessing firearms, tighten safe storage laws, ensure only licensed dealers are entitled to sell firearms, and strengthen firearm dealer and

sales regulations, all without violating the Second Amendment” (p. 103). Hirsh (2013) said this is due to the fact that “even after the endorsement of an individual right interpretation in *Heller and McDonald*, the Second Amendment does not prevent the introduction of gun control laws that are substantially related to important government interests, such as preventing crime and enhancing public safety, as are the vast majority of Australian gun control laws” (p. 103).

President Bill Clinton had signed a bill banning 19 different kinds of semi-automatic rifles but the law had a clause that allowed it to expire after 10 years and it was never renewed (Cole, 2016). While semi-automatic weapons have the ability to kill more people than handguns during a mass shooting, this weapon is rarely used in school shootings according to research conducted by a major news outlet. According to a review of 24 school shootings in 2018 by Newsweek magazine, only three of such events involved the use of a semi-automatic rifle (Woytus, 2018).

Summary

This literature review has revealed that gun violence on American school campuses is a serious problem with school shootings happening each year in many states and that nearly 55% of the shootings take place in K-12 schools (McQuiller, 2019, Welsh, 2016). We also know that white males using handguns are responsible for most of the shootings in many instances (Musu et al., 2019) and that while bullying plays a role, there are “various dynamics that contribute to an environment that can predispose a community to school shooting” (Reuter-Rice, 2008). Gun violence in American schools has been declared an epidemic and a public health crisis with a financial price tag in the range of \$174 billion as of 2010 (Katsiyannis et al., 2018).

In response to gun violence, states have responded by introducing a mix of solutions including arming their workforce. One of the biggest cases against arming teachers is the fact

that most teachers are opposed to their colleagues carrying concealed handguns at school, according to a Gallup poll of K-12 teachers (Brenan, 2018). On the other hand, one of the most credible arguments for arming teachers is the fact that many schools without adequate funding and being too far away from the nearest police station must rely on their staff to protect themselves against armed intruders (Shah, 2013a).

Shockman (2019) said despite the fortification of schools, this did not slow down the increase in the frequency of school shootings which suggests that the measures implemented to stop these attacks are ineffective. The use of active drills, forcing teachers to watch training videos, providing resource officers in schools, more security at entry points and surveillance cannot prevent a student from bringing a gun to school and opening fire on schoolmates (Shockman, 2019). The study by two school security experts from Minnesota recommends keeping S.R.O.s involved in schools, but that there is a greater need to implement mental health services that provide care for students on an individual basis in order to tackle dangerous threats. The two researchers stated that schools should take threats very seriously because their study showed that school shooters normally make threats about what they intend to do before they carry them out (Shockman, 2019).

But perhaps, the divide over guns has its origins in the Cultural War over guns which heightened with political battles between Newt Gingrich's deployment of funds from the biggest gun lobby in the country, the N.R.A. against a sitting President Clinton who had just passed gun laws banning semi-automatic rifles and increased background checks of gun purchases (Gagnon, 2012). This review also informed us that many countries in the world had experienced gun violence because those shooters may have been copying what happened at Columbine. And

while gun violence did occur in the schools of other countries it did not happen as frequently as they do on American campuses (Bondu et al., 2011).

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the design and research methodology that were used to conduct this study. The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives and experiences of six classroom teachers and three school administrators in Colorado who are authorized to carry concealed handguns into school buildings. The perspectives of armed teachers and school administrators were not found in literature, therefore, such experiences would add to the body of research on the issue.

This study will employ the use of the qualitative research method to examine the list of research questions. Roberts (2010) made a useful definition of the qualitative research method. The author observed that the “qualitative approach is based on the philosophical orientation called *phenomenology* which focuses on people’s experience from their perspective” (p. 143). Roberts (2010) states that “inquiry begins with broad, general questions about the area under investigation and that “researchers seek a holistic picture--a comprehensive and complete understanding of the phenomena they are studying” (p. 143). The author also noted that at this point the researcher will enter the field to collect information, make observations, and carry out detailed and open-ended interviews. With a qualitative study, the data are words instead of numbers. Roberts (2010) said examining “the essential character or nature of something, not the quantity can be sometimes called naturalistic inquiry because the research is conducted in a real-life setting” since there will not be an effort to manipulate the environment (p. 135).

Statement of the Problem

Fifteen states in America have laws that allow schools to arm their workforce and legislation to allow teachers to carry a concealed weapon is pending in at least nine other states

by the beginning of 2020 (Owen, 2018). Still, no studies were found in the literature that listed the challenges and experiences of educators who carry concealed handguns into school buildings. Therefore, it is desirable to conduct research that examines the perspectives of these teachers in order to provide information that may be of interest to educational leaders and the wider community.

This qualitative study consisted of interviews with six classroom teachers and three school administrators from rural Colorado who carry a concealed handgun at school. The study employed the use of the qualitative research method. Roberts (2010) made a useful definition of the qualitative research method. The author observed that the “qualitative approach is based on the philosophical orientation called *phenomenology* which focuses on people’s experience from their perspective” (p. 143). The qualitative study included face-to-face interviews and written responses from the participants about their perspectives on the challenges and positive aspects of carrying a concealed handgun at school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the perspectives and experiences of six classroom teachers and three school administrators in rural Colorado who are authorized to carry a concealed handgun into school buildings. There are anecdotal incidents about experiences of armed teachers in media interviews, but such reports were not found in the literature. The documentation of the experiences and perspectives of armed teachers and school administrators should add to the body of research on this topic especially for school districts that are still considering whether to arm their workforce.

Research Questions

1. What perceptions related to school security do select classroom teachers and school administrators report before the district gave approval to arm its workforce?
2. What levels of training and support do select teachers and school administrators report to prepare them to use and carry a concealed handgun into school buildings?
3. What did select classroom teachers and school administrators identify as challenges and positive experiences while carrying a concealed handgun at school?

Research Design

The method of qualitative research used for this study was the use of interviews and open-ended questions. Crossman (2019) said that this kind of research is “a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help understand social life through the study of targeted populations of places” (para. 1). Qualitative research has attracted researchers because it allows for the investigation of people’s behavior and how they relate to others (Crossman, 2019). At the start of the study, participants were interviewed face-to-face, but this was discontinued because of the coronavirus and replaced with open-ended questions being sent through email by the researcher.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of nine educators from Colorado: six of them are high school classroom teachers. Two of the school administrators work at an elementary school and the third one is a school administrator who works at both schools. The participants are a convenience sample. Describing the reasons for convenience sample, Crossman (2019) said this is

when a researcher is eager to begin conducting research with people as subjects, but may not have a large budget or the time and resources that would allow for the creation of a large, randomized sample, the researcher may choose to use the technique of convenience sampling. This could mean stopping people as they walk along a sidewalk, or surveying passersby in a mall or it could also mean surveying friends, students, or colleagues to which the researcher has regular access. (para. 2)

The educators in this study were identified by the researcher through information provided by a colleague who volunteers for a police department in Denver, Colorado. The contact at the police department was among a number of retired police officers who worked with school districts to provide initial and recurrent firearms training to educators in Colorado. The participants met the specific criteria required for this study: that they had to have been carrying their concealed handgun at school for at least 12 months. The rationale for the use of the criterion was based on the notion that a teacher or administrator who had been carrying a concealed handgun for a year could provide enough experience to discuss during the interview.

At the two schools where these educators carry guns, it is public knowledge that members of staff carry concealed handguns, however; the names of those armed teachers and administrators remain confidential to the public, students and other members of staff. In order to protect the identity of the participants in this study, the names of these educators will remain confidential. The participants in this study will be identified only by their gender and assigned an alphabet or a number. They are listed below:

Female Teacher A, Female Teacher B, Female Teacher C, Male Teacher D, Male Teacher E, Male Teacher F.

Administrator Number one, Administrator Number two, Administrator Number three.

Human Subject Approval

During the study, all the participants were employed at the schools in a district in Colorado. Of the six teachers, three are men and three are women. Of the school administrators, one is a man and the other two are women. Their race or gender was not a factor in the selection for participation in the study.

After several discussions with a colleague about the purpose of this study, an email was forwarded to several teachers who fit the criterion for the study. Those teachers then emailed the researcher and expressed a willingness to be interviewed. After several email exchanges, the researcher met face-to-face with some of the teachers to conduct interviews. Before the beginning of each interview, the participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the confidentiality and the non-risks declarations (see Appendices C, D, and F). They were told they had the right to accept or decline to participate in the study. After the doctoral committee approved the study proposal, the researcher submitted an application to the St. Cloud State University Institutional Review Board (I.R.B.) before starting to conduct interviews (see Appendix A). The researcher listed the details of the study, procedures, ethical concerns, data collection and security protocols in the IRB application form. This included the required consent forms. The researcher agreed to keep the names of the educators anonymous in the study. After all the interviews, the participants were offered a \$5 gift card from Starbucks. The risk for being involved in the study is very minimal if any at all.

Instrument(s) for Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher established a list of questions based on a review of a number of articles that were examined during the review of the literature. Developing this kind of instrument was required since this kind of tool could not be found in research. The very purpose of this study is

based on the notion that there is very little research conducted examining the actual experiences, challenges and issues encountered by classroom teachers who are armed with concealed handguns. After consultation with the chair of the doctoral dissertation committee, the researcher established an instrument. It is 10 questions that each participant would be required to answer during a face-to-face interview. Roberts (2010) has confirmed that the creation of your own instrument is a regular part of conducting research when an appropriate one is not available. The instrument was created to ensure that it aligned with the research questions of the study.

Data collection began on March 4, 2020 and was completed on April 14, 2020. The researcher went to Colorado and conducted six face-to-face interviews, however; due to the guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control and Prevent. following the outbreak of the coronavirus, that kind of data collection was discontinued. The researcher had to request permission from the IRB to modify the way the data was collected. The IRB approved the modification to allow the researcher to use FaceTime or send written questions to participants in the study. (see Appendix B). Three participants: one school administrator and two teachers responded with written responses; three other teachers who had initially agreed verbally to participate did not respond to written questions. The list of questions that were asked by the researcher during the face-to-face interview is the same set of questions that were sent to participants by email after the data collection procedure was modified. The questions that were sent by email are listed at the end of this study (see Appendix F).

Treatment of Data

Roberts (2010) observed that qualitative studies must provide “a description of the matrices used to display the data and identify the coding processes used to convert the raw data into themes or categories for analysis” (p. 159). This description should have information about

how a large amount of information was analyzed whether it was the use of software or just sticky notes or index cards. Roberts (2010) observed that “every researcher approaches the coding process differently and that “there is no one right way to code textual data” (p. 159). The data for this research was collected through separate face-to-face interviews with six of the participants. Those sessions were recorded and lasted for about 45 minutes. After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed. Three of the interviews did not need to be transcribed as they were already written. The researcher did not meet three of the participants due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. After approval was given by the IRB to modify the data collection, a list of questions was sent by email to three educators and they responded with written answers.

After reviewing the transcripts from the audio and written responses, a framework for coding the data was established by the researcher. A list of themes was pre-selected based on the instrument used for the interview. For example, the researcher listed the following words or phrases before going through the transcripts: perceptions of security, training systems; challenges encountered and positive impact. Those themes were used to match the data to the codes already identified. This pre-conceived approach is a well-established tactic in qualitative research known as framework analysis or “structured” coding (Turner, 2019).

Summary

The qualitative study involved face-to-face interviews of six educators: two education administrators and four classroom teachers and written responses from three educators: two school administrators and one classroom teacher. They are all employed at a school district in Colorado. The purpose of the interviews and written questions was to examine the perspectives and experiences of a small group of teachers and school administrators who are authorized to

carry concealed handguns into school buildings. The study results are intended to add to the body of research on the specific issue of experiences of educators who carry guns at school.

Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perspectives of six classroom teachers and three school administrators in Colorado who carry a concealed handgun into school buildings. Specifically, these educators noted the support and challenges they experienced as armed educators on the job. A study of this nature may add to the literature since research about the experiences of armed teachers and school administrators was not found. This study could also provide important information to leaders of school districts who are considering arming their workforce.

Fifteen states in America have laws that allow schools to arm their workforce and legislation to allow teachers to carry a concealed weapon is pending in at least nine other states (Owen, 2018). This study employed the use of the qualitative research method to examine the list of research questions. Roberts (2010) made a useful definition of the qualitative research method. The author observed that the “qualitative approach is based on the philosophical orientation called *phenomenology* which focuses on people’s experience from their perspective” (p. 143). The qualitative study included face-to-face interviews and written responses from the participants about their perspectives on the challenges and positive aspects of carrying a concealed handgun at school.

A review of the literature has revealed that law enforcement and educators are concerned about the increase in the frequency of school shootings and the uptick in targeted shootings (Paradice, 2017, Warnick et al., 2010). Gun violence on American school campuses is a serious problem with school shootings happening each year in many states and that nearly 55% of shootings take place in K-12 schools (McQuiller, 2019, Welsh, 2016). We also know that white males using handguns are responsible for most of the shootings in many instances (Musu et al.,

2019) and that while bullying plays a role, there are “various dynamics that contribute to an environment that can predispose a community to school shootings” (Reuter-Rice, 2008). Gun violence in American schools has been declared an epidemic and a public health crisis with a financial price tag in the range of \$174 billion as of 2010 (Katsiyannis et al., 2018).

In response to gun violence, states have responded by introducing a mix of solutions including arming their workforce. One of the biggest arguments against arming teachers is the fact that most teachers are opposed to their colleagues carrying concealed handguns at school, according to a Gallup poll of K-12 teachers (Brenan, 2018). On the other hand, those who support arming teachers point out that many schools without adequate funding and located far away from the nearest police station must rely on their staff to protect themselves against armed intruders (Shah, 2013a).

Shockman (2019) said despite the fortification of schools, this did not slow down the increase in the frequency of school shootings which suggests that the measures implemented to stop these attacks are ineffective. The use of active drills, forcing teachers to watch training videos, providing resource officers in schools, more security at entry points and surveillance cannot prevent a student from bringing a gun to school and opening fire on schoolmates (Shockman, 2019). The study by two school security experts from Minnesota recommends keeping S.R.O.s involved in schools, but that there is a greater need to implement mental health services that provide care for students on an individual basis in order to tackle dangerous threats. The two researchers stated that schools should take threats very seriously because their study showed that school shooters normally make threats about what they intend to do before they carry them out (Shockman, 2019).

But perhaps, the divide over guns has its origins in the Cultural War over guns which heightened with political battles between Newt Gingrich's deployment of funds from the biggest gun lobby in the country, the N.R.A. against a sitting President Bill Clinton who had just passed gun laws banning semi-automatic rifles and increased background checks of gun purchases (Gagnon, 2012). This review also informed us that many countries in the world had experienced gun violence because those shooters may have been copying what happened at Columbine. And while gun violence did occur in the schools of other countries it did not happen as frequently as they do on American campuses (Bondu et al., 2011).

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative study of classroom teachers and school administrators who carry concealed handguns at school in Colorado. This study is an examination of the perspectives and experiences of a small group of educators who are authorized to carry concealed handguns into school buildings in Colorado. To achieve this goal the researcher conducted separate face-to-face interviews with six of the participants and exchanged emails with questions and answers from three others. The primary areas of research examined in this study included the perceptions by the teachers and the school leaders about school security before they were authorized to carry a concealed handgun, the training and support they received, and their positive and negative experiences.

The method of qualitative research used for this study was the use of interviews and open-ended questions. At the start of the study, participants were interviewed face-to-face but this was discontinued because of the coronavirus and replaced with questions sent through email by the researcher. This study was guided by three research questions.

Description of the Sample

Eight of the participants in the study had experience with firearms before they were authorized to carry a gun at school. Three of them were former members of the United States military while the other five had a license to carry a concealed handgun. Only one of the participants did not have any experience with handguns before volunteering to carry one at school.

Participant A is a female high school teacher who has been teaching for 28 years. She has been carrying a firearm at school for 12 months. She had been licensed to carry a firearm for many years before carrying a concealed handgun at school.

Participant B is a female high school teacher who has been a teacher for four years. She has been carrying a concealed handgun at school for a year but she had spent several years in the military before she became a teacher.

Participant C is a female high school teacher who has been teaching for 12 years. She has been carrying a concealed handgun at school for a year. She did not have any experience with guns until she enrolled in a basic class for handguns prior to volunteering to carry a concealed handgun at school.

Participant D is a male high school teacher who has been teaching for 16 years. He also spent time in the military before he switched careers to become a teacher. He has had a license to carry a concealed handgun since 2019 before he volunteered to carry one at school. He has been carrying a gun at school for a year.

Participant E is a male high school teacher who has been teaching for 43 years. He has been carrying a licensed firearm since 2015 and has been carrying one at school for 12 months.

Participant F is a male high school teacher who spent many years in the military before he became a teacher. He has been carrying a gun at school for 12 months.

Administrator number one is a male member of staff who has been in education for more than 20 years. He has been carrying a concealed handgun since 2019.

Administrator number two is a female elementary school member of staff who has had a license to carry a concealed handgun for eight years before she volunteered a year ago to carry one into school buildings. She has been in education for 24 years.

Administrator number three is a female elementary school member of staff since 2015 and has had a hunting rifle for many years before she volunteered to carry a concealed handgun at school.

The interview information for each participant: Female teacher A, Female teacher B, Female teacher C, Male teacher D Male teacher E, Male teacher F and Administrator one, Administrator two and Administrator three were organized by research questions. The responses by teachers and school administrators were organized separately to make it easier for the reader.

This qualitative study involves six classroom teachers and three school administrators employed at two educational institutions, an elementary and a high school in rural Colorado. The interview format included face-to-face sessions and written responses. This study was guided by three research questions.

Research Question 1

What perceptions related to school security do select classroom teachers and school administrators report before the district gave approval to arm its workforce?

Male teacher F said before teachers started carrying concealed handguns at the Colorado high school, the security plan called for teachers to shelter in place that is to remain in their classrooms under lockdown and wait for the police to respond to an active shooter situation.

Female teacher B said the school conducted an active shooter drill in 2018 and it took law enforcement 45 minutes to reach the campus. And the first officials to arrive were not the police: they were from the state's Parks and Wildlife Department. "That made me worry," she remembered, "this is when arming teachers became a topic for discussion."

Male teacher E echoed the same sentiment. He said many staff members were concerned about the amount of time it would take law enforcement to get to the school campus if there was a school shooting incident. He elaborated:

Knowing the response time out here if you call 911, you are lucky enough to have a deputy sheriff close by; it might be five minutes. But we did our drill two years ago (2018) and it was well over 30 minutes before we had a response. And I thought there's not a whole lot they can do for you.

Male teacher D said the main flaw in the previous security plan was that it would take too long for the police to get to the school to neutralize an armed intruder. He said, "Many studies show that any kind of shooting incidents happen in minutes and so by the time any armed officers would be here it would have already ended so we were very vulnerable."

Female teacher B said the length of time it took police to reach the school during the active shooting drill was a major concern for her. She said due to the fact she had served in the military before starting her teaching career she thought about volunteering to bring a concealed handgun at school. "I knew about weapons safety and all of that. I was qualified for it. My

husband was also worried that I was out here without anyone to help us. It could be a shooter or an animal because we have wild animals too.”

Female teacher A said security protocol for dealing with an armed suspect before she was allowed to carry a gun at school made her nervous. She was nervous because she felt defenseless if the intruder was able to break his or her way into her classroom. She observed:

It was basically lights out, close the (window) blinds with students sitting at their desks and just waiting. You are supposed to act like you are not there. But if an intruder is there, they know you are there, they know you are at school. They don't come to shoot up a school at night. I always said this is stupid, I said I didn't care. I was one of the first teachers who said we are going to fight back and that's what my plan was about. We made barriers at the door. Students are told to put their backpack on but to wear it in front of them because those books could be useful to protect their organs. We still have that now but we have so much more additional security measures, plus now I am armed to protect my students if it comes to that. I decided years ago that I would rather go down to give my life to my students. These kids are my kids. As a teacher, I am like their second mom....also, it's just like on the plane. People will not just sit there anymore if someone is acting... like you know? People are going to fight back.

Female teacher C also wanted a security plan that involved fighting back. Before she was armed, she said the previous security plan made her feel like “a sitting duck” because they would be “sitting in their classroom waiting for the armed suspect to break in and take a shot at anyone.” Teacher C said she suggested arming the staff to help take care of any potentially armed suspect because the police are too far away to help. She remembered that she was not the only one who was in favor of allowing teachers to carry guns. She added:

Before the 2018-2019 school year, the superintendent held some town hall meetings with parents and members of the community to get a feel for approval of armed staff. The meeting I attended showed that many hands were raised when parents were asked by a show of hands who would support arming school employees. From there, the school board and district leaders created a plan and put policies in place as well as insurance and training.

Female teacher B described the security plan as inadequate before teachers were armed. She said, “Honestly our security plan was lacking, but because so many teachers didn’t want to carry (a concealed handgun) or were opposed to teachers carrying they started fighting for other security measures.” Female teacher B noted that for example, the school did not have any fencing and that came about because a serious debate started about what non-lethal measures to protect the student population.

She said the school was sharing a School Resource Officer (S.R.O.) with another school. She said the S.R.O. was on campus for only a couple of days in the week until one was finally assigned to their school on a daily basis. But the service lasted only for a year as the sheriff’s department was requesting that the school pay for the services of the armed officer. “We couldn’t afford it so they took her away,” said the female teacher. She said the withdrawal of the S.R.O. was worrisome because they were stuck on depending on the police which would not be able to respond as quickly as possible if there was a shooting incident at school.

Male teacher E said before teachers were armed he remembered that the school was involved in announced and unannounced lockdown drills as part of its security plan but that it was up to each teacher to provide information on how they intended to keep an armed intruder from entering their classrooms. He recalled that his school had a lockdown drill two weeks

before the mass shooting in Columbine in 1999. “I had a plan to be by my door with a baseball bat in case someone tried to enter,” he said.

Female teacher A said that since teachers have been armed at the high school in 2019, their training drills have shown that they can respond to an armed shooter in 30 seconds instead of waiting more than 30 minutes for police to arrive. She added:

They say that most of the killings take place within the first three minutes that the armed shooter gets on the scene. We can reduce the carnage by a lot because we are already here. The killings at Sandy Hook Elementary School make me sick. If someone had been armed at the front office, they could have eliminated the threat. It could have been a different story.

Administrator number two who is employed at the elementary school said although they had locked doors and had active shooting drills at school, she welcomed the idea to arm staff members. “I had a permit eight years before I started carrying at school so I felt very comfortable doing this.” Administrator number two also noted that response time to a potential shooting has been significantly reduced because they have staff members carrying guns.

Administrator number one stated that the school district did not have any formal security plans in place before staff members started carrying guns. He said the schools had a Security Resource Officer designated to their schools but that the school district had to discontinue the service because of financial reasons.

Administrator number three said she performs a security function at school because it is her job to monitor the video doorbell at her elementary school. She said while the system is effective, she felt more secure knowing that if someone gets through the secured entrance with a gun, she can use force to defend herself and students.

Summary of Research Question 1 Findings. The information from the interviews presented a negative perception regarding school security before the workforce was armed. Six of the participants expressed concerns about the time it would take for the police to arrive at their school because the campuses were in a rural area far away from the nearest police station.

Before teachers and school employees carried concealed handguns to school, the participants from the elementary and high schools said the protocol for handling an armed suspect on campus called for teachers to keep their students locked in their classrooms until law enforcement arrived. But the active shooting drills conducted at the schools revealed that it would take at least 30 minutes for the police to reach their school buildings. Two of the participants believe that if teachers are armed they can respond much quicker than the police.

Research Question 2

What levels of training and support do select teachers and school administrators report to prepare them to use and carry a concealed handgun into school buildings?

Male teacher E said the organization that was responsible for covering the cost of arming and training the teachers is a non-profit group called FASTER which is Faculty/ Administrator Safety Training and Emergency Response. He said the program they were engaged in offered over 26 hours of firearms training and three days of classroom evaluations. Male teacher E noted the following:

This is really good first training because many of us might think we would be really good at shooting but then when you get with somebody who is truly a professional then you learn a lot and realize that if you have to carry (a firearm) you will have a huge obligation and responsibility to be safe and be reactive if necessary.

Male teacher E noted that the school district paid for their memberships at the gun range, however; he said because he lives in a very remote, rural area with a huge back yard, he would often engage in target practices at home, firing off at least 100 rounds each week.

Male teacher D said while teachers at his high school were asked to volunteer to carry a concealed handgun, the school district implemented a comprehensive screening process to ensure that each volunteer was competent enough to carry a concealed handgun at school. He added:

We had psychological screenings, and they choose people based on the success of that. And they did so because we had people who were against us carrying weapons. But the school district was smart to allow people opposed to teachers carrying guns on these selection committees to weed out people.

He said after the selections were made volunteers had three full days of weapons training including with former law enforcement professionals from S.W.A.T and special operations teams. He added: “That was pretty extensive because we probably used 1,500 rounds, plus field training and at least 6, 7 hours of classroom work. We also had to pass a performance test to get the certification to be able to carry it at school.” He said each year they must engage in recurrent training to maintain their certification. In addition to that, Male teacher D and his armed colleagues conduct their own training with each other and also engage in scenario-based training with law enforcement officers even though they are not required to conduct such exercises. But he said they are motivated to maintain a state of readiness. He said when they conduct this additional training they do not use live ammunition. He said the scenario-based training is related to safety and teachers are not armed to replace S.W.A.T teams. Male teacher D explained:

We are just here to stop a threat and then we are taught—if there’s no shooting going on and there’s nobody dying then we not focused on hunting to kill or anything and we are

not doing cartwheels down the halls looking for bad guys—we will focus on the safety of the students such as first aid or other safety-related tasks.

Male teacher F observed that the initial training was intense. He said:

We use the FASTER program and it was three days of mental, medical, and a lot of firearms training. It took a lot of people from a beginner shooter to highly trained. We have also done a lot of follow-up training as a team and as individuals. I have taken multiple classes and I have practiced no less than 20 hours a month.

Male teacher F served in the military and he said he has had a lot of experience training with all types of firearms.

Female teacher C said that she is one of the teachers who never owned a gun and had no experience with them before volunteering to carry one at school. Before she signed up to carry a handgun at school in January of 2019, she enrolled in a basic handgun class taught by a former member of the United States Army Special Forces. The female teacher said, “I went with a friend who showed me the basics and helped me choose a weapon. I also signed up for a basic handgun class given by a Green Beret, it was a 2-day class, in the classroom and on the range.” After that training, she participated in the initial training conducted by FASTER. She said the teachers who now carry guns at school engage in training at least once a month and attend team meetings/training when asked. She said they have recurrent training each year.

Female teacher A said she admired the way that her school established an information campaign to inform its stakeholders about the plan to arm its workforce as the many teachers had many misconceptions about having an armed workforce. She explained:

First of all, not everybody is going to carry a gun. You have to be invited, you have to want to carry a gun and you had to go through a very strict vetting process. I don't think every teacher should get a gun, that's ridiculous!

She said in addition to firearms training, the armed teachers are trained in helping students if they became a victim of gunshot wounds. She said the school also has a team of staff members involved in helping to detect students who are displaying behaviors that merit some kind of intervention or counseling.

Female teacher B said in addition to weapons training, the program involved learning how to treat victims with gunshot wounds and how to deal with stress and making decisions during a crisis situation. Each teacher had to have a perfect score in marksmanship to get certified. "I was told Police officers only have 26 out of 28 and we had to have 28 out of 28." She said on-going training involves working with police officers conducting drills of active shooting situations. She said a couple of weeks before this interview, she and another co-worker were involved in an active shooting drill at an elementary school in her district. She said the drill involved learning how to stop an active threat and to go through each room and declaring them safe to enter. Female teacher B said one of the major aspects of the training and school security is the building of friendships between the armed teachers. "...it's important to train a lot together as much as we can to build comradery among the people who carry (a weapon)."

To protect staff members who carry concealed handguns their names are not disclosed to the rest of the staff, students and the wider community, according to *Male teacher F*. He added: "they are not allowed to ask if a teacher is part of the team." *Female teacher C* wrote that they (members of the security team) are forbidden to discuss the topic with anyone at the school for security reasons.

Male teacher E said none of the students have ever asked which members of staff are carrying guns. He added... “and you know we try to tell the kids don’t ask me because we are not going to tell you.” He also said his gun is locked away in an undisclosed location at the school. He said if he is carrying his concealed handgun, the clips are carried separately from his weapon to minimize the accidental discharge of his handgun.

Male teacher F said the high school is working with the security team to wear some kind of identifying clothing that can be worn if there is a shooting incident. He said they have had training with law enforcement on how to identify themselves. He said the training drills at the moment are to follow the instructions of the police.

Female teacher C also noted that there are discussions about finding a visual cue that would be noticed by the police. The current procedure is to verbally identify yourself and follow the instructions of the police on the scene.

Male teacher D admits that while there could be confusion regarding the identity of an armed shooter and armed teachers; he thinks any shooting event might almost be over by the time the police arrive. He explained:

In reality, whatever is supposed to happen will be done by the time they (the police) get here. When the threat is down we need to re-holster completely and then obviously whoever is on the phone will say: there is armed staff, one is wearing this or he is wearing a blue shirt. Please don’t shoot us. We have talked about getting some kind of identifiers. We have not implemented that yet, but it’s something we always talk about.

Male teacher E said discussions about wearing something during an emergency are good ideas but worries that teachers might forget about it because of the nature of the emergency event. He said while teachers are aware of each other, the police will not know the identities of

the teachers carrying handguns. He said the training procedure is to identify themselves; put their weapons down and assume whatever positions ordered by the police. He added:

...because obviously, those kinds of accidents are probably the most likely accidents. It would be nice if all of us could identify each other and that's information they would have to have beforehand. I don't know how you could disseminate that because we are covered by so many jurisdictions, mostly the county sheriff and the deputies. But the drill goes like this: this is El Paso County Sheriff's department, and they respond by telling me what to do, I am an armed teacher. My gun is on the ground or I am away from my gun.

When asked about how armed teachers will identify themselves to law enforcement in the event of a shooting incident, *Administrator number one* said based on the training, armed staff must listen to the commands of the police on the scene. He added: "for example when ordered we would drop our weapon immediately and drop to the floor." The administrator said the school district is considering the purchase of an application that would help law enforcement to recognize who are the armed members of staff. He also said there are discussions about getting an armband or vest that would be worn if an emergency occurs.

Administrator number two said when the security team is engaged in tactical training with the police, they practice such scenarios. She said when the call goes out to the police, they are to be informed of armed members of staff and when the police arrive we confirm our identities. She said: "The person who calls must provide certain information to the police. Tell them that I am wearing black pants, a yellow sweater and I am part of the armed staff team. The person calling has to be very clear and vocal about this because you need accurate information to avoid accidents."

Administrator number two said in addition to the required training by the school district by FASTER, she is engaged in firearms training every week. She noted that she is at the gun range where her membership cost is covered by the school district.

Administrator number one said he has been licensed to carry a concealed handgun before educators were allowed to carry their guns at school, but he said when the FASTER training came about, it was geared specifically to what they were trying to do. He said it was three days of training in shooting and scenario-based evaluations. He said the schools in the district worked closely with law enforcement and others to create layers of security that included four parts. For example, he said the security team consists of members of staff who carry concealed handguns, staff members who can render first aid to victims of gunshot wounds; and teams that provide social and emotional interventions. Lastly, there are also improvements in building infrastructure.

Administrator number one said that if any of the teachers who are armed have concerns about the mental and emotional well-being of any of their colleagues, there is a reporting system in place to ensure that the information is passed on to the relevant authorities. He said armed teachers can be suspended from the team if this was necessary. He said he is not above this process.

Administrator number three said she grew up in a family that had guns in the house and due to this prior experience with guns she decided to volunteer to be included in the armed security team at school. She described the FASTER program as comprehensive. One practice that emerged from training and that has been put in practice at school is that armed staff members do not carry their guns loaded. Administrator number three said she carries the clip

with bullets separately “We do not carry with anything in the barrel....to avoid anything going off at any time,” she stressed.

Administrator number three said the security team has been trained on how to handle this issue and the words to be communicated by the persons who will contact the police. “When they call 911 they must say who we are; what we look like and what we are wearing and that we are armed.”

Summary of Research Question 2 Findings. The initial training for teachers and school administrators in this school district in Colorado was carried out by Faculty/Administrator Safety Training and Emergency Response, a non-profit organization in the state. The training was provided at no cost to the school district and the program offers 3 days of training in weapons safety, marksmanship and first aid solutions for gunshot wound victims. They also had to pass target practice (shots at human-shaped targets) to get certified to carry their handgun at school. Recurrent training is conducted each year.

In addition, the participants engage in on-going informal or formal training in their community. The school district covers the membership fees for volunteers at the local gun range. The teachers and school administrators undergo a comprehensive vetting process before they are allowed to carry a concealed handgun at school. Though they are armed at school, their weapons are not loaded with ammunition. The clips with bullets are carried separately as a safety precaution to ensure that their handgun does not go off accidentally. While everyone at school knows that its workforce is armed, the identities of the members of the security team remain confidential for security reasons.

Another aspect of the training involves identifying themselves to law enforcement officers in the event of a shooting event. Communication is a key part of this: when the call is

made to the police they will be told that teachers are carrying guns; they must indicate what they look like and what they are wearing. The armed teachers and school administrators have also been instructed to identify themselves and should listen to the instructions of the police on the scene.

Research Question 3

What did select classroom teachers and school administrators identify as positive experiences and challenges while carrying a concealed handgun at school?

Since the workforce has been armed at this Colorado high school, *Female teacher A* said she feels a personal sense of empowerment. She believes the rest of the community feels this way as well. She regards this sense of empowerment as the positive effects of carrying a concealed handgun at school. Also, according to Female teacher A:

I think students feel safer. I think teachers feel like we are being empowered because if something were to go down we have a plan in place which includes more than just carrying guns...we have practiced how to respond to a shooting and the drills have been extremely effective in identifying the gaps we need to work on. We have a lot of confidence from the community.

She said that the community has been very supportive of the security plan that includes having an armed workforce. She added:

I have had no negative feedback at all. No one knows that I am armed but there has been no one protesting outside the school and I think that parents feel that we have a plan in place to keep their students safe...we actually have a waiting list for students to get into this school!

Male teacher F said he was happy that the idea to arm teachers was brought to the public before it was approved. He said the public has been very supportive of the plan because they realized that teachers wanted to “stand up for their kids.” When he was asked to comment on any positive effect that he has experienced since he has been authorized to carry a gun at school, he replied, “We have not had any incidents where we needed to use our firearms.”

Female teacher C described the relationship with other members of the security team as “fun” to work with and said she is happy to have such a good rapport with them. She also feels much safer having a gun at school so that she can protect herself, her students, and her colleagues at work. She said that she now carries a gun outside of school which is something she never did before. She also said the community is very happy to have armed staff at school.

Regarding positive experiences she has had since she is armed, **Female teacher B** said she feels safer because she is carrying a gun at school. She said the feeling of being more empowered is very positive.

I feel like I can protect the students and our community...we had had a couple of situations where we did implement a lockdown. I remember someone was in a black hoodie riding a bicycle and he was acting suspiciously. But it turns out that he was just a student. He wasn't armed. But I know that if someone were to come in here and try to threaten my students, I would be in a position to help them.

She said based on her experience many members of the community support the decision of the school district to arm the workforce, however; she said there has also been a lot of negative feedback about the security measure. She was quick to point out that parents are not withdrawing their students from the school and there has been an increase in enrollment since

she has been carrying a gun at school. “I think a few parents may not like the idea (that teachers are armed) but they are ignoring it.”

Male teacher D said he believes the community is almost 100% in support of the security policy of having armed members of staff at the school. He said: “I have never met a member of the community who is against it. Actually, most of the opposition is from some teachers, but a lot of teachers support us too.” He said when members of the community express favorable opinions about the armed staff, he feels very appreciative of the comments because he is aware that the topic of armed teachers can be very controversial.

Male teacher E believes that while the students do not know the names of the armed members of staff, they are very appreciative of the notion that someone is looking out for them. He added:

I think that’s the best positive impact I can see from all of this and kids are smart, tough and they are not worried about us having an accident. The kids see the signs out there (that staff members are armed) and it can probably help deter us from having a shooting. I think the signs tell a potential shooter, don’t bother coming here because someone will address you. I think the odds of someone coming here are low but the fact that we are armed pushes those odds even further below.

Male teacher E estimates that at least 75% of the community is very supportive of the policy of arming its workforce while the other 25% are resigned to the idea. He elaborated:

There is always going to be somebody who says teachers should not be armed. But the community was also made aware of the drill that was done two years ago and what the wait time was for the police to arrive. Even the teachers who were reluctant about it (arming teachers) understand that only people with training are going to be armed. Once

the misconception that the school wasn't going to buy a bunch of guns and hand them out to every teacher was squashed more support and positive feedback came from the staff.

Female teacher A said she cannot report any challenges that she has experienced while carrying a gun at school. She noted that while people do not know that she has a concealed handgun, the community has been very supportive of the policy of arming its workforce, "some people are still concerned" about it. She explained:

The biggest concern was thinking that everyone would be issued a handgun which is not the case. But we did a really good job of communicating this to the community. We let people know that there are safety protocols, we have first aid and we have counseling. Those are three aspects of the plan we have in place.

Female teacher B said one challenge she has experienced is the fact that when anyone at work expresses an unfavorable opinion about the workforce being armed, she tries to remain silent because she does not want to say anything that would reveal the identities of the teachers carrying her own. She added:

Sometimes you feel alone because if people don't know you are carrying they can't really judge you but you still feel that way. I would compare it to being the only Trump supporter or the only Bernie Sander supporter in a room where everyone is the opposite. It can be awkward sometimes. People are passionate, and against it and I have to just stay out of it...

She also said that selecting what she wears can also be a challenge because she always has to ensure that her firearm remains concealed.

Male teacher D reported that wearing clothes that will keep his handgun concealed can be a challenge. He noted that he has experienced "some discomfort at times" and since he has

several meetings outside of the school he has to be mindful of the places that forbid the carrying of firearms. “Also, if I go to another meeting at a school that doesn’t allow, I can’t so...the challenge can also be forgetting that I have it on me.” But he said his colleagues who are armed are always vigilant and making sure that his handgun is not showing through his clothing.

Female teacher C expressed similar challenges with clothing to conceal her weapon. She has opted to wear a corset gun holder which she said works well but she also felt hot without a fever wearing it. She added:

I have had to figure out how to conceal while standing in front of a room full of kids. It was much harder to do than I thought, I am a thin person, there is really nowhere to hide a gun easily. The discomfort of the weapon poking and jabbing leaves red marks by the end of the day.

She also said “hugging anyone is awkward, leaning back while sitting is out of the question” as it will cast an imprint of a handgun. “So attempting not to adjust it while around others is hard,” she admitted.

Male teacher E said he has not experienced any serious challenges while carrying a gun at school except maintaining the right kind of clothing to keep his weapon concealed. “I carry my gun on one side with two extra magazines on the other side so I have both legs basically balancing my pants so I don’t have a fat leg and a skinny leg,” he observed.

Male teacher F said he did not have any negative or challenging experience to report.

Administrator number one said the positive effect that he has experienced since he has been armed is watching the community members express their appreciation for what the teachers and armed staff members are doing to protect their students. Administrator number one noted that even though the community and staff were overwhelmingly supportive of armed staff to

protect students, the school district ensured that opposition voices were included on the interview committee selecting members of the security teams at the elementary and high schools.

Administrator number one reported that the school district's effort to arm teachers was a collaborative approach. He said the district conducted surveys to get the views of the stakeholders before it implemented the decision to arm its workforce. He said 79% of the community said it supported staff members carrying guns at school while 72% of the staff favored the idea of arming their workforce. Said Administrator number one: "Most parents of children attending our school support the idea of having an armed workforce because they are aware of how isolated the school is from the nearest police station."

Reflecting on positive experiences since carrying a gun at school, *Administrator number three* said she feels better knowing that she has more control over any potentially dangerous situation that may arise at school. She also said that the community response has been very positive although she admits: "there have been a few that are not necessarily in agreement with what we are doing...but once they find out about the training we engage in they are a little more onboard."

Administrator number two echoed the same sentiments of feeling safer because she is armed at her elementary school. She said: "I know that if something were to happen...instead of being a victim I know I would have the opportunity to solve the problem and make it better." She said it is tragic to turn on the television and watch a news story about another mass shooting at school where teachers were not in a position to defend themselves.

Commenting on the challenges experienced since carrying a gun at school, *Administrator number one* mentioned dealing with false reports and rumors about armed staff members,

however; it is not an issue now as communities have come to accept that teachers with guns at school will be a part of the campus security.

Administrator number two said the most challenging aspect of carrying a handgun at school is the selection of clothing to keep her gun concealed: “I have to be careful in what outfits I wear to school so my gun doesn’t stick out. And the other challenge at the elementary level is that kids always want to give you hugs and so for me is... I have to be aware always when I see them coming.”

Administrator number three said she does not have any challenging or negative experience to report.

Summary of Research Question 3 Findings. Four of the participants said they felt safer at school because they were carrying a concealed handgun. One teacher described it as a personal sense of empowerment. They felt better believing that being armed can help them protect the students if there is a shooter on campus. They also noted that a supportive community has been a positive experience since the workforce has been armed at school. The biggest challenge that was mentioned involved clothing selection. Four of the participants mentioned clothing selection to fit their concealed handgun as an issue. One teacher mentioned that she had to be careful around elementary students because she fears that those wishing to give her a hug might feel the print of her gun while another female teacher found it challenging that she had to remain silent when her peers expressed unfavorable opinions about an armed workforce. She said because the names of the armed teachers are confidential, she has been instructed to avoid entering these debates.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the findings of the three research questions. Six classroom teachers and three school administrators offered their responses to questions about their experiences after they had been authorized to carry concealed handguns at school.

The first question was based on perceptions by classroom teachers and school administrators related to school security before the district gave approval to arm its workforce. Teachers and administrators were concerned about school security because the police were too far away to respond in the event of a school shooting and that they could not afford to pay for the services of an S.R.O.

The second research question was related to the types of training and support members of the security team received as they volunteered to carry a concealed handgun at school. The initial training was carried out by Faculty/Administrator Safety Training and Emergency Response FASTER, a non-profit organization in the state of Colorado. The training was provided at no cost to the school district and the program offers three days of training in weapons safety, marksmanship and first aid solutions on how to help gunshot wound victims. They also had to pass tests to get certified to carry their handgun at school. Recurrent training is conducted each year.

The third research question was related to positive and challenging experiences that they have faced while carrying a concealed handgun at school. Almost all of the participants said they felt safer at school because they were carrying a concealed handgun. One teacher described it as a personal sense of empowerment. The biggest challenge that was mentioned repeatedly was selecting the right clothing to ensure that their handgun remains concealed.

Chapter V examines the findings as it relates to the literature and presents the conclusions and discussion of the study findings. Limitations of the study are presented and recommendations for further research are discussed.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Discussion, Limitations, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perspectives and experiences of a small group of teachers and school administrators in a rural school district who are authorized to carry concealed handguns into school buildings. Although there are anecdotal views by teachers or school administrators who carry concealed handguns in media interviews, research about their perspectives was not found in the literature. The documentation of the experiences and perspectives of armed teachers and school administrators will add to the body of research about school security and could provide information for school districts that are still considering whether to arm their workforce. The qualitative study provided the opportunity to conduct face-to-face interviews and gather written responses from a small group of educators in Colorado.

Chapter V provides conclusions that emerged from the interviews conducted with the six classroom teachers and three school administrators based on the three research questions that guided this qualitative study. The study findings are compared with the related literature. Limitations and further recommendations for research and practice are provided in the chapter.

Overview

The first research question was related to perceptions about school security before teachers and school administrators were allowed to carry concealed handguns at school. Most of the participants said they were concerned about not having armed security on campus and the time it would take law enforcement to reach the school if there was a shooting event. Participants felt that if teachers were armed they could reduce the time it would take to respond to an armed intruder.

The second research question was related to the types of training and support received by teachers and administrators who volunteered to carry a concealed handgun at school. The initial

training was provided at no cost to the school district by a non-profit organization and the program offers three days of training in weapons safety, marksmanship and first aid solutions for gunshot wound victims. They also had to pass target practice (shots at human-shaped targets) to get certified to carry their handgun at school. Recurrent training is conducted each year.

The third research question was related to positive and challenging experiences encountered by teachers and school administrators who carry concealed handguns at school. The participants said they felt safer carrying a concealed handgun at school and listed the support from the community as positive aspects of being an armed educator. They also said finding the appropriate clothing to keep their firearm concealed and dealing with unfavorable views about arming teachers as negative experiences.

Conclusions and Discussion

For this section, the study findings are compared with the related literature.

Analysis Related to Research Question 1

Research Question number one addressed the perceptions by the teachers and the school administrators about school security before they were authorized to carry a concealed handgun.

Research Question 1: What perceptions related to school security do classroom teachers and school administrators report before the district gave approval to arm its workforce?

According to the study findings, most of the participants expressed various degrees of anxiety about school security before the workforce was armed. During the interviews, six of the participants said their anxiety was due to the fact that their schools could not cover the cost of having armed security and that previous active shooting drills had revealed that the police response time was well over half-an-hour. Female teacher C had reported that before teachers and school administrators carried guns at school, the security plan for dealing with an armed

shooter was for teachers and students to remain in their classrooms until police arrive on campus. Female teacher C said she had never liked this security plan because of the time it took the police to arrive on campus during active shooting drills.

Female teacher A believes that having a gun would be helpful if a shooting were to occur at her school. She said reports of previous school shootings revealed that most of the killings take place within the first three minutes after the armed shooter arrives on the scene. She stated that during their active shooting drills their response time is about 30 seconds. She added:

We can reduce the carnage by a lot because we are already here. The killings at Sandy Hook Elementary School make me sick. If someone had been armed at the front office, they could have eliminated the threat. It could have been a different story.

The review of the literature revealed there is at least one example of a security expert confirming that mass shootings are usually over within six minutes (Jackman, 2018) The literature also mentioned that schools in rural districts have opted to arm their workforce because they cannot afford armed guards and they are far away from the law enforcement (Shah, 2013a).

It is worth noting that DeMitchell and Rath (2019) have reported that shootings have occurred in schools even when there was armed security. Warnick et al. (2015) explained that schools are targeted because the shooter “deliberately selected the location for the attack” and most likely will not be deterred by armed guards. The school is “not simply a random site of opportunity” and these shootings involve “a student or former student as the shooter with the target being current students or teachers” (p. 371). So while arming teachers might not deter an armed suspect, it is possible that an employee carrying a gun could neutralize the suspect. In the absence of any shooting incidents involving a teacher and an armed suspect, we may need to conduct more studies to examine what are the likely outcomes in such a scenario.

Analysis Related to Research Question 2

Research Question number two addressed training and support for the teachers and school administrators who carry a concealed handgun into school buildings.

Research Question 2: What perceptions related to school security do classroom teachers and school administrators report before the district gave approval to arm its workforce?

The study findings showed that the initial weapons training for the participants were carried out by Faculty/Administrator Safety Training and Emergency Response, a non-profit organization in Colorado. The training was provided at no cost to the school district and the program offers three days of training in weapons safety, marksmanship and first aid solutions for gunshot wound victims. They also had to pass target practice (shots at human-shaped targets) to get certified to carry their handgun at school. Recurrent training is conducted each year.

Male teacher D said the school district implemented a comprehensive screening process to ensure that each teacher that volunteered was mentally competent to carry a concealed handgun at school. He also said that teachers who carried guns had to undergo 26 hours of initial firearms training and three days of classroom evaluations. He said after the selections were made volunteers had three full days of weapons training including with former law enforcement professionals from S.W.A.T and special operations teams. He added: "That was pretty extensive because we probably used 1,500 rounds, plus field training and at least 6, 7 hours of classroom work. We also had to pass a performance test to get the certification to be able to carry it at school." He said each year they must engage in recurrent training to maintain their certification.

Female teacher B said in addition to weapons training, the program involved training to take care of trauma injuries and how to manage stress and making decisions during a crisis situation. She each teacher had to have a perfect score in marksmanship to get certified. "I was

told Police officers only have 26 out of 28 and we had to have 28 out of 28.” She said on-going training involves working with police officers conducting drills of active shooting situations.

The literature was divided over whether teachers can use a firearm effectively if they were confronted by an armed student. Kirk (2018) reported that a Johns Hopkins University education professor Sheldon Greenberg examined the track records of law enforcement officers’ confrontations with armed suspects and the evidence suggests that “police officers do not shoot accurately in a crisis encounter” and believes that teachers who encounter school shooters are not likely to do better than the police (para. 7). But a university professor who carries a concealed handgun on campus has stated that research has proven that anyone can do a good job defending themselves with firearms “despite their relative lack of training compared to police officers” (Hsiao, 2018, p. 470.) He said that teachers do not need to be an expert with firearms to use them successfully and that “even for someone untrained, guns are still their best bet for self-defense” (p. 471).

Kirk (2018) said Greenberg is a former police officer who had round table discussions with law enforcement in January 2013 and many of his former colleagues expressed concerns about the policy of arming teachers “including the erroneous assumptions that a teacher would be in proximity to the shooter, the likelihood that an armed teacher and plainclothes police officer would not mistake each other for an active shooter...” (para. 8).

Hsiao (2018) noted that the police’s inability to determine who the shooting suspects are “would apply to any situation in which the police must encounter a victim who is successfully resisting an attack” (p. 468). The professor stated that “mistaken identity can occur in a host of different contexts and not just those on campus. Hsiao (2018) then added: “so if the mere possibility of police confusion is enough to justify a ban on campus carry, then it would also

justify a ban on any kind of forceful self-defense measure. But this would be absurd: it would mean that victims would not be allowed to defend themselves” (p. 469). The writer suggested that maybe the time has come for implementing requirements for gun owners to have training in self-identification and communications with law enforcement and first responders (Hsiao, 2018).

The study findings suggested that the armed teachers and school employees covered the topic of self-identification by armed staff members during weapons training. It appears that communication is a key part of this: if a 911 call is made to the police the caller is instructed to provide a series of information including that the teachers are carrying guns, indicating what they look like and what they are wearing. The armed teachers have also been instructed to identify themselves when the police arrive and should listen to the instructions of the police.

Administrator number one said the district is considering the purchase of an application that would help the police recognize who are the armed members of staff. He also said there are on-going discussions about getting an armband or vest that would be worn if an emergency occurs. Procedures of self-identification by armed teachers were not found in the literature and it is yet to be seen how this would work for the schools with an armed workforce.

Participants in the study said the school district implemented a policy of carrying their handguns separately from clips with ammunition to avoid accidental firearm discharging. They had not had any incidents since they have been armed since 2019. In the literature, there have been at least two reported cases of firearms going off accidentally by teachers who carry guns at school (Connolly, 2014). In Utah, it had been reported that an elementary school teacher’s gun went off; shooting herself in the leg while in that same month a university professor shot himself in the foot while he was teaching a class (Connolly, 2014).

Analysis Related to Research Question 3

Research Question number three asked the participants to talk about the positive and challenging experiences they have had since they have been authorized to carry a concealed handgun at school.

Research Question 3: What did select classroom teachers and school administrators identify as challenges and positive experiences while carrying concealed handguns at school?

During the interviews, four of the participants said they felt safer at school because they were carrying a concealed handgun. One teacher described it as a personal sense of empowerment. They also noted that a supportive community has been a positive experience since the workforce has been armed at school. At least one of the teachers said he appreciates the fact that the students have displayed a sense of gratitude towards him even though they are not aware of the identities of the teachers who are armed. He added:

I think that's the best positive impact I can see from all of this. Kids are smart, tough and they are not worried about us having an accident. The kids see the signs out there (that staff members are armed) and it can probably help deter us from having a shooting. I think the signs tell a potential shooter, don't bother coming here because someone will address you. I think the odds of someone coming here are low but the fact that we are armed pushes those odds even further below.

According to the literature, many of the teachers who chose to carry a concealed handgun at school said the decision was personal. Speaking to an elementary school teacher in Colorado, Gutowski (2018) observed that teachers feel an overwhelming responsibility to protect the kids in their care especially after some of the worst mass shootings at American schools had taken place. Brudin (2017) reported that one Colorado teacher has admitted that "the question of being

able to shoot and kill someone she knows has crossed her mind” and has described it as her “absolute worst nightmare” (para. 9). The teacher has been carrying a concealed handgun to school for two years and hopes that she could handle that situation if it occurs. At the same time, she hopes this will never happen. But she believes “carrying a concealed handgun is worth it to protect her 20 students” (Brudin, 2017, para. 10).

As for challenging experiences, four of the participants mentioned clothing selection to fit their concealed handgun as an issue. One teacher mentioned that she had to be careful around elementary students because she fears that those wishing to give her a hug might feel the print of her gun. The challenge to find appropriate attire to conceal their firearm has been found in the literature (Brudin, 2017).

One female teacher cited listening to unfavorable views about armed staff members and being unable to respond to them as her biggest challenge. Female teacher B said armed teachers have been instructed not to engage in any discussions with her peers about her armed colleagues even if the comments are negative. Such opposition should not come as a surprise because many teachers oppose arming their workforce based on documentation from the literature (Brenan, 2018).

The participants in this study have said during their drills, the response time of law enforcement was more than 30 minutes while the time for the armed teachers is 30 seconds. Of course, a number of things could go wrong in the event of a real scenario. Shah (2013a) recounted the questions teachers asked after the killings at Sandy Hook Elementary. “Can I kill someone if the time comes? And maybe the most frightening of all, what happens if I miss?” (Shah, 2013a, p. 23).

Luckily, we are yet to witness such a situation where an armed teacher had to discharge his or her gun during a real active shooting event. And we still do not have any credible research examining the effectiveness of armed teachers (Minshew, 2018). But this is an area where more study needs to be conducted. There are also important questions that are worth looking at if school leaders want to arm their workforce. If a teacher inadvertently shot and killed another student while he or she was responding to an armed attack, who should be blamed for this incident: the teacher trying to repel the attack or the armed suspect? Then, there is the issue of law enforcement unknowingly using force against an armed teacher because the information about the identity of the teacher did not reach the police on the scene in a timely manner. The participants in this study agree that this is a matter that they are constantly thinking about. These are legitimate issues and questions that require honest answers but we can find moral and ethical answers for them.

Limitations

According to Roberts (2010), limitations are certain features of your study “that you know may negatively affect the results or your ability to generalize” and are usually “areas over which you have no control” (p. 162). The coronavirus had a major impact on this study.

1. Three of the participants who had initially agreed to participate in a face-to-face interview eventually switched their input through written questions instead due to a nationwide lockdown triggered by the coronavirus.
2. The diversity of the participants was also impaired. The participants in this study were all from a rural school district in Colorado. Four other teachers from Texas and Utah had given a verbal agreement to participate in the study but later declined because they were unavailable addressing personal matters related to the virus.

Recommendations to the Field

After a review of the information from the interviews, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

1. It is recommended that if school administrators in school districts support the idea to arm its workforce, it should engage its stakeholders such as parents, teacher unions and its teachers in a series of public and private discussions before making a final decision;
2. It is recommended that if school administrators wish to go ahead with plans to arm its workforce, it should include dissenting voices on committees or panels established to select volunteers;
3. It is recommended that school administrators develop methods for increasing contacts and communications with local law enforcement regardless of whether its workforce is armed or not.

Recommendations for Further Research

Given the findings of the research and its potential to add to the literature, the following future research studies are suggested:

1. A mixed-method study should be conducted to examine the experiences of teachers opposed to having an armed workforce but are working in schools with armed teachers;
2. It is recommended that this qualitative study about armed teachers and school administrators is replicated with a much larger sample size to include participants from multiple states;

3. It is recommended that a qualitative study be conducted to assess the perspectives of parents who have students attending schools in districts where teachers carry concealed handguns.
4. In the absence of any shooting incidents involving an armed teacher or school employee and a shooting suspect, it might be desirable to conduct a study of any kind to examine what are the likely outcomes in such situations.

Summary

Chapter V examined the findings of the study in relation to the literature and presented the conclusions of the study. The study also presented its limitations. This qualitative study conducted interviews with six classroom teachers and three school administrators who carry concealed handguns in two schools at school.

The study results revealed that most of the study participants were concerned about school security before their workforce was armed. They were worried about not having any armed guards at their schools and the amount of time it would take for the police to reach their campuses in the event of a mass shooting at school. The participants also indicated that their main challenge carrying a concealed handgun at school was selecting the right clothing to ensure that their weapon remains hidden.

All nine participants had to complete 26 hours of initial firearms training, target practice and 3 days of classroom evaluations before they were authorized to carry a concealed handgun. They must also attend re-current training each year to be certified to continue carrying a concealed handgun. More than half of the participants had prior experience with guns as two teachers were former members of the military and another three already had permits to carry a concealed handgun.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Patrick Scudder
Email: pmscudder@stcloudstate.edu

**IRB PROTOCOL
DETERMINATION:
Exempt Review**

Project Title: Teachers who carry guns

Advisor: John Eller

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1949 - 2516	Type: Exempt Review	Today's Date: 2/5/2020
1st Year Approval Date: 2/5/2020	2nd Year Approval Date:	3rd Year Approval Date:
1st Year Expiration Date:	2nd Year Expiration Date:	3rd Year Expiration Date:

Appendix B: IRB Approval for Protocol Modification



OFFICE OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD REQUEST SPONSORED PROGRAMS For ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY Protocol Revision or Modification

This form is to be completed when requesting a modification to an approved or exempt study. Please submit this coversheet, as well as *tracked* and *clean* copies of the revised protocol and/or any revised supporting documents.

Proposed changes to the protocol or study documents may **NOT** be implemented until after the IRB has approved the modification.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal Investigator (PI):	Patrick Scudder
IRB #:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Study Title:	Teachers who carry concealed handguns

OVERVIEW OF CHANGE

Specify whether changes are made to the following:
<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol Title – New Protocol Title: Click or tap here to enter text.
<input type="checkbox"/> Funding Source - Explain: Click or tap here to enter text.
<input type="checkbox"/> Study Population/Eligibility Criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> Study Sample Size
<input type="checkbox"/> Research Sites or Locations
<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment Methods or Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Consent/Assent Forms or Process
<input type="checkbox"/> Data Management/Confidentiality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Modification to Instruments or Measures (e.g. Interview protocols, surveys)
<input type="checkbox"/> Others, please explain: Click or tap here to enter text.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Provide a brief summary of <i>each</i> change:
Due to the Corona virus, face-to-face interviews will be virtually difficult to complete and a less intrusive method of collecting data will be required to complete more interviews. For example, the use of FaceTime or telephone interviews that are recorded might be required and also sending in written responses to questions might also be required in light of social distancing guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control, CDC.
Provide a rationale for <i>each</i> change:
The use of written responses by participants or recorded FaceTime or phone chat are necessary due to the the corona virus.

RECONSENTING OF PARTICIPANTS

Could the requested change affect a participant's willingness to continue taking part in this research study?
--

Appendix C: Request for Research

March 3, 2020

Dear Superintendent [REDACTED] my name is Patrick Scudder. I am a candidate for a doctorate in educational leadership at State Cloud State University in St. Cloud in Minnesota. I am conducting a qualitative study about teachers who are trained and authorized to carry a concealed handgun into school buildings. In my research about this topic, I discovered that there has been a lack of information regarding the actual experiences about teachers who are armed. The study I am conducting would help to add to the body of research on this subject. The teachers who participate in my study would remain anonymous and the schools they attend will not be listed. In my published report teachers would either be listed as teacher one or two.

I am writing to you because I hope you can help me to connect with teachers who have undergone training at your school. I would really appreciate your help. Please consider this letter as an introduction. I understand if you decline this request. But should you be willing to help connect with teachers or any other armed employees, please let me know so we can begin discussing how we can make this a reality.

My supervisor is Dr. John Eller, a professor in Educational Leadership and the Director of the Applied Doctoral Program in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State. He is also the chair of the committee that is supervising my research. If you do wish to contact him to verify my work, you can email him at j.eller@stcloudstate.edu or call the center of doctoral studies at 320-308-4220. You can also contact me directly at this email or call me [REDACTED]. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Patrick Scudder

Appendix D: Research Subject Informed Consent Form

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

St. Cloud State University
Center of Doctoral Studies
B 121 Education Building
720 4th Avenue South
St. Cloud, MN 56301

Patrick Scudder
[REDACTED]

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

1. PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

- You are asked to participate in a Qualitative Research Project documenting the experiences of teachers who are authorized to carry a concealed handgun into school buildings.

2. PROCEDURES

- You will engage in a face-to-face interview with the researcher who will record the session for accuracy. Interviews could last for about one hour.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORT

- There should not be any possible risk or discomfort for participants, however you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS

- When the study is concluded, you will be offered an opportunity to learn about the results. The information will certainly add to the body of literature about teachers who carry concealed handguns into school buildings.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- After completion of each interview, participants will be offered a \$5 gift card from Starbucks.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

- The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Your personal identity will remain confidential. You will not be identified by your name in any published material. All data will be kept in a file cabinet in a locked drawer in my apartment.

7. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time, for any reason, without penalty. The study investigator may stop your participation at any time without your consent for the following reasons: if you fail to follow directions for participating in the study, if the study is canceled, or for reasons deemed appropriate by the research coordinator to maintain subject safety and the integrity of the study.

8. AVAILABLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Any further questions you have about this study will be answered by the Main Researcher: Please contact him at the number listed.

9. AUTHORIZATION

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will be informed about the result of this study. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws.

Participant Name (Printed):

Date:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Appendix E: Release Form for Use of Photograph/Video/Audio Recording

Teachers who carry concealed handguns into school buildings

Patrick Scudder
Principal researcher

[REDACTED]

Dr. John Eller
supervisor

[REDACTED]

Please Print:

Participant Name

Legal Representative if Applicable

This form asks for your consent to use media for and from this study. We would like you to indicate how we can use your media. On the next page is a list of media types that we will use. Please initial where you consent for that type of use of your media. Legal representative initials will provide consent when needed.

Regardless of your answers on the next page, you will not be penalized.

We will not use your media in any way you have not initialed.

Questions regarding this form should be directed to the researchers. Additional answers can be found by contacting the IRB Administrator or an IRB Committee Member. Current membership is available at: <https://www.stcloudstate.edu/irb/members.aspx>

A copy of this form will be provided for your records.

TYPE OF RELEASE: USED BY RESEARCH TEAM TO RECORD AND ANALYSE DATA.

CONSENT GRANTED

Appendix F: Interview Questions

1. What was the security plan that was in place before you began carrying a concealed handgun at school?
2. How have the policies and practices changed since you started to carry a concealed handgun at school?
3. What influenced your decision to carry a concealed handgun and how was your school administrator involved?
4. Tell me about your initial training for the use of your handgun and what kind of recurrent training do you engage in?
5. Do you have specific procedures in place regarding the use of your firearm that addresses concerns from those who might not like the idea of arming teachers and school employees?
6. How have members of the community responded to the new security measure?
7. What are some of the challenges you have experienced while you have been armed?
8. Can you tell me about any positive experience you have had since you have been carrying a concealed handgun at school?
9. How will armed teachers identify themselves to law enforcement that arrive that arrive on campus in the event of a shooting incident?
10. What advice would you give to schools considering arming their workforce?