

2023

Exploring Black Parents' Perception of Armed Teachers in School Settings

Iris Mathis-Spellman
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Iris Mathis-Spellman

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Walden University
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Abstract

Exploring Black Parents' Perception of Armed Teachers in School Settings

by

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MA, Norfolk State University, 2009

MSW, University of Connecticut School of Social Work, 2000

BS, Westfield University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

May 2023

Abstract

The prevalence of mass school shootings in K–12 classrooms has ignited ongoing conversations about arming teachers in school settings to prevent future tragedies and provide a safe learning environment for students. This research study aimed to understand Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. Critical race theory provided the framework to explore the impact of race and implicit bias on teacher–student social interactions when policies permit teachers to carry firearms. Accordingly, the research questions explored Black parents' perceptions of policies allowing armed teachers in school settings. A basic qualitative design was utilized with a purposeful and snowball sample method. Data were collected via audio-recorded semistructured interview questions of 10 participants. Data were transcribed using Rev.com, and NVivo was utilized to facilitate the data analysis. A six-step, inductive thematic analysis of the data was conducted, and six themes emerged. The overall results indicated that all participants perceived that Black students are already impacted negatively by persistent patterns of mistreatment and having a loaded firearm in the hands of teachers coupled with implicit bias would exacerbate the racial violence experienced by Black students. The recommendation is for future researchers to continue to explore the impact of the arming teacher policy on Black students. The findings positively impact social change by encouraging lawmakers and school district leaders to review their stances on the arming teacher policy and focus on finding better alternatives for responding to and preventing mass school shootings that do not subject Black students to additional harm.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Allen Mathis; my mother, Iris A. Mathis; my sisters, Nina M. Mathis, Latisha S. Mathis, and Shamora Mathis; my brother, Maasai A. Mathis, and sister in love, Jewell Mathis. You each supported me during this tedious and remarkable journey and showed your unwavering faith and love for me. You cared about my health and whether I got enough sleep and took the time for self-care. You often made me chuckle with your overprotective behaviors. Thank you to infinity and beyond for your prayers, encouragement, love, and support!

I also dedicate this dissertation to my late Nana, Isabel Nelson Mathis Simms, and my late grandmother, Willie Mae Harris. You both believed in me, took pride in all my accomplishments, and believed that if I put God first, I could accomplish anything. I miss you both very much. I will never forget everything you taught me, and I will continue to make you proud and strive to be the best I can be. I love and thank you for being an integral part of my life. Rest easy.

To my nieces, Ruby, Deanna, Nyema, and Zamaya, and my nephews, Marquise, Larry, Jai, Jamari, Jaylen, and Jace, Auntie loves you. *Thank you for your love!* *Nothing*, and I mean *nothing*, is impossible with God!

Our Family Motto: “*When one wins, we all win.*”

Acknowledgments

First, I am nothing without Christ, and I acknowledge his existence in my life. Without grace and mercy, blessings, and the power of prayer guiding me through a challenging yet rewarding journey and overwhelming accomplishment, I would not be here writing this acknowledgment. I want to thank those who supported, encouraged, and empowered me along this road to my Ph.D. I want to extend a special thank you to my spiritual leaders, Pastor Thomasine McClendon, who is resting in Jesus, and Pastor Walter Thomas Pierce, who prayed fervently for me and had faith when my faith wavered and I doubted that this process would ever be over. I would also like to give a special thank you to Dr. Tony Gaskew for serving as my dissertation committee chair. Your guidance, support, encouragement, zoom calls, and diligence to get me to the finish line during this dissertation journey were remarkable. Dr. G, you kept me focused and moving in the right direction to complete this stressful process. Dr. G, your enthusiasm was unmatched; sometimes, I felt you wanted it more than I did. Still, that zeal motivated me to keep going. I would also like to thank my second committee chair, Dr. Carolyn Dennis. Thank you for your support, guidance, and help as I completed the methodology portion of my dissertation. Your expertise was valuable in helping me to understand the method of research. I want to also thank Dr. Joseph McMillian for serving as my URR.

Last but not least, I thank my tribe. To all of my family members and friends, I could not have completed this goal and fulfilled this aspiration of working towards and finally completing my Ph.D. Without your love, support, and unwavering encouragement, graduation 2023 would not be possible. I am forever grateful and

appreciative for all the phone calls, check-ins, and constant push towards success and excellence. Your love is unmatched. I love each of you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Millions of American students attend school daily (United States Census Bureau, 2019). The goal of entering academia is for the educational process to occur and students to aspire to excellence. Students attend educational institutions to learn social skills and become academically enriched to become productive citizens in society (Kehoe et al., 2018). Thus, an institution of learning should be an environment of safety (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). However, in the late 20th and 21st century, U.S. schools have not always been safe places. Many schools have been a battleground for mass shootings (“School Shootings,” 2018).

Mass school shootings, also known as rampage-style shootings, are not a new phenomenon. Over the past 50 years, the United States has had more than 250 shootings in secondary and postsecondary schools (Cato, 2018, para. 1). School shootings, which cause fear, hurt, and pain for loved ones and emotional scars and trauma that linger for years, are a cause for concern and public outcry. Nevertheless, despite the growing research, interest, and debate of mass school shootings, there has not been enough done to curtail these tragedies, with no concise solution for preventing mass school shootings (Gervase, 2019). Therefore, legislators in some states, including Florida, have enacted laws giving teachers and administrators the authority to carry concealed firearms in school and on school premises to ensure students’ safety so they can thrive in an academically enriched environment, free from the potential of school gun violence (Conti, 2015). Such measures may appear to be the best solution for increasing the safety and security of students, teachers, and administrators. However, these approaches have

caused a growing debate and mixed views of whether arming teachers and administrators is a good safety strategy and response to mass school shootings. Teachers, administrators, students, legislators, other stakeholders, and even the U.S. President have voiced concerns, perspectives, perceptions, and recommendations for policies that enable educators (i.e., teachers and administrators) to carry concealed firearms on school grounds (Isbell et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2020; Minshew, 2018). However, the stakeholders too often left out of the conversation are the Black parents of children who could be impacted by policies for arming teachers in school settings. Thus, a need existed to research Black parents' perceptions of policies to arm teachers. Black parents could contribute different perceptions to the ongoing debate of arming teachers to protect students from further mass school shootings.

Thus, the goal of this study was to understand Black parents' perceptions of policies for arming teachers in school settings. This study focused on Black parents' perceptions of arming teacher policies in school settings in Florida and the southeast United States. The study also addressed the impact of such policies on Black students in schools where implicit racial bias may exist.

Chapter 1 presented the study's background, problem statement, and purpose. The chapter also included the proposed study's research questions, theoretical framework, and nature of the study. Chapter 1 also presented the definitions of key terms, as well as the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and social impact, followed by a chapter summary.

Background

School shootings are not a new phenomenon in the United States (Paolini, 2015). Attacks in the late 1990s and the 21st century have caused extensive tragedy. Fox and Fridel (2018) noted, “The issue of school shootings in general, dominated the news in the national discourse, so much so that the Associated Press named it the news topic of the year” (p. 17). National media outlets presented the tragic murders of students and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary, Columbine High School, Santa Fe High School, and West Nickel Mines Elementary (Dahmen, 2018; Dahmen et al., 2018; Luca et al., 2020). Recurring incidences indicated the need for a solution to keep students and staff safe from further mass school shootings. One response to school gun violence was enacting policies that enabled school teachers and administrators to carry concealed firearms on school grounds (Luca et al., 2020).

The December 14, 2012, Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, resulted in the deaths of 21 first graders and six school personnel. The shooting was one of the deadliest mass school shootings in the history of the United States at that time (DiLeo et al., 2018). The Sandy Hook attack inspired the first of many national debates on how to prepare, prevent, and react to vulnerability to gun violence in U.S. schools. The National Rifle Association (NRA) advocated for and proposed allowing teachers and administrators in every U.S. school district to carry concealed firearms on school grounds in anticipation of mass school shooting violence (Weatherby, 2015). Some school leaders nationwide also called for an end to shooting violence in schools and began considering arming teachers (Agnich, 2015).

However, arming teachers was a decision left to individual states, and state legislators began to discuss policies for arming teachers in school settings. After much debate, leaders from 30 states introduced and proposed policies for arming teachers and school administrators on school campuses (Weatherby, 2015). Legislators from 15 states signed into law the policy for arming educators in school districts (Yacek, 2018).

In 2018, a school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, resulted in 17 dead and 17 injured (Brezenski, 2018; Galea et al., 2018; Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Mettler, 2019). The Marjory Stoneman Douglas attack was the deadliest school shooting in the United States and became a catalyst for another public call for action. Legislators sought to prevent mass school shootings, reigniting a federal and national debate about arming teachers (Isbell et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2020; Rajan & Branas, 2018).

In December 2018, President Trump issued a statement, saying, “No, child, no teacher, should ever be in danger in an American school. No parent should ever have to fear for their sons and daughters when they kiss them goodbye in the morning” (Congressional Bills 116th Congress, 2019, para. 4). The President subsequently established the Federal Commission on School Safety, the objective of which was to “review safety practices and make meaningful and actionable recommendations to keep students safe” (DeVos et al., 2018, p. 6). The Federal Commission on School Safety provided several recommendations for preventing school violence and mass shootings, such as placing trained school resources officers (SROs) in schools to prevent, protect,

and respond to campus violence. President Trump went further, advocating for arming teachers (Blad, 2018). President Trump tweeted,

Armed Educators (and trusted people who work within a school) love our students and will protect them. Very smart people. Must be firearms adept & have annual training. Should get yearly bonus. Shootings will not happen again—a big & very inexpensive deterrent. Up to States. (Minschew, 2018, p. 129)

Thus far, the federal government has not implemented national policies for arming teachers in school settings. Thus, state leaders, including those in Florida, have been able to enact state legislation for programs that allow arming teachers to protect schools and students from gun violence (RAND Corporation, 2020). One such endeavor is the Guardian Program, implemented in 2018 after Coach Aaron Feis was shot and killed in the Parkland, Florida, school attack. Established through the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, the Guardian Program authorized highly trained school personnel or hired individuals to act as a school guardian, aiding in averting an active school shooter on school premises (Florida Department of Education, 2019). In 2019, Florida established the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, which suggested expanding the Guardian Program to allow teachers to carry concealed firearms in schools. This recommendation caused much debate. Some individuals believed that arming teachers as the first line of defense for student safety could subject children to further risk (Mancini et al., 2020). Arguments for and against arming teachers resulted in emotional debates in Florida, as in many other U.S. school districts.

Mass school shootings are a reality in the United States without a concrete solution for preventing further tragedies. There was no federal law, and state laws vary greatly (Minschew, 2018). School districts in various states (e.g., South Dakota, Alabama, Kansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Indiana, Ohio, Texas, and Tennessee) have indicated support for arming teachers. However, other state and school leaders fear such actions would pose greater threats to students, teachers, and staff (Minschew, 2018). Despite the substantial attention afforded such policies, politicians, state and government officials, and other stakeholders have not considered the full impact of arming teachers, including the effect on Black students.

In the 2013–2014 school year, 50 million students are enrolled in K–12 schools across the United States (Nowicki, 2018). According to Nowicki (2018), “Black students represented 15.5 percent of all public-school students and accounted for 39 percent of students suspended from school, an overrepresentation of about 23 percentage points” (p. 12). Statistics and a growing body of research have indicated that teachers exhibit implicit bias toward Black students for behavior infractions and disciplinary actions. Thus, Black students receive significantly more in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions than students of other demographics (Blad, 2018; Cook et al., 2018; Nowicki, 2018; Wegmann & Smith, 2019).

Several studies and government reports have suggested that implicit, bias-negative attitudes and stereotypes about certain groups of people, especially Black students, have a significant impact on views of student behavior (Blad, 2018; Cook et al., 2018; Nowicki, 2018; Wegmann & Smith, 2019). Compared to White students, Black

students often receive harsher disciplinary outcomes for perceived disruptive, violent, and threatening behaviors, such as school-related arrests, calls or referrals to law enforcement, and corporal punishment (Blad, 2018; Nowicki, 2018; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Moreover, these concerns could negatively influence a teacher's approach to engaging with a Black student, which could result in injury or even death if the teacher has a firearm in a school setting.

This study addressed the legislation for arming teachers to prevent mass school shootings and protect students and staff in Florida and the southeastern United States. The study focused on Black parents' perceptions of armed teachers in school settings and the potential impact on Black students. Researchers have investigated arming teachers in schools and the perspectives of teachers (Olive, 2019; Winston, 2016), the public (Mancini et al., 2020), students and parents (Rogers et al., 2018; White et al., 2019), and school principals (Kelly, 2017; Weiler & Armenta, 2014). However, little to no literature had addressed Black parents' perceptions of arming teacher policies in schools. Thus, a need existed to fill the research gap by focusing on Black parents' perceptions of policies for arming teachers.

Problem Statement

Mass school shootings are not a new phenomenon. Although rare, mass school shootings remain a too-common fixture of U.S. society that have caused students, teachers, and community members to fear for their safety (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). According to the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, approximately 68 K–12 school shootings have occurred in the United States since the 1999 Columbine High

School massacre (Melgar, 2019). However, these numbers do not include the attacks off campus or outside of school hours (Melgar, 2019). Nevertheless, media images, news reports, and public health symposiums show school shootings to be “an epidemic that must be addressed” (Katsiyannis et al., 2018, p. 2565). Consequently, policymakers have called for stricter safety and security measures to protect students and staff from shooter violence, with the most debated policy being arming teachers (Rajan & Branas, 2018).

Following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, leaders from 30 states introduced and proposed policies for arming teachers to curtail gun violence in U.S. schools and protect students from school shootings (Weatherby, 2019). Six years later, Nikolas Cruz, a former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, entered the high school with an AR-15, killing 14 students and three teachers (Isbell et al., 2019). The Parkland, Florida, massacre was the 17th school shooting in the United States in 2018 and the deadliest such attack since Columbine (Brezenski, 2018; Galea et al., 2018; Katsiyannis et al., 2018). The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High tragedy reignited the conversation for arming teachers to prevent further school shootings and provide a safe learning environment.

In 2019, leaders from nine states (Idaho, Kansas, Wyoming, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, South Dakota, and Florida) made legislative provisions for allowing teachers to carry concealed weapons onto school premises and into schools (Education Commission of the States, 2019). Florida Governor Rick Scott approved and signed into law Florida Senate Bill 7030, also known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, to permit armed teachers inside schools. However, Florida school

district leaders have the discretion of enacting the arming teacher policy in their schools (Florida Education Association, 2019; Mettler, 2019). Nevertheless, like so many other federal and state officials, Governor Scott overlooked the profound impact of such a policy on Black students and its potential for enabling racialized violence (Minsheu, 2018). Thus, this study's goal was to explore the impact of policies for arming teachers on Black students in schools with implicit racial bias, as educators tend to perceive Black students as aggressive and menacing. According to Minsheu (2018),

These facts are concerning on their own, but now we are adding a loaded gun into the equation. The issue becomes even trickier in states like Florida that have Stand Your Ground Laws, that permit an individual to use deadly force against another person if they feel their life is in danger. (p. 130)

Several scholars (Anyon et al., 2018; Archerd, 2017; Gregory et al., 2016) have focused on the implicit bias of teachers in the classroom and the impact of their attitudes and stereotypes contributing to negative interactions with Black students. Teachers exhibit implicit bias when they misinterpret Black students' behaviors in the classroom as problematic (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Additionally, educators may see Black students' behavior as threatening, uncontrollable, and dangerous, even when the behavior does not cause harm or a legitimate safety concern (Nance, 2019; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Therefore, arming teachers in schools with implicit bias could result in a hostile environment (Archerd, 2017; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014) and potentially dangerous and lethal consequences for Black students.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to understand Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. This study was a means of gaining insight into how policies for arming teachers could cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns. The policy was a concern for Black parents, as racialized violence, negative interactions, and detrimental outcomes tend to exist between youth of color and authority figures who carry firearms (Chernega, 2016; Correll et al., 2014; Minshew, 2018). In this study, qualitative in-depth unstructured interviews were the means to explore the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perceptions of Black parents familiar with the social phenomenon of the policy for arming teachers in Florida and the southeast United States. This study included Black parents' perceptions on policies for arming teachers in school settings.

Research Questions

This study included the following guiding research questions:

RQ1: What are Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings?

RQ2: How do Black parents perceive policies that permit arming teachers impacting Black students?

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework was the critical race theory (CRT) by Bell, which emerged in the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Considered the father of CRT,

Bell focused on the construction of race and institutional and systematic racism as tools of oppression and unfair treatment toward Blacks in laws and policies (Bell, 1995). Bell introduced the CRT as a framework in 1994 to provide insight into how race, power, and White privilege are issues embedded in law, society, and U.S. culture (Martinez, 2015). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) expounded upon Bell's work, acknowledging that individuals from marginalized populations experience patterns of racial disproportionality and implicit and unconscious bias that result in power struggles and racial violence. Moreover, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Delgado and Stefancic (2017) examined the influence of race on student–educator interactions and student treatment in educational settings.

CRT was this study's theoretical framework, as it provided a comprehensive understanding of deep-rooted historical, pervasive, and persistent patterns of racial discrimination and negative attitudes toward Black people. Scholars have used the CRT framework to address concerns about Black students in U.S. classrooms, the disparity in school punishment and discipline, implicit racial bias in the classroom, and broader political, social, and public policy issues, such as policies for arming of teachers in school settings (Scott et al., 2017; Varela, 2019; Wilson et al., 2020).

There are several premises to the CRT, although they vary by scholar (Martinez, 2015). This study included two premises of CRT:

- Racism is an ordinary behavior deeply embedded in the structural landscape of U.S. social and public institutions, laws, policies, and practices; racism is an everyday occurrence of the lives of Black people; and Whites do not

acknowledge experiences of racial inequality, resulting in colorblindness and making racism difficult to detect and therefore difficult to address (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; George, 2021; Martinez, 2015; Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

- Racism is a means of promoting the interest of White elites and White working-class individuals via the interest convergence theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; George, 2021). The interest convergence theory suggests that Whites permit racial equality for Black people if Whites can benefit from the racial progress and if the “convergence” of interests enables members of the majority to maintain their power and privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007, 2017).

The CRT framework was well-suited to explore Black parents’ perceptions of policies for arming teachers inside school settings and its impact on Black students. The CRT also provided insight into how race, implicit bias, and racial stigma impact student-teacher social interactions in school settings with policies for arming teachers.

Additionally, as explained in detail in chapter 2, I utilized CRT as a framework for this study to gain insight into how policies for arming teachers could cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns.

Nature of the Study

Basic qualitative methodology was appropriate to address the research questions. As the researcher, I explored the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perceptions of 10 Black parents from Florida and the southeastern United States. The basic qualitative approach allows researchers to gather information about a social phenomenon and the

participants in specific situations, circumstances, and settings (Jackson et al., 2007; Patton, 2015).

The research instrument was in-depth semistructured interviews conducted via Zoom. Interviews allowed me to engage in in-depth conversation via probing questions about the Black parents' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of policies for arming teachers and the impact of these policies on Black students in school settings. Participant selection occurred via purposive and snowball sampling, which were essential components of the data collection process. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling are nonprobability means of sampling. Purposeful sampling enables researchers to intentionally select participants with specific criteria, and snowball sampling helps the researcher identify other potential subjects with the assistance of other research participants (Ngozwana, 2018; O'Sullivan et al., 2017). In this study, snowball sampling enabled the participants to recruit other parents.

The collected data were transcripts of the interview recordings. The participants reviewed the transcripts to enhance the credibility and validity of the research. NVivo was the software used for coding and thematic analysis. The purpose of the data analysis was to look for commonalities, repeating concepts, and emergent themes in the interviewees' perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the social phenomenon. Coding the respondents' words, sentences, and phrases indicated emerging themes associated with the codes and categories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaña, 2016).

Definitions

The following are the definitions of the study's key terms:

Armed teacher: Someone employed by a school district and legally permitted to carry a concealed firearm on school grounds (Minshe, 2018).

Arming teacher policy: Law enabling a school district employee to legally carry a concealed firearm on school grounds (Minshe, 2018).

Implicit bias: “The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner” (Staats, 2015, p. 29).

Mass school shootings: Three or more killings during an incident via the use of a firearm in a school setting (Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012, 2013; Morton, 2008).

Assumptions

This study had several assumptions. The first assumption was that policies enabling teachers to carry firearms in school settings have a negative impact on Black students. Black students suffer from a culture of punishment driven by universal, implicit racial bias and the teachers’ negative perceptions of Black students as dangerous, even when they exhibit inoffensive behaviors (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). The second assumption was that the Black parents from Florida or the southeastern United States, who participated in this study had knowledge of the arming teacher policy. This assumption is logical, as Governor Rick Scott approved and signed Florida Senate Bill 7030 into law after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in the participants’ county (Florida Education Association, 2019; Mettler, 2019). Additionally, several Southeastern United States school districts allow authorized teachers to carry firearms in school settings (Yacek, 2018; Weatherby, 2019). The third assumption was

that the Black parents who participated in the study would understand the study's importance and criteria for participation. Participation requirements were to: (a) provide honest answers to the interview questions; (b) understand the interview questions and be able and willing to provide detailed responses to interview questions about personal feelings, attitudes, perspectives, and perceptions; (c) provide perceptions on the policy for arming teachers in a school setting; and (d) know how to navigate and use internet technology (i.e., Zoom or) or be willing to engage in a telephone interview.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this research was qualitative. The study focused on the perceptions of Black parents who reside in the southeastern United States or Florida and are familiar with a policy for arming teachers in school settings. A purposive sample of 10 participants willing to answer semistructured interview questions honestly was utilized. This study focused on Black parents' perspective on policies for arming teachers in the school setting and the impact of those policies on Black students, as there is a lack of research on this phenomenon. The findings from this research could indicate the impact of armed teachers on Black students, as they are a population already affected by harsh punishments and disciplinary actions due to implicit bias. The proposed study's findings could also indicate how to create a safer school environment for Black students and alternative school safety and gun violence prevention strategies that do not present the risk of further harm to Black students.

Based on the participant criteria, the research did not include parents who did not self-identify as Black or did not reside in Florida or the southeastern United States. The

southeastern United States and Florida were the study's demographic location. Additionally, Florida was the site of one of the deadliest and most highly publicized mass school shootings in the United States. The shooting was the catalyst for a public call for action and federal and national debates about arming teachers to keep students safe and prevent further school shootings (Isbell et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2020; Rajan & Branas, 2018). Qualitative methodology was appropriate because of the need to obtain Black parents' perceptions and attitudes. Capturing the essence and meaning of a phenomenon requires a sample of between five and 25 participants (Mason, 2010). Thus, selecting 12 parents for semistructured interviews provided an abundance of rich data for this study.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. There were 10 participants. Thus, the study did not have a sample representative of the general population of Black parents in the southeastern United States and Florida. However, the small sample size was sufficient to provide an abundance of rich data.

Because the study focused on Black parents, it did not include other parents' perceptions on the arming teacher policy and its impact on Black students. The research was limited to the Southeast regions of the United States, with the scope of information focused on Florida. Thus, the study did not include other geographical regions or states with Black parents and their perceptions on arming teacher policies and the impact on Black students.

Additionally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was a limitation to conducting face-to-face interviews. Thus, the interviews occurred online via audio communication, (Zoom), which required different ethical considerations. Although this study had limitations, the data from the research questions could provide guidance for future research on policies for arming teachers in school settings.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is essential to the relevance and usefulness of the findings, meaning that the results can be replicated in different settings with different researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The findings of this research are transferable despite the limitations. As the researcher I was able to establish transferability by providing a thick description of the full research process as well as a descriptive account of the participant interviews, criteria, demographics, interview procedures (excluding personal identifiers), data analysis, and results. With a detailed (thick) description of the methodological process, future researchers could utilize this study for other similar and related future studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Significance of the Study

Mass school shootings are a significant problem in the United States, leading to public outcry for politicians and other government officials to take a stance on gun violence in schools. Arming school personnel (i.e., teachers and administrators) is one proposed means for keeping U.S. schools safe from further gun violence (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). According to DeMitchell and Rath (2019), "School violence is a broad

public health problem, and student safety remains a serious social, cultural, policy, educational, and juvenile justice issue in the United States today” (pp. 65–66). Thus, the concept of arming teachers has impacted public policy, indicating the need to find the best way to protect school staff and students from further mass school shootings.

Amid the focus on preventing mass school shootings, often in the wake of tragedy, policymakers have tended to react to societal pressures and make quick decisions (e.g., arming school personnel) of what they consider to be the best response to the problem (Rogers et al., 2018). Politicians, other government officials, and stakeholders have not considered the many risk factors associated with educators carrying guns, especially the unintentional impact of such policies on Black students (Minshew, 2018). The extant research had a gap in understanding Black parents’ perceptions of how such a policy could cause harm to Black students. Consequently, the study’s significance was to understand how pushing to eradicate and prevent mass school shootings across the United States by arming teachers may have adverse effects on Black students. Therefore, a need existed to identify and explore Black parents’ perceptions of policies for arming teachers in schools and their impact on Black students.

Social Change

Showing the potential impact of armed teachers on Black students by understanding Black parents’ perceptions about policies that allow armed teachers in schools is a motivator for positive social change and addressing the significant problem of mass school shootings in the United States. Additionally, understanding the potential impact of policies that permit teachers to carry guns in schools can help indicate ways of

creating a safer school environment for Black students. Lastly, creating alternatives to arming teachers should be those focused on keeping Black students from additional harm so all students can benefit from school safety measures.

Summary

This dissertation has five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the study, as well as the background, problem statement, purpose, and research questions. This chapter also included the study's nature, theoretical framework, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope, and limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 provided insight into mass school shootings, the literature on arming teachers, Florida policies for arming teachers, and teachers' implicit bias and negative perceptions of Black students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In 2018, there were more than 53.1 million students enrolled in U.S. elementary and secondary schools (United States Census Bureau, 2019, para. 5). According to Katsiyannis et al. (2018), entering the walls of academia allows the educational process to occur so that students can aspire to excellence in an environment of safety. However, multiple studies have indicated the growing concern of gun violence at primary and secondary schools across the United States (Croft et al., 2019; Jonson, 2017; Palmer, 2018). K-12 schools have become sites conducive to mass shootings, causing extreme fear, hysteria, and concern for student and staff safety (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Schildkraut et al., 2015). Therefore, how to respond to school shootings and prevent future attacks has received national attention, with a focus on legislative policies (Isbell et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2020; Rajan & Branas, 2018). One such policy response is arming teachers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), leaders from each state are responsible for determining courses of action for policies, programs, and laws that enable teachers to carry firearms in school settings. Minshew (2018) said, “The legislation that exists surrounding arming teachers is a unique as each state’s geography” (p. 130). Minshew attributed the diversity in arming teacher policies to the need of each state and school district; thus, arming teachers in K–12 schools is an issue addressed on a state-by-state basis. Individuals in favor of the policy maintain that armed teachers could deter would-be school shooters (Campbell, 2016). In contrast, opponents argue that

arming teachers could be a liability resulting in unintentional gun-related accidents, further gun violence, and increased risk of severe student injury or death (Mancini et al., 2020; Swedler, 2018).

Policies that enable teachers to carry concealed firearms on school grounds and in classrooms continue to be the focus of national discussions. According to Rogers et al. (2018), policymakers have not considered all the concerns and risk factors associated with teachers carrying loaded guns at school, particularly teachers' implicit bias and its impact on Black students (Anyon et al., 2018; Minshew, 2018). Teachers tend to exhibit implicit bias in their interactions with Black students; therefore, Black students are more often affected by those in authority. Black students' interactions with their teachers may not always have positive results (Anyon et al., 2018). Black students receive disproportionately more disciplinary infractions and punishment for behaviors perceived as dangerous, offensive, or disruptive than White students (Minshew, 2018; Morris & Perry, 2016). Thus, implicit bias coupled with armed teachers could have devastating consequences for Black students.

An abundance of research has focused on arming teachers in K–12 schools in the United States (Kelly, 2017; Lenihan et al., 2020; Mancini et al., 2020; Olive, 2019; Shamsrad et al., 2020; Weiler & Armenta, 2014). Such studies have provided the knowledge essential for understanding how to prevent mass school shootings; however, a gap exists in the literature. Absent from the research are Black parents' perceptions of armed teachers in school settings. Researchers have not addressed the factors that could contribute to safety concerns for Black students and the profound impact of arming

teacher policies on Black students (Minsheu, 2018). The lack of literature on such a topic is problematic. The research has indicated that Black students already experience implicit bias and racial violence in K–12 schools by teachers and other school authorities (Chin et al., 2020; Kohli et al., 2017; Marcucci, 2020). Therefore, adding guns to an already complex environment could be disastrous.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings. I aimed to understand how Black parents perceived the arming teacher policy impacting Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Lastly, I also aimed to understand how policies for arming teachers possible cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns. Equally important, this qualitative study could lead to positive social change by addressing the significant problem of mass school shootings in the United States. Additionally, finding promising approaches and best practices for strengthening safety policies for responding to and preventing mass school shootings other than arming teachers with firearms. Lastly, finding ways to create a safer school environment for Black students and creating alternatives to arming teachers that focus on keeping Black students from additional harm so all students can benefit from school safety measures.

Chapter 2 presented the foundational research on mass school shootings in the United States. The purpose of this literature review was to understand the existing research on armed teachers in school settings and the factors that have contributed to enacting arming teacher policies in U.S. primary and secondary schools. This literature

review also showed the connection between CRT's theoretical framework and policies, such as arming teachers, and the factors which often lead to detrimental consequences for Black students.

Chapter 2 began with an overview of the strategy used to search for the literature for the study. The chapter then provided an overview of the study's theoretical framework, followed by the seven guiding topics. The first section of the literature review addressed the history and statistics of mass school shootings in the United States. Next, the chapter presented three of the deadliest K–12 mass school shootings in the United States. The third section focused on the legislative response to mass school shootings. The fourth section addressed the Marjory Stoneman Safety Act/Guardian Program that enables teachers to carry firearms in Florida's schools. The fifth section presented the arguments for and against arming teachers in schools. The sixth section presented various stakeholders' perceptions of the arming teacher policy. Finally, the seventh section presented the implicit bias of teachers in the classroom, the impact of their unconscious thoughts on negative interactions with Black students, and how these harmful interactions have possible dangerous and lethal consequences for Black students when teachers have guns in the classroom.

Literature Search Strategy

This literature review included sources from Walden University databases. Search engines and databases used for this study included Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Criminal Justice ProQuest, Criminal Justice Databases, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals. In addition, the study's literature included

books, government documents (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, United States Census Bureau, Center for Homeland Security and Defense), and references from the articles utilized for the research. This review included peer-reviewed journal articles for enhanced credibility. The Boolean operates AND and OR with combinations of search terms also commenced to enhance the search results. The search for literature included articles published between 2014 and 2020, as well as other sources meaningful to the study. The search terms were *armed teachers, arming teacher policy, mass school shootings, implicit bias, critical race theory, school shootings, Guardian Program, firearms, guns, armed personnel, implicit racial bias, school discipline, race, racism, racial stigma, white privilege and white supremacy, racialized violence, and unconscious bias.*

Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical framework was the CRT. CRT is a means of challenging various dimensions of race, institutional racism, and the racial stigma experienced by "most people of color in this country" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 8). Scholars have used CRT in various fields of scholarship and disciplines, including the educational, criminal justice, and legal systems. Moreover, CRT provides a precedent for recognizing and understanding the perpetuation of racism and race ideologies in unconscious feelings and attitudes, often resulting in the adverse treatment of Black Americans and other people of color. CRT provides an in-depth perspective of the adverse effects of racist policies, laws, and decisions on Black Americans' livelihoods. Furthermore, CRT provides theoretical insight into the relationship "among race, racism, and power"

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). The three concepts of race, racism, and power continue to contribute to the interests of the power elite and the marginalization of other populations via the policies, practices, and constitutional and state laws of legal and public institutions, including primary and secondary schools in the United States.

History of Critical Race Theory

CRT originated in the field of law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Gordon, 1990; Martinez, 2015) and has aspects of the critical legal studies (CLS), radical feminism, and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2015). CRT was a theory developed in the 1970s, after lawyers, activists, and legal scholars felt frustrated and dissatisfied because CLS did not indicate how race and racism are fundamental elements of constitutional law and civil codes (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2015). Also unhappy with the progression of racial reform in U.S. institutions, CRT theorists Bell, Freeman, and other scholars held various workshops and wrote articles to challenge racial injustice and address the issues of race and racism as instruments of power and privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus, CRT suggests reexamining challenges and issues and how power, race, racism, and racist policies and practices are means of controlling the interest, privilege, and status of White elitists via constitutional and state laws. CRT also indicates how those who benefit from the privilege of race and racism cannot recognize race and racism in its most blatant forms (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2015).

Bell introduced the concept of CRT, focusing on the construction of race and how institutional and systematic racism are tools of oppression and unfair treatment for Blacks

in law and policies (Bell, 1995). Bell showed how race, power, and White privilege are factors embedded in law, society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dixson, 2018; Martinez, 2015), and the “culture of American institutions” (Martinez, 2015, p. 18). As a result of Bell’s contributions, scholars have evolved CRT over the last 2 decades, shifting its focus from legal scholarship to various interdisciplinary fields, including education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Simson, 2014). According to Ladson-Billings (1998),

The connections between law and education are relatively simple to establish. Since education in the USA is not outlined explicitly in the nation’s constitution, it is one of the social functions delegated to individual states. Consequently, states generate legislation and enact laws designed to proscribe the contours of education. (p. 17)

In other words, state leaders must determine the regulations and policies for their schools’ educational environment. This study focused on the legislative policy of arming teachers in response to mass school shootings.

Critical Race Theory in Educational Research and the Connection to the Study

In 1994, educator scholars used the CRT as a framework for analyzing and assessing how race and inequality in education have produced inequity and have adverse effects on the U.S. educational system (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). The emergence of CRT in education enabled theorists, scholars, and practitioners to utilize the theory as a framework for identifying and analyzing policies and practices impacting students in schools worldwide (Gillborn, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2005). Educational researchers has

used CRT to acknowledge the experiences of marginalized populations; patterns of racial disproportionality in disciplinary school actions; and how implicit and unconscious bias have resulted in power struggles, racialized violence, and a disparity in disciplinary and punitive practices for minority students, especially Black students (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Educators in the 1990s used various punitive discipline approaches in schools (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) to curtail school violence and provide a climate of safety in the form of zero-tolerance laws (Morris & Perry, 2016). The goal was to administer discipline fairly to all students with behavioral infractions; however, this has not been the case for many Black students in U.S. primary and secondary schools (Morris & Perry, 2016). Black students have received inordinate amounts of racialized discipline, punitive practices, and punishment from authority figures assigning disciplinary consequences (Morris & Perry, 2016; Quereshi & Okonofua, 2017; Staats, 2015).

Educators have also used CRT in educational research to examine the influence of race, racism, and racial stigma on student–teacher interactions, teachers’ treatment of students in educational settings, and the detrimental consequences of Black students’ social interactions with authority figures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Race, racism, and racial stigma have a long history in U.S. educational policies and practices (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Simson, 2014). Historically, unequal treatment due to racism and racial stigma has existed in various school practices and policies in U.S. primary and secondary schools for years (Library of Congress, n.d.). For example, before *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Jim Crow laws upheld the segregation of

Blacks and Whites in public schools as constitutional because of the “longstanding idea that African-Americans are inferior to whites” (Simson, 2014, p. 541); thus, Blacks lacked equal access to education.

Racism and racial stigmatization have contributed to White privilege, White supremacy, and the aggressive treatment of Black students due to the “social psychology phenomenon of implicit bias” (Simson, 2014, p. 506). According to Watts and Erevelles (2004),

The norm in public schools has historically always upheld the property rights of Whiteness...such that those students oppressively marked by race...are always constructed as students of lack, who are therefore seen as inferior, dangerous, and of little value in the school system. (p. 292)

Implied negative perceptions and presumptions of the threat of Black students often cause educators and others in authority to mistreat these youth, sometimes with deadly ramifications (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Fieldstadt, 2020; Hines & Wilmot, 2018; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). For example, a Black female student suffered a broken arm and neck and back injuries after a school resource officer violently flipped her desk, although she posed no threat to the school resource officer, herself, or other the students in the classroom (Butcher, 2020; Lesley, 2021; Wolf, 2018). Black students often experience pervasive and persistent violent punitive behavior of severe magnitude (Simson, 2014). The modern school system contributes to and presents the ideology of Black inferiority and lack of worth and White supremacy and White value (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Simson, 2014).

A review of CRT and the relationship between race, racism, and racial stigmatization and their contributions to White privilege, power, and supremacy have shown that school policies, practices, and laws do not provide benefits to Black students nor reflected their needs (Butcher, 2020). Furthermore, school policies and practices contribute to and enable White superiority and control (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Thus, the agenda of the mass-White elite continues to have adverse effects on Black students. CRT is a means of challenging and explaining how punitive school policies, practices, and treatment could have pervasive, troubling, and harsh consequences for minority youth, especially Black students, in U.S. schools. Thus far, CRT has presented a long history of racial prejudice and racial stigma resulting from implicit bias. CRT indicates that racism is ingrained in U.S. society. Racism is a common experience for most Blacks, with Whites failing to acknowledge Black people's experiences with racial realities due to colorblindness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

Colorblindness is the notion that an oppressor does not see the color of an individual's skin and that all people receive equal treatment, regardless of race. However, history has shown that systematic racism exists. Neutrality toward and dismissal of White privilege are inherited forms of racism that enable those in the dominant group to retain power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Despite policies and constitutional laws guaranteeing equal rights and protection for all humanity, Black people continue to experience racism, implicit bias, unequal treatment, and detrimental consequences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; DeMatthews et al., 2017; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). Bell

argued that racism is a standard fixture in society that remains unacknowledged, unaddressed, and unsolved (Curry, 2008; Delgado, 1991). Bell also asserted that racism exists systematically in every social and public institution in the United States and is a problem invisible in laws, policies, and practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Another notable premise of CRT is the interest convergence theory. Bell believed that racism is a way to promote the interest of White elites and White working-class individuals and that the policies and practices instituted by the masses provide for the dominant group and class (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Bell also believed that changes in policies and practices occur only based on the self-interest and beliefs of White people. Such changes do not occur to benefit the minority have-nots but for those who seek to maintain their positions of power and supremacy in society (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Coupled with the notion of self-interest, Bell also declared that Black people only obtain victories when White and Black people come together and unite to move the agenda and interest of White people via interest convergence. Thus, Whites allow and provide support and allegiance for progressing and changing policies and practices if they consider the changes beneficial to themselves (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Consequently, White people have minimal incentive to eradicate racism, implicit bias, or discriminatory and prejudicial practices and policies.

Bell (1992) believed that the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision was not a victory in denouncing racist policies against Black people; instead, political forces were the impetus for establishing equality in public schools across the United States. Bell pointed out that the United States received criticism for televised depictions and news

broadcasts of police brutality and inequality. Therefore, the self-interested White elitists sought to benefit from enacting equal opportunity laws so that they could remove the stain of treating Blacks brutally (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007, 2017).

Another example is the arming teacher policy in school settings. Arming teachers is a strategy for addressing school violence and mass school shootings and protecting the safety of students and staff. However, scholars, parents, students, and educational and criminal justice officials have asked whose safety is maintained if the arming teacher policy has negative effects (Batsche, 2019; Jonson et al., 2021; Minshew, 2018; Shamserad et al., 2020), similar to other school-related policies and practices (i.e., zero-tolerance discipline policies) for Black students (Curran, 2019; Skiba, 2015). This example suggests that people feel concerned about another school policy that could have detrimental consequences for Black students. Additionally, CRT indicates that past and present school policies are means of recreating the racial hierarchies that historically existed in the United States (Simson, 2014) due to racism, racial stigma, implicit bias, and White supremacy.

A relationship exists between implicit bias, discipline, and negative consequences for Black students (Chin et al., 2020; Gregory & Roberts, 2017; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Staats, 2015). Thus, perceptions of Black students' behavior in school settings correlate with race, racism, and racial stigma. Teachers are often the stakeholders who decide what constitutes appropriate behavior, decisions that frequently have a negative impact on Black students (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). The premise of racism being ordinary and interest convergence theory are approaches well-suited for understanding

that state policies for addressing school violence, mass school shootings, and school safety, including arming teacher policies, may have detrimental effects on Black students.

Implicit Bias and the Use of Critical Race Theory

Several studies in education have indicated that school violence and mass school shootings are critical issues. Education scholars have used CRT as a framework for understanding the influence of race in federal, state, and local punitive and disciplinary school policies, procedures, and practices in response to gun violence in schools (Pagliocca & Nickerson, 2001; O'Donnell, 2001; Triplett et al., 2014). Researchers have also use CRT to examine the influence of implicit bias and racial stigma on how educators discipline and punish Black students in reaction to perceived disciplinary problems or potential acts of violence (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Simson, 2014). Black students with behavior seen as deviant, dangerous, and disrespectful toward authority figures in the school system often experience harsh discipline (Simson, 2014; Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

Annamma et al. (2019) used the CRT as a framework to focus on racialized and intersectional violence against Black girls and the outcomes of the exclusionary discipline administered by teachers and administrators. They found that implicit racial bias and perceived risk of threat, injury, and defiance resulted in Black girls receiving harsher punishment than other female students. Annamma et al. also found “that Black girls are most often subjected to discipline based on the judgment of school personnel, many of whom likely have limited understanding of ways race and racism affect Black girls’ lives” (p. 230). In other words, school personnel remained unaware of the influence

of their White privilege and Whiteness on their misguided perceptions of Black female students' behaviors, which resulted in unnecessary punishment and disciplinary sanctions.

In this study, the CRT was the theory used to focus on the impact of race, implicit bias, and stereotypes on teachers' negative perceptions of Black students' behavior, resulting in harsh disciplinary consequences. Implicit teacher bias based on race could be a negative influence on a teacher's decision-making. Moreover, bias and negative preconceptions about Black students' actions and behaviors, combined with severe disciplinary actions with an armed teacher, could result in injury or even death.

The issues of race, racism, and racial stigma, which are the results of conscious and unconscious bias, have a long history in U.S. educational system policies and practices (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Simson, 2014). Additionally, racism and racial stigmatization have contributed to White privilege, White supremacy, and the negative treatment of Black students due to the "social psychology phenomenon of implicit bias" (Simson, 2014, p. 506). According to Watts and Erevelles (2004),

The norm in public schools has historically always upheld the property rights of Whiteness...such that those students oppressively marked by race...are always constructed as students of lack, who are therefore seen as inferior, dangerous, and of little value in the school system (p. 292).

Therefore, implicit, negative perceptions of Black students could cause educators and others in authority to mistreat them, sometimes with deadly ramifications (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Fieldstadt, 2020; Hines & Wilmot, 2018; Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

Understanding CRT and the tenet that racism is normalized in everyday practices and legislative policies toward Black students could be essential for the legislators and policymakers who implement gun violence prevention policies (e.g., arming teacher policy) without considering the possible consequences on marginalized populations already experiencing unfair treatment and racial disparity due to punitive policies and practices. Additionally, CRT could be a means of understanding the connections between perceived negative behavior, disciplinary problem, and violence toward Black students and the potential consequences of arming teachers in school settings. The goal of utilizing CRT as this study's framework was to explore the impact of race, racial stigma, and implicit bias on teacher–student social interactions in primary and secondary schools with arming teacher policies.

Review of Relevant Literature

Historical Overview Mass School Shootings

School shootings in the United States are not a new phenomenon (Paolini, 2015). The earliest known mass school shooting in the United States was the 17th-century Pontiac Rebellion School massacre, which killed 10 of the 13 children enrolled. The Pontiac attack was a tragedy never before experienced in U.S. history. Another mass school shooting occurred in Bath Township, Michigan, in 1927. The shooting had 108 victims: 45 dead and 58 injured (Donnelly, 2020, para. 12). The Bath Township massacre led to a national dialogue on how to prevent school gun violence (Donnelly, 2020). Nevertheless, the recommended prevention measures (e.g., locked entrance doors) were unsuccessful in stopping other mass school shootings.

Consequently, senseless acts of violence from mass shootings continued to occur in the United States. The late 1990s saw many events that caused unspeakable tragedy and dismay to Americans, who “watched in horror as a wave of mass shootings on middle and high school campuses swept across the country” (Newman et al., 2004, p. ix). The number of mass school shootings and fatalities continued to increase in the 21st century. Augenstein (2018) reported, “The death toll in the 21st century, in just the first 18 years of its history...exceeded that of the entire 20th century” (para. 1). As of September 2020, the United States had seen 1,600 K–12 school shootings (Riedman, 2020, para. 1). Riedman (2020) sought to address the notion that mass school shootings were a serious social problem, collecting data in 2018 and 2020. In 2 years, mass school shootings increased by 81.25%, from 1,300 in 2018 to 1,600 in 2020 (Riedman, 2020; Riedman & O’Neill, 2018).

Everytown for Gun Safety (2021) noted that mass school shooting incidents comprised less than 1% of the overall gun-related school violence in K–12 schools in the United States. Nevertheless, the total number of casualties in mass school shootings reached “a disproportionate share of overall deaths and people wounded from school gun violence” (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2021, para. 8). The statistics have indicated the magnitude of the severe public problem of school shootings in the United States.

The prevalence of mass school shootings caused a growing debate on how to respond to gun violence in K–12 classrooms, as well as how to prevent future tragedies (Curran et al., 2020; Johnson & Barsky, 2020; Rajan & Branas, 2018). However, The National Institute of Justice indicated that local and government officials have yet to find

a clear-cut solution for such atrocities, which result in the loss of innocent lives (Ames, 2019). In response to the last two deadliest K–12 mass school shootings (Sandy Hook Elementary [17 dead] and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School [26 dead]), the legislative response has been proposing and creating policies for enabling teachers and administrators in every U.S. school district to carry concealed firearms on school grounds (Purdy, 2019; Weatherby, 2015).

Statistical Overview of Mass School Shootings and the Definition of Mass School Shootings

Katsiyannis et al. (2018) provided a historical examination of school violence in the United States, focusing on mass school shootings in the 20th and 21st centuries. Katsiyannis et al. noted that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the agency responsible for tracking and collecting data on mass shootings, lacks a formal definition of mass shootings that occur in schools. According to the FBI, mass murder is the homicide of three or more people at the same incident but not necessarily at the same time (Morton, 2008). Thus, based on the FBI's definition of mass murder, Katsiyannis et al. defined mass school shootings as

A situation in which one or more people intentionally plan and execute the killing or injury of four or more people not including themselves using one or more guns with the killings or injuries taken place on school grounds during the school day or doing a school-sponsored event on school grounds. (p. 2564)

Katsiyannis et al.'s definition provides a clear understanding of the mass school shootings accounted for and included in an examination of intentional mass school shootings in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Katsiyannis et al. (2018) focused on the data of mass school shootings perpetrated by adolescents and adults in K–12 schools, excluding organized gang shootings and mass shootings at universities, such as the Virginia Tech massacre. Additionally, Katsiyannis et al. looked at school gun violence in the United States and noted the rarity of mass school shootings and school-related violent deaths; however, since “1979, the number of [mass school] shootings increased and then decreased, with the 1990s as a peak. However, deaths from shootings went from 12 in the 1980s to 36 in the 1990s to 14 in the 2000s to a high of 51 in the 2010s” (p. 2564). Cox and Rich (2018) also acknowledged the rarity of school shootings, which “represent a tiny fraction of the gun violence epidemic that, on average, leaves a child bleeding or dead every hour in the United States” (para. 3). Although they may appear low, deaths from school shootings still present a disturbing story of the surge in mass shootings in K–12 schools.

Based on their definition and criteria of mass school shootings, Katsiyannis et al. (2018) identified 22 school shootings in the United States during the 20th century and 13 school shootings in the 21st century. Using the same criteria and definition and after collecting and examining their data from schools across the United States, they found that 60% of adolescents ($n = 15$) and 40% of adults ($n = 10$) committed mass school shootings in the 20th century, while 77% of adolescents ($n = 10$) and 23% of adults ($n = 3$) perpetrated mass school shootings in the 21st century (pp. 2564–2565). Although the

incidents are rare, the data suggest that mass school shootings in primary and secondary schools are a significant and detrimental problem for students and school personnel in K–12 schools. Katsiyannis et al. (2018) observed, “Firearm violence in the United States is viewed as a public health crisis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention” (p. 2565). Therefore, the researchers suggested that mass school shootings have created an awareness of the epidemic and a need for action to prevent further attacks.

Three Deadliest K–12 Mass School Shootings in the United States

The three deadliest K–12 mass school shootings of the 20th and 21st centuries are Columbine High School (1999), Sandy Hook Elementary School (2012), and Marjory Stoneman High School (2018). These tragic events caused shock and disbelief among the public (Astor et al., 2018), as major networks (e.g., NBC, ABC, and CNN) aired uninterrupted, live coverage of the atrocities (Elsass et al., 2016). Media outlets and the national news also provided detailed coverage of the shootings (MacNeal, 2018), which caused intense dialogue on how to respond and prevent future mass school shootings; these debates have resulted in arming teacher policies (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Isbell et al., 2019). The following sections present the events in chronological order, beginning with the Columbine High School shooting.

Columbine High School

On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, both students of Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, entered the school building wearing black trench coats and carrying duffle bags loaded with homemade explosives, weapons, and ammunition (Jury, 2015). Harris and Klebold rigged their homemade bombs around the

school's perimeter, intending for the bombs to ignite and blow up the school (Brockell, 2021). However, this part of their plan failed because most devices did not detonate. The teenagers then entered the school, threw bombs into the cafeteria, and opened fire on unsuspecting students and staff with sawed-off shotguns, a rifle, and a pistol (Achenbach & Kenworth, 1999). The shooters moved through the school building, looking for more people to kill.

Achenbach and Kenworth (1999) interviewed Columbine High School students after the massacre. Several students recalled that the shooters targeted minorities. One student stated,

[Eric Harris] came into the library and shot everybody around me. Then he put a gun to my head and asked if we all wanted to die and that he was going to kill us if we were of color. ...I just started screaming and crying and telling him not to shoot me...and then he shot the black kid because he was black. And, he shot him in the face. (para 34)

The massacre resulted in the injuries of 21 people and the deaths of 13, with Harris and Klebold also committing suicide (Jury, 2015, para 6). Although not the first U.S. K–12 mass school shooting, Columbine inspired discussions on how to arm school teachers and other school personnel to avoid another attack (Brockell, 2021).

Sandy Hook Elementary School

On December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut, Adam Lanza, a former student of Sandy Hook Elementary, shot his way through a locked school front door (State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Danbury, 2013). Several reports (e.g., Bonanno &

Levenson, 2014; Ray, 2021; The State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Danbury, 2013) indicated that Lanza entered the building with a military-style weapon and shot and killed the principal and school psychologist. He then proceeded to a first grade classroom and murdered 15 students and a teacher (State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Danbury, 2013). Lanza walked to another classroom, reloaded his weapon, and opened fire, killing five more students and two more staff members before committing suicide. Following the horrific attack, 26 children and six staff members lay dead, and two people sustained injuries. Consequently, the Sandy Hook shooting resurrected and heightened discussions of arming teachers and other school staff, as well as federal incentives to hire more SROs (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). NRA members promoted legislation to enable K–12 teachers and other school personnel to carry firearms in schools (Chrusciel et al., 2015; Eckstein & Partlow Lefevre, 2017; Perez, 2017).

Marjory Stoneman High School

On February 14, 2018, people around the world once again watched in horror and shock as another mass school shooting occurred in a U.S. school, just over 5 years after the presumed deadliest mass school shooting in the 21st century (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Nikolas Cruz, a former Stoneman High School student, walked into the building with an AR-15 semiautomatic firearm and multiple magazine clips, randomly shooting into classrooms through doors and windows (History.com Editors, 2018; Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Cruz moved swiftly from floor to floor, shooting anyone in his path and reloading his weapon to kill others; however, school leaders had recently installed hurricane-impact windows, thus reducing the number of potential casualties (History.com

Editors, 2018). Over 17 people (14 students and three teachers) lost their lives, and 17 sustained injuries. The shooting created anger among parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and state and government officials, who called for an end to school violence and resumed the debate on arming teachers.

A Call for Action: Protecting America's Classrooms

Arming School Teachers

Before Columbine High School, the focus in many K–12 U.S. schools was keeping guns away from school settings (Purdy, 2019). However, after the 1999 attack, the gun lobby and NRA began conversations on implementing policies to enable teachers and other school personnel to have concealed firearms to more immediately confront and deter school shooters (Jackman, 2018; Minshew, 2018). Much debate occurred between gun lobbyists, congressional leaders, and the public; however, there was only a push to enact teacher carry laws and not to approve such a policy (Jackman, 2018). In the aftermath of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, which resulted in 27 deaths, including first graders (Shultz et al., 2013, Table 3), the conversation changed. The Sandy Hook shooting was the “tipping point” for a call to action (Shultz et al., 2013, p. 65).

Unprecedented debates of arming teachers in school settings resurfaced (Isbell et al., 2019; Minshew, 2018). President Obama addressed the nation, saying, “I know this is not the first time this country has debated how to reduce gun violence, but this time is different” (“Now Is the Time,” 2013, para. 81). President Obama proposed legislation to house and fund SROs to prevent school gun violence and keep students safe, allowing

leaders from each state and local school district to determine the best course of action for protecting their students. As a result, some state leaders found a loophole in the Gun-Free School Zone Act to enable law-abiding citizens with valid state- or locality-provided conceal-and-carry permits to carry concealed guns in a school zone (Minschew, 2018).

The bypass permitted the storage of an unloaded firearm in a

Locked container, or a locked firearm rack that is on a motor vehicle, [and used] by an individual in a program approved by a school in the school zone, [and] by an individual in accordance with a contract entered into between a school in a school zone and the individual or an employer of the individual. (18 U.S.C. § 922, U.S. Congress, 1990, Sect. II, pp. iv–v)

Four years later, in 2017, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, was the catalyst for a policy allowing teachers and other school officials to carry concealed firearms inside schools (Brezenski, 2018; DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). Members of the public, students, school administrators, community leaders, and parents concerned about additional school shootings demanded solutions for preventing the next tragedy (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). Citizens asked elected government and state officials to find solutions to mass school shootings (Rogers et al., 2018). President Trump tweeted,

History shows that a school shooting lasts, on average, 3 minutes. It takes police & first responders approximately 5 to 8 minutes to get to the site of crime. Highly trained, gun adept, teachers/coaches would solve the problem instantly, before police arrive...GREAT DETERRENT!" (Vitkovskaya, 2018, para 2)

President Trump also called for “weapons talented teachers” (Balingit, 2018, para 6), proposing that 20% of teachers (640,000 nationwide) would receive training and firearms as the first line of defense to active shooters in a school setting (Vitkovskaya, 2018, para 4). At the same time, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, then-Chair of the Federal School Safety Commission, considered arming teachers the best way to prevent further mass school shootings despite resistance from other government officials (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). DeVos and other committee members endorsed armed teachers in school settings.

Some state policymakers and local school district leaders resolved to create individualized policies and programs to permit teachers and school staff to have concealed firearms in the classroom (Richmond, 2019). Some states that already allowed teachers to carry concealed firearms in school zones expanded their existing legislation to allow teachers and staff to have concealed firearms (Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Isbell et al., 2019; Minshe, 2018). For example, Florida broadened the Guardian Program, switching from permitting certain school employees to have firearms and training from the Sheriff’s Department to allowing classroom teachers to volunteer as armed guardians in the school (Isbell et al., 2019).

States That Allow Armed Teachers

Arming teachers to prevent mass school shootings is relatively new legislation for most states when recommending ways to prevent mass school shootings and ensure student safety. The number of incidents in which school teachers have used firearms to thwart active shooters (Minshe, 2018) and how many K–12 teachers carry firearms

(Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Minshew, 2018; Richmond, 2019) remain unknown. However, the fear of further mass school shooting incidents has caused a public outcry for government, state, and local officials to address schools' vulnerability to acts of gun violence and protect students. (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Minshew, 2018). Since 2013, legislators, parents, students, principals, and school administrators have argued whether arming teacher policies are good safety and preventative measures for curtailing school gun violence and mass school shootings (Lenihan et al., 2020). Proponents of arming teachers argue that such policies are ways to make schools safer (Chrusciel et al., 2015; Lenihan et al., 2020). At the same time, opponents argue that arming teachers could have adverse effects on school climate (Jones & Sung, 2018) and be a threat to the safety of the student body, particularly Black and Brown students (Jones & Sung, 2018; Minshew, 2018). Reasons for arming teachers include deterring potential assailants and the cost-effectiveness of training teachers and preparing them to encounter active shooters (Jonson et al., 2020; Limón, 2018; Walker & Sampson, 2018). However, other researchers (Anderson, 2019; Conti, 2015; Givens, 2015) have identified reasons for not arming teachers, such as liability, accidental discharge of a firearm, and unintentionally putting a teacher or student in harm's way.

As of this study, 28 states have policies for permitting school or school district leaders to decide which school employees and designated others can carry firearms in schools (Dwyer, 2019, para. 4; RAND Corporation, 2020, para. 9). Additionally, 19 states have policies for allowing anyone with permission from school authorities to carry a firearm on school grounds (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019, para. 1).

Of the 10 states with policies to allow teachers and administrators to be armed, Idaho, Wyoming, and Kansas require teachers carrying firearms to have concealed carry permits and school permission. The policies of the remaining seven states (South Dakota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas, and Florida) indicate that school districts and local school boards must provide permission to carry firearms and that teachers must first receive firearm training (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Also, at the time of this study, the national debate continues whether to arm teachers in different states with the authorization of school districts. State officials continue to push armed teacher bills through the Senate; Columbus, Ohio, is the most recent city with debates on the issue and a proposed bill (Blad, 2018; Tebben, 2020).

Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Safety Act/Guardian Program

Data from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School showed that over 1,600 K–12 school shootings incidents occurred between 1970 and the present (Riedman, 2020, p. 2). The Center for Homeland Defense and Security began compiling data on school shooting incidents after one of the most tragic mass school massacres in the 21st century: Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The shooting resulted in 17 deaths and led to extensive policy discussions and debates in Florida (Mettler, 2019). Parents of the victims, traumatized students, lawmakers, and community members wanted to know how to prevent further attacks, keep students safe, and respond to an active shooter incident (MacNeal, 2018; Rajan & Branas, 2018).

In response to the community plea, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed into law SB 7026, also known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, on March 9, 2018 (Florida Department of Education, 2018). SB 7026, the purpose of which is to address gun violence in Florida's primary and secondary schools (Holson, 2019), created the Office of Safe Schools division within the Florida Department of Education. Additionally, sheriffs established a Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program (after the football coach fatally wounded while trying to subdue the shooter). In May 2018, there was an addendum added to bill SB 7026. Florida legislators approved the Guardian Program and passed it into law (Holson, 2019; Mazzei, 2019). The goal of the Guardian Program is to prevent the next school tragedy and reduce active shooter incidents on school grounds via school employees who volunteer to carry firearms (Florida Department of Education, 2018). The purpose of SB 7026 is to enable school personnel members to volunteer, become school guardians, and carry firearms in school.

According to the Florida Department of Education (2018), volunteers receive a \$500 stipend for their service. Each volunteer must undergo 144 hours of law enforcement training on proper firearm use, a psychological evaluation, a drug test, diversity training, and ongoing training (Holson, 2019, para. 5). Additionally, volunteers must have concealed carry permits and firearm qualifications certification (Florida Department of Education, 2018). However, classroom teachers with direct contact with students—except JROTC teachers, current service members, or current or former law enforcement officers—cannot volunteer or participate in the Guardian Program (Florida Department of Education, 2018). After much scrutiny, Governor DeSantis expanded SB

7026 and signed SB 7030 into law to give all school employees, including teachers, permission to volunteer as armed school guardians and carry concealed weapons in classrooms during school hours if they met the qualifications (Florida SB 7030, 2019). Additionally, the new provision allowed each school district to decide whether to arm teachers (Holson, 2019) and where to store teachers' firearms on school premises (Florida SB 7030, 2019; Grinberg et al., 2018).

Florida has 67 school districts, of which 42 are participants in the Guardian Program (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). However, not all participating school districts have armed teachers (Holson, 2019). Additionally, two of the largest school districts, Miami-Dade and Broward County (site of the Parkland massacre), have opted out of the program. Many smaller districts in rural areas, such as Putnam County, participate in the program and have armed teachers (Florida Department of Education, n.d.).

Opponents Against and Proponents for Florida's Guardian Program

Opponents. Critics of the Guardian Program have suggested that its proponents have not fully addressed the risks of armed teachers, especially to the safety of Black students (Mazzei, 2019; Minsheu, 2018). Opponents have indicated that teachers with loaded firearms could put Black students at risk if they perceive them to be threats. A teacher's unconscious bias could also affect a split-second, impulsive decision that could have dire consequences (Mazzei, 2019). Opponents of the program have also argued that students face a far greater risk of gun violence at schools with more guns on the premises, even if intended to keep students safe (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Weatherby, 2015).

Florida State Representative Shervin Jones echoed the need to protect Black students from undue harm by trying unsuccessfully to pass two amendments through the House (Mazzei, 2019). The amendments would have (a) required teachers volunteering as guardians to have implicit bias training and (b) would not have allowed a teacher who accidentally shoots a student during an active shooter situation to claim self-defense under Florida's Stand Your Ground Law. Jones stated, "We are talking about black boys and girls who are getting murdered by police officers! ...There are bad police, and there are bad teachers" (Mazzei, 2019, para. 5).

Multiple researchers have indicated that Florida State Representative Jones did not have a far-fetched line of thinking. It is more probable for Black students to experience implicit bias or stereotyping as having problematic behaviors and negative attitudes requiring disciplinary and punitive action (Cook et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2016; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Black youth are more likely to be mistaken as violent and a threat than their White counterparts, which could have dangerous and lethal consequences when authority figures have guns (Martin et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2018). Tamir Rice was a 12-year-old Black boy killed because police assumed his toy gun was real. Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old murdered as he walked home from the grocery store by a neighborhood watch volunteer who perceived him as a threat, citing Stand Your ground as a defense (Diaz, 2016). Additionally, an SRO threatened to shoot a Black Florida teenager who left school with an excused absence (Shepherd, 2020). Circumstances such as these have resulted in the deaths of Black youth or placed them in serious situations that could result in death.

Sheriff Tony Gregory of Broward County in Parkland, Florida, stated, “Arming teachers is not the right approach to keep our children safe. ... This program would place students, teachers and first respondents at risk, when our focus should be on keeping our students safe and making school places where they feel they belong.” (Mazzei, 2019, para. 20)

Rogers et al. (2018) indicated that having more firearms in schools increases the risk of injury or death from accidental firearm discharges. In 2014, a sixth-grade teacher from Taylorsville, Utah, sustained an injury when she accidentally discharged her gun while using the faculty restroom (Hobbs & Brody, 2018). Furthermore, anecdotal evidence and research have suggested that teachers do not receive enough hours of training to prepare for an encounter with an active shooter; thus, they have an increased risk of misfiring or accidentally shooting an innocent person (Weatherby, 2015). Even police officers who undergo extensive training find their shooting accuracy compromised in high-stress situations; thus, teachers may struggle in an active shooter situation.

Proponents. Not everyone is an opponent of the Guardian Program.

Superintendent Bill Husfelt of Bay County Schools, a district with armed teachers (Florida Department of Education, n.d.), stated, “You know until you are standing in front of someone with a gun pointed at you, you do not realize how helpless you are. ... We do not look at it as we want more guns, we look at it as we want more protection” (Holson, 2019, para. 6). Multiple researchers (e.g., Weatherby, 2015) have provided empirical data supporting the safety and security of arming teachers to prevent harm, death, and would-be active shooters at schools.

Having guns in K–12 schools has far-reaching implications, and opponents of the Guardian Program have legitimate concerns about permitting teachers to carry concealed firearms on campus. The full extent of these concerns remains unknown and requires investigation. Nevertheless, the literature presents the risk factors of arming teachers in school settings. Additionally, advocates of arming teachers have a legitimate stake in acknowledging that such policies could be the best response to mitigating causalities and preventing another mass school shooting. These findings relate to the proposed study because they show the opinions of those for and against arming teacher policies, as well as the potential impact of the policy on Black students where implicit bias may exist.

Opinions for and Against Armed Teachers in School Settings

Numerous reasons exist why people either oppose or approve of arming teachers in school settings. Hobbs and Brody (2018) noted the accidental discharge of firearms. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2021) indicated the unintentional accessibility of a gun. DeMitchell and Rath (2019), Mancini and Smith (2020), Rogers et al. (2018), and Weatherby (2015) cited the potential liability of armed teachers to a school district and the potential of misusing a firearm that could result in unintended injury or death. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Committee Report (2019) indicated that armed teachers could respond quickly to a mass school shooting to reduce the loss of life and severe injury. Hawkins (2015) argued that armed teachers on school campuses could deter potential shooters. This literature review provides two reasons (deterrence effect and response time) in support of the arming teacher policy and two reasons (mishandling of firearms and liability) against the policy.

However, no studies have focused on whether views for or against armed teachers in schools have positive or negative impacts on students and staff.

Opposition: Mishandling of Firearms

According to Hobbs and Brody (2018), opponents of arming teachers in school settings believe the possibility of firearm accidents could cause students to face the additional risk of gun violence. Several studies showed that gun violence occurred more often with children unnecessarily exposed to firearms that adults used for protection. In the United States, there are 110 unintentional gun deaths annually for children between the ages of 0 to 14, with far greater numbers of children accidentally shooting their peers than in other developing countries (Nordin et al., 2018, p. 4). Fowler et al. (2017) used the National Vital Statistics Systems and examined nonfatal and fatal firearm-related deaths in children under 18 years. According to Fowler et al., nearly 1,300 fatalities and 5,790 gun injuries resulted in emergency hospital visits between 2002 and 2014 (p. 3). Even more disturbing is the disproportionate number of gun deaths by minorities.

Several news reports have addressed the mishandling of firearms in K–12 schools in various states (see Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2021). Researchers from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2021) independently verified the Gun Violence Archive data, finding numerous incidents of unintentional discharge, use, and accessibility of firearms left unattended or accidentally fired. A disturbing find was incidents of mishandling guns during student discipline. For example, on November 28, 2018, a Dolton, Illinois, school security guard broke up a fight between students, pulled a gun on one of the students, grabbed him by the neck, and threatened to kill him. Luckily,

there were no shots fired. However, the guard could have accidentally fired the gun, or the student could have gotten ahold of the gun, resulting in severe harm to the student or the school security guard. Nonetheless, situations of accidental discharge have occurred. In 2019, a substitute teacher in Blountsville, Alabama, where teachers can have firearms, accidentally discharged a gun in his pocket, with a bullet fragment striking a first grade student.

Furthermore, reports (as cited in Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2021) have indicated that the unintentional accessibility of guns on school campuses is a problem. In 2019, a middle school teacher in Whitney, Texas, left her gun unattended in the teacher's workroom. Two months prior, the principal of the same school left her gun unattended in the school's bathroom. The principal and the teachers were volunteer guardians in the Guardian Program. In 2018, an elementary substitute school teacher in Largo, Pinellas County (a county where teachers can carry firearms), Florida, was entertaining students by showing them how to do a cartwheel when his 9 mm Canik handgun loaded with 19 rounds of ammunition fell from his waistband. Luckily, there were no shots fired. Given the seriousness of mishandling a firearm during a disciplinary infraction and the unintentional discharge of a firearm, the unfortunate accessibility of a gun in a school setting is a grave concern, as students and staff could cause severe harm or injury to themselves or others.

Opposition: Liability

Laws provide public schools with immunity and liability from injuries caused by random acts of violence because schools are third-party entities (Weatherby, 2015). However,

legislators who allow school districts to arm school teachers have “[invited] the risk onto campus, they become vulnerable, throwing schoolchildren into the ‘snake pit’ of danger and exposing themselves to liability under Section 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the government-created risk doctrine” (Weatherby, 2015, p. 119). Section 42 U.S.C. § 1983 enables individuals to bring liability claims against someone who has caused an injury or death because of the danger created by the accused (Conti, 2015). Weatherby (2015) argued that teachers and school district leaders must recognize and not ignore the inherent risk and danger of arming teachers in school settings.

DeMitchell and Rath (2019) found that students are not the only stakeholders vulnerable to unintentional gun injury or death; armed teachers also expose visiting parents, administrators, and other school staff to gun danger. State laws require that school-aged children attend an educational institution under the Compulsory Education Law (Diorio, 2013). This law has produced a unique student–school relationship in which the school is a custodial parent when the student is at school and must thus provide students with protection. Rogers et al. (2018) posited that firearms in the classroom are an enormous risk to the entire study body, especially with improper storage. DeMitchell and Rath considered the handling and storing of guns of vital importance. Thus, an armed teacher has a moral obligation and responsibility when carrying and storing a firearm in a school setting (Gereluk et al., 2015). Referencing the 2005 Child Safety Lock Act, DeMitchell and Rath argued that teachers must take every reasonable step to ensure their students’ safety and reduce the likelihood of unintentional gun access and accidental death or injury.

The reviewed researchers have agreed that arming teachers in school settings may not be the most reasonable protective measure against further mass school shootings (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Gereluk et al., 2015; Rogers et al., 2018). Additionally, schools should provide students with protection from further acts of violence, including armed teachers. Anything less than a duty of care is a liability.

Support: Response Time. Advocates of arming teachers in school settings have suggested that an armed teacher can neutralize an active shooter (Baranauskas, 2020). Proponents believe that arming teachers could be a way to reduce casualties when waiting for law enforcement. The Columbine Review Commission (2001) indicated that delayed police response time results in unnecessary loss of life. For example, in the Columbine massacre, Dave Sanders, a teacher and coach, bled to death while waiting for medical attention, as the Special Weapons and Tactics team did not enter the school building until 3.5 hours after he was shot. Law enforcement officials also took roughly an hour to rescue Sanders after a staff member told them he lay bleeding in the classroom. All the K–12 mass school shooters presented in this literature review caused mass student and staff casualties and injuries because no one in the building stopped their carnage before they either escaped or committed suicide (Arnold, 2015; Martaindale & Blair, 2019).

The Sandy Hook Elementary shooter committed suicide less than 1 minute after police arrived, leaving 28 students and teachers dead (Arnold, 2015). The Columbine killers committed suicide after the police took over an hour to penetrate the building; however, in their 16-minute rampage, they killed 13 individuals (Janofsky, 2000). An on-

duty officer was working at Columbine High School on the day of the shooting; however, he was 60 to 70 yards away from the school, not wearing the prescription glasses needed to exchange gunfire with the shooters, and approached only after Harris and Klebold had already entered the building (Arnold, 2015). The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Committee Report (2019) showed that the Parkland, Florida, massacre lasted 6 minutes and resulted in the deaths of 17 people. The gunman discarded his weapon and 180 rounds of ammunition and escaped with other students fleeing the scene, captured and arrested 20 minutes later (pp. 7, 49). The police officers' slow response contributed to the Parkland victim count, as many of the officers who arrived on the scene took several minutes to gear up and enter the building 17 minutes after their arrival (p. 36).

According to the literature (Arnold, 2015; Janofsky, 2000; Marjory Stoneman High School Public Safety Committee Report, 2019; Martaindale & Blair, 2019), response time is critical in a school shooting. Accordingly, advocates for arming teachers argue that armed teachers could provide the entire school community a better chance for survival because they can quickly neutralize aggressors, decreasing the likelihood of fatalities and injuries (Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Walker & Sampson, 2018). Additionally, proponents argue "the facts that no school with armed teachers and staff, excluding SROs, has become a victim of mass school shootings" (Lott, 2019, as cited in Jonson et al., 2021, p. 5). For this reason, supporters contend that armed teachers are deterrents to would-be mass school shooters because they are ready to protect and defend students and staff (Limón, 2018).

Support: Deterrence Effect. Advocates believe that armed teachers can deter potential shooters (Arnold, 2015; Walker & Sampson, 2018). Yacek (2018) suggested that would-be assailants may reconsider carrying out mass school shootings if they know the teachers carry concealed weapons. School districts authorizing teachers to have firearms should post signs that teachers are armed and dangerous and will protect students and staff by any means necessary. Potential shooters could consider the sign a deterrent and reconsider the impending danger of causing gun violence.

Additionally, advocates have noted that thus far, no K–12 school with armed teachers has had a mass school shooting, death, or student or staff injury related to gun violence (Lott, 2019). Other supporters refer to Utah as an example of why arming teachers is a successful strategy (Arnold, 2015). The state has no attempted or actual mass school shootings since arming teachers. Wayne LaPierre of the NRA said, “The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun” (Editorial Board, 2016, para. 1). Thus, advocates assert that having armed teachers in schools could deter potential assailants, saving student and staff lives (Arnold, 2015; Lott, 2019).

Implicit Bias and the Potential Impact on the Arming Teacher Policy

According to Staats (2015), implicit bias is “the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner” (p. 29). Implicit bias exists in the subconscious, influencing an individual’s interactions with others, what the person considers appropriate behavior, and the feelings and attitudes harbored toward another person based on race, appearance, age, and ethnicity (Annamma et al., 2019; Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Staats, 2015). Teachers often associate Black students with

aggressive behavior and negative attitudes toward authority (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Todd et al., 2016). Researchers have attributed this perspective to views of Black boys and girls as potentially dangerous and threats to their teachers' well-being (Annamma et al., 2019; Epstein et al., 2017). Black girls are viewed as more adult-like, disrespectful, deviant, and mature than their same-aged White peers (Annamma et al., 2019; Epstein et al., 2017). Similarly, Black boys are perceived as older, worldlier, and more corrupt than White boys of the same age (Payne & Welch, 2015). Waytz et al. (2015) noted that Black boys and girls are also viewed as having superhuman strength and are "superhumanized."

Multiple researchers (Addington, 2019; Gregory & Roberts, 2017; Ritter & Anderson, 2018) have found evidence that Black boys and girls unfairly receive harsher disciplinary and punitive consequences than White peers, even for the same behaviors and infractions. Unfortunately, such negative consequences result from a teacher's perception of a Black student as dangerous or a threat to others. This research is important to note, especially as implicit bias can influence interactions between teachers and Black students (Skiba, 2015).

Annamma and Morrison (2018) found that implicit bias can have deadly ramifications for Black students. They cited a 2002 study on the effects of race in the decision to shoot or not shoot in a video game with armed and unarmed Black and White people as targets. The research indicated the existence of shooter bias, as the respondents playing the video game

Tended to shoot an armed black person faster than an armed white person and were more likely to shoot an unarmed black person. Shooter bias was more likely in groups that recognized stereotypes about black people as dangerous, aggressive, and violent. (Annamma & Morrison, 2018, p. 120)

Therefore, the gamers used their implicit bias and perceptions of Black people to guide their behaviors when they perceived danger despite the lack of an immediate threat (e.g., an unarmed Black person).

There is a need to apply the research to implicit bias in education and subjective attitudes of Black students when those in authority can carry firearms in a school setting. Implicit bias based on race and stereotypes influences the behavior of school personnel of authority and presents Black students as threatening, disrespectful, disruptive, and violent (Wegmann & Smith, 2019). Further, implicit bias produces negative interactions and contributes to already stressful encounters, which could result in the loss of life or severe injury (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019).

Consider the case of an 11-year-old Black sixth-grader slammed to the ground, shoved into a wall, and told to stop resisting by a White SRO officer after allegedly taking extra milk from the cafeteria and assaulting the principal, a claim proved untrue (Wayt, 2019). Even after a school official declared that the young girl was not a threat to him or others, the SRO officer continued to use excessive force with the student. Similarly, an SRO attacked a 17-year old Black girl, Brittany Overstreet, for allegedly having mace (proven false) and not giving it to the officer when asked. The SRO knocked

Overstreet unconscious and left her with a split lip, two missing teeth, and a broken jaw (Agorist, 2015). A White high school teacher in Beaumont, Texas, forcefully pushed papers off a Black student's desk and slapped him repeatedly while he tried to cover his face (Moyer, 2016). According to the victim and witnesses, the teacher was angry that the student spoke out in class because she thought he interrupted her lesson. When the student asked why she assaulted him, the teacher replied, "Because you are stopping him from graduating, you idiot [expletive]!" (Moyer, 2016, para. 3). Consequently, all of the interactions resulted in the students suffering injuries due to others perceiving them as threatening, noncompliant, and disruptive. These examples show the implicit bias and dehumanization of how the teacher and SROs responded to the Black students (Advancement Project, 2016). With a loaded gun in the teachers' possession, the consequences could be even worse (Minschew, 2018).

Perception: Arming Teachers in School Settings

Principals and Law Enforcement

Chrusciel et al. (2015) explored the perspectives of law enforcement personnel and public-school principals on increasing the presence of SROs in schools, policies for arming teachers and school administrators in school settings, and school gun violence and safety issues in the wake of mass school shootings across the United States. Chrusciel et al. used two surveys to identify the attitudes of law-enforcement executives and school principals on armed teachers in public schools. They increased the completion of the questionnaires by using the Dillman Total Design Survey Method (TDM) to survey 228 public school principals and 1,086 law enforcement executives (Chrusciel et al., 2015, p.

28). The TDM suggests that researchers provide an introductory letter and a prepaid envelope with the questionnaire and sends the same information with a follow-up letter a few weeks later (Dillman, 2007, as cited in Chrusciel et al., 2015). The surveys had a return rate of 141(61.8%) from law enforcement executives and 486 (44.8%) from school officials (Chrusciel et al., 2015, p. 28). Chrusciel et al. found that both law enforcement executives and school officials supported having armed SROs in schools. However, the respondents did not consider arming teachers or other school administrators an effective measure for preventing school shootings.

Chrusciel et al. (2015) sought to identify empirical evidence on the perspectives of law enforcement and school principals on laws for arming school personnel, including teachers, as the discussion has not yet included the opinions of these two groups. Chrusciel et al. focused on the Sandy Hook Elementary School and Columbine High School massacres and the media attention on the tragedies that caused public concern of mass school shootings and protecting schools. Although there was a concern for school safety after Columbine; however, it was not until Sandy Hook that an overwhelming number of officials changed school security policies to add more SROs in schools. Officials also introduced security proposals for arming school personnel, including teachers, inside school settings due to a diminished sense of safety and the need to reduce and prevent gun violence.

The purpose of Chrusciel et al.'s (2015) study was to expand the body of knowledge on the perspectives of armed teachers in school settings. Scholars had not yet documented the views of those included (e.g., teachers) and not included (e.g., principals,

parents) in studies on arming teacher policies. However, no studies included information from the key stakeholders in the debate. Thus, Chrusciel et al. filled the gap in the literature by providing the perspectives and attitudes of principals and law enforcement on arming teachers, administrators, and SROs.

Chrusciel et al. (2015) used surveys that aligned with the purpose of their study in the context of the research and a relevant geographic location. They selected South Carolina as the state to conduct the research; at the time of the study, South Carolina policymakers were considering laws to arm school teachers and other school personnel in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting. The researchers used a 4-point Likert-type scale to gather the respondents' views, feelings, and attitudes on arming school employees in their jurisdiction (law enforcement) and school district (principals). The study contributed to the existing data and studies by focusing on arming teachers and other school personnel to increase school safety and prevent further mass school shootings. Chrusciel et al. only elicited the perspectives of law enforcement officials and principals from South Carolina; however, the study had findings applicable to other states with proposed existing arming teacher policies. The findings affected social change, as the researchers recognized mass school shootings as a problem and the need to protect students and staff by preventing other mass school shootings in K–12 schools. The findings also contributed to this proposed study, indicating the need to find alternative responses, practices, and approaches to armed teachers and personnel to ensure school safety and prevent school shootings.

The Public

Mancini et al. (2020) examined public perceptions in support of and against an arming teacher policy to determine public attitudes toward permitting teachers to carry firearms in K–12 schools. Mancini et al. examined public preferences for teacher carry laws as a safety measure to prevent school shootings. The researchers used a 2018 poll of 521 Virginians to address three questions: “How supportive is our residence toward a law that would permit educators to carry in public K–12 schools?; To what extent do social demographic predictors explain variation in the likelihood of favoring K–12 carry?; and What effect do crime-related concerns have on public preferences?” (p. 610).

According to Mancini et al. (2020), 49% of the public indicated support for allowing teachers to carry firearms in schools settings, a percentage slightly higher than the national average and considerably higher than California and South Carolina (p. 616). The second question focused on socio-demographics, showing that West Virginians and Virginians between 25 and 34 years who were male, White or Latino, nonparents, Republican, and had some college education showed higher percentages and stronger support for armed teachers in schools than Virginians of other age groups, sex, race, ethnicity, political ideology, education, and regions (Mancini et al., 2020). The last question had a multivariate analysis, the same socio-demographic characteristics as the second question, and crime and justice factors as variables. Mancini et al. found that certain socio-demographics (i.e., sex, race, and region) showed higher support for armed teachers in school settings; however, other demographics (i.e., political affiliation and age) did not influence Virginians’ views with the addition of the variables of crime and

justice. Mancini et al. were the first researchers to capture K–12 parents views of teacher carry in schools.

Mancini et al.'s (2020) results contributed to the ongoing research on public perceptions of armed teachers in school settings (Jonson et al., 2021). Their findings indicated the need to investigate public perspectives of arming teacher policies, particularly the perspectives of the parents whose children would feel the impact of such policies. The findings also had implications for future research examining public attitudes toward arming teacher policies and laws. Mancini et al.'s study contributed to this proposed research, addressing parents as stakeholders in the arming teacher policy debate and indicating the need to explore parents' perspectives and the factors associated with their perceptions of armed teachers. This research could present the concerns of parents of children inadvertently impacted by teachers carrying guns in K–12 schools. My findings could also affect social change by finding alternative methods, favorable approaches, and best practices for strengthening safety policies for responding to and preventing mass school shootings. Mancini et al.'s findings also contributed to the scholarship on the possible impact of armed teachers in schools, especially on Black students, and the best programs and practices for protecting all students.

Students

In a 3-year quantitative study, Shamsrad et al. (2020) administered an online survey to a diverse group of seventh- to 10th-grade students enrolled in 12 middle schools across six school districts in a U.S. Midwestern county. Shamsrad et al. examined students' support for and feelings of safety with teachers armed in school

settings, finding that most students (80%) opposed arming teachers (Shamserad et al., 2020, p. 132). Additionally, only 23% of the students indicated that they would feel a lot or somewhat safer if a teacher on campus carried a firearm. Twenty-five percent of the students indicated no change in feelings of safety with an armed teacher, and more than 50% stated that they would feel a lot less safe with an armed teacher (Shamserad et al., 2020, p. 132). Moreover, the male students were twice as likely as females students to support teachers carrying firearms (p. 132). Regarding feelings of safety, 60% of the female students felt less safe (p. 132). Shamserad et al. also found notable racial differences in support and feelings of safety. White students (23%) were more likely to support armed teachers in comparison to the Black students (19%). Additionally, 29% of the White students indicated feeling safer if a teacher had a firearm, in comparison to 19% of Black students (p. 133). Teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and legislators could use these statistics to provide environments where all students can thrive and feel safe, regardless of the safety and prevention measures implemented to stop school violence.

Shamserad et al. (2020) also reviewed studies on students' perceptions of school safety and security measures for the arming teacher policy. They "surprisingly [found that] little is known about the level of support the policy receives from the very people it is intended to protect—students" (p. 128). Therefore, Shamserad et al. decided to explore students' attitudes toward armed teachers. They also sought to identify students' support of teachers carrying firearms in school and whether their feelings of safety increased in a school with armed teachers. The study's purpose and research questions focused on

producing the data needed to complete the research. The researchers administered surveys aligned with the study's purpose and research questions.

I used the findings of Shamsrad et al. (2020) for reference in this proposed study. First, the results indicated that the arming teacher policy could have an impact on Black students, as researchers have shown that security measures and policies (e.g., zero tolerance) have detrimental effects on the well-being and safety of Black students (Gopalan & Nelson, 2019; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Thus, adding another policy (armed teacher) could have the same adverse effects and consequences (Minschew, 2018). Second, studies have shown the disparity in punitive school disciplinary policies for Black students in comparison to White students (Anyon et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 2015–2016, 2018), which causes Black students to feel less safe in school (Lacoe, 2015). Adding teachers with loaded guns to an already tense school environment with implicit bias could result in the same outcomes as Shamsrad et al. found.

Gap in the Literature

According to Walden University (2014), the gap in the literature is “like the hole in the donut; the gap is defined by what surrounds it” (para. 1). In other words, the literature gap shows something missing or lacking in the literature that requires further examination or exploration. Scholars have extensively researched mass school shootings as a serious problem in the United States (Conti, 2015; Gervase, 2019; Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Thus, it is not a challenge to find literature on the topic of school shootings. Additionally, an abundance of literature exists on mass school shootings and a growing

concern for the safety of students. Scholars have presented proposed and permitted steps for preventing further mass school shootings and thwarting would-be and active shooters (Minshew, 2018). Furthermore, much literature has focused on researchers' reviews, examination, and exploration of the policies (e.g., arming teacher policy) proposed and permitted to enable teachers to carry firearms in school settings (Balingit, 2018; Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Toppo, 2018; Vitkovskaya, 2018).

Literature is available on the arguments for and against arming teachers in school settings (Baranauskas, 2020; Hobbs & Brody, 2018; Walker & Sampson, 2018). Researchers have addressed the potential impact of implicit bias of armed teachers on Black students in school settings (Minshew, 2018). The literature has focused on the perspectives of students (Shamsrad et al., 2020), law enforcement officials and principals (Chrusciel et al., 2015), and the public, including K–12 parents, on mass school shootings and teacher carry in schools (Mancini et al., 2020). However, researchers have not yet addressed Black parents' perceptions of arming teachers in school settings, which is the gap in the research. There is a need for research on Black parents' perceptions of the arming teacher policy in school settings, especially as they have been a population omitted from studies and could have children negatively impacted by the policy (Shamsrad et al., 2020).

Florida had one of the most horrific and deadly mass school shootings (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida). Thus, Florida's leaders have permitted school district officials to decide whether to arm teachers (Florida Department of Education, n.d.; Mahoney, 2019). Of the 67 school districts in the state, leaders of 43

counties have expressed interest, and 11 school districts have provided classroom teachers with the option of carrying firearms on school grounds and in the classroom. Despite overwhelming objection from Parkland parents, victims, family members, students, and Black lawmakers who stated “that letting educators pack heat is a recipe for disaster” (Ifill, 2018, para. 3), Florida senators approved a bill to arm teachers (Holson, 2019; Mazzei, 2019). NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson said, “Our concern is not only black and brown students but all students who could be harmed” (Jones & Sung, 2018, paras. 15–16). Additionally, Florida Senator Cynthia Stafford mentioned that implicit bias could have unintended consequences and might be one danger of arming teachers. Jones and Sung (2018) stated, “Some parents of black students in the state said they would consider pulling their children from school if their district were to adopt the program” (para. 6). Black parents have expressed concern that their children could encounter hostile and volatile situations if teachers carry firearms in school settings, indicating a need for alternatives to armed teachers to prevent further school shootings.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the literature on the problem of mass school shootings in the United States, various stakeholders’ views and awareness of arming teacher policies, and the factors contributing to legislators enacting arming teacher policies in primary and secondary schools. Chapter 2 also indicated the need to explore and understand the perceptions of all stakeholders when enacting legislation to prevent further mass school shootings. Understanding mass school shootings is a complex topic; therefore, a measure to prevent school gun violence and protect students and staff is a

multifaceted issue requiring a multidisciplinary approach. Thus, a need exist for further analysis on whether arming teachers in school settings is an appropriate measure for preventing further gun violence and a need to find safe alternatives to arming teachers that would not cause students, especially Black students, to face the additional risk of gun violence.

This study contributed to the literature by providing vital information on a population excluded from research of armed teachers in school settings. The study's results provided a comprehensive analysis of Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. The study was also a means of analyzing teachers' implicit bias and its impact on their negative interactions with Black students. In addition, there was a comprehensive analysis of how harmful interactions between armed teachers with implicit bias and Black students could have possible dangerous and lethal consequences.

Furthermore, this research could indicate the need for policymakers to recognize and consider the potential impact of armed teachers on Black students. Lawmakers should consider those factors to enact policies and alternative strategies for preventing mass school shootings and providing all students with a safe school environment. Lastly, researching such a debated topic could be a means of encouraging lawmakers and school district leaders to review their stances on the arming teacher policy and find better approaches to preventing mass school shootings that do not subject Black students to additional harm.

Chapter 3 presented the study's methodology, including the setting, participant selection, sample size, and criteria. Chapter 3 contained the research design and rationale

and my role as the researcher. The chapter also included the study's instrumentation, data collection, participant recruitment, interview procedures, informed consent, potential risk and benefits of participation, data collection strategies, data storage, means of establishing trustworthiness, and ethical challenges and procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This basic qualitative study was a means to explore Black parents' perceptions of armed teachers in school settings. This study provided valuable insight into how Black parents perceive arming teachers in school settings and the impact of the arming teacher policy on Black students. Chapter 3 included the research design and rationale for a basic qualitative approach and the role of the researcher. Also presented were the study's methodology, setting, participant selection, sample size, criteria, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 3 concluded trustworthiness, ethical concerns and procedures, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design and rationale sections included the research questions of this basic qualitative study, the phenomenon under study, and an explanation. The section included the rationale for choosing the basic qualitative approach to understanding Black parents' perception of the arming teacher policy.

Research Questions

The research questions focused on the *what* of the participants' experiences through the intrinsic reality of the phenomenon under study (Newman & Covrig, 2013). The research questions were a means of capturing the participants' perception. This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings?

RQ2: How do Black parents perceive policies that permit arming teachers in school settings impacting lack students?

Basic Qualitative Research Design

The phenomenon under study was Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. This study occurred with the qualitative method and basic qualitative design. In-depth interviews were the means of conducting the study and answering the research questions. The qualitative methodology provides the opportunity to study people and explore the social interactions of individuals and groups (Patton, 2015). Additionally, the qualitative methodology also allows for gathering information for an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon experienced by participants. Qualitative researchers can access participants' feelings and emotions inaccessible via other methodologies. For example, the quantitative methodology has a numerical focus. Quantitative researchers look for patterns of differences between groups or subjects with a statistical basis for retrieved data (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Therefore, quantitative research would not be a suitable means of exploring the participants' perceptions.

Qualitative research evokes people's comprehension of particular situations, circumstances, and settings (Jackson et al., 2007). The qualitative methodology was the most appropriate approach for answering the proposed research questions, focusing on the participants' perspectives. Qualitative scholars explore participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perspectives (Patton, 2015). The qualitative approach indicates how a researcher should look at a phenomenon; it is a fundamental way of understanding the impact of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Jackson et al., 2007). The

proposed design focuses on answering the what, who, and why of the research phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

Each qualitative research design (case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography) provides a unique approach, similar in some aspects and different in others. All qualitative studies allow interviews as a data source, and all focus on understanding the meaning of a phenomenon via the perspectives of individuals and groups having experienced the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

A case study was not an appropriate design for this study, as case studies require cases of real-life events focused on time and place. Grounded theory was also not applicable, as this study did not include developing a new theory of the emergence of the studied social phenomenon. I did not look to explore the participants' lived experiences; therefore, I excluded phenomenology as a qualitative design. Additionally, ethnography was unsuitable because of its focus on in-person observations and participation in the field. Thus, a basic qualitative design was the only appropriate approach to obtaining an in-depth explanation, focus, and understanding of the phenomenon (Mason-Bish, 2019). Basic qualitative research allowed me to address the gap in the research, which is the absence of Black parents' perceptions of the arming teacher policy. This study's findings could inspire more research on armed teachers in school settings and Black parents' perception of arming teacher policies.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the qualitative researcher is "to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of studying participants" (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 226). This study included

semistructured interviews to elicit the participants' perception of arming teachers in school settings. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the interviews occurred virtually via Zoom. It was my responsibility to listen thoroughly to the participants during the one-on-one interviews. Focusing on the participants' thoughts, feelings, and views provided better understanding and insight into their perception of policies that permit the arming of teachers in school settings and the potential impact on Black students.

Another role of the researcher is to collect data. I recorded the interviews using Zoom to capture the participants' verbal communication. As the researcher, I took copious and detailed handwritten notes from the recorded interviews, transcribed the notes verbatim into a Microsoft Word document, and uploaded the transcriptions into a Microsoft Excel document. I also maintained an electronic folder for the transcribed notes to organize the notes in a simplistic form and utilized an interview guide to capturing the participants' responses and my feelings.

An additional role of the researcher is accurate data analysis. I transcribed the interviews, organized the data, placed codes into categories, sorted the categories into themes and patterns, and identified recurrent themes (Saldaña, 2016). The participants were Black parents from the southeastern United States and Florida. Although I self-identify as Black and live and work in a geographical region of Southeast United States, I am not a parent and will have no personal connection to the participants. Therefore, as the researcher, my race, residence, and prior employment would not influence the participants' interviews, and thus, this study would not have any conflicts of interest.

A researcher must also acknowledge personal bias, which I did through self-reflection. As the researcher, I reflected on my thoughts before and after the audio-recorded interviews. I also maintained open communication with the participants throughout the data collection and analysis processes. The participants were provided a copy of their interview transcripts for review to ensure their responses' accuracy, transparency, and clarity. Member checking—a technique used to check the accuracy and credibility of participants' answers was utilized to reduce personal bias before and after the data analysis and to minimize ethical issues from inaccurate data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Furthermore, as the researcher, it was my responsibility to report the information that I gathered during the interview process honestly and accurately. Therefore, I chose a transcription program with excellent speech-to-text accuracy to help transcribe the data.

Lastly, Sutton and Austin (2015) explained that “the primary responsibility of the researcher is to safeguard [the] participants and their data” (p. 226) during data collection. Thus, an additional role included following ethical guidelines. Therefore, to ensure that I followed ethical guidelines, participants were instructed that their participation was voluntary, that their identity would be kept confidential, and that they could stop or withdraw from the interview process at any time. Furthermore, as the researcher, I ensured that parents willingly accepted the invitation to participate in the study by collecting emails with the words “I consent” before participating.

Methodology

This section presented the methodological procedures of this basic qualitative study. The section included the means of setting and selecting the participants, sample

size, and criteria. I discussed the instrumentation, recruitment procedures, participation criteria, data collection, data analysis, interview protocol, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Setting

Florida was one of the study's locations. In 2020, Florida had an estimated population of approximately 21.5 million people, 17.0% of whom identified as Black or African American (United States Census Bureau, 2020). Florida is one of the 28 states with an arming teacher policy. Florida senators have moved to allow public school teachers to carry weapons in the classroom at the discretion of the school district (Lowe, 2019).

Florida was an appropriate location because it was the site of the catastrophic Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in 2018, one of the most catastrophic mass school shootings in a K–12 school in the United States. Additionally, the highly publicized shooting was the catalyst for public, federal, and national debates about arming teachers to keep schools safe and prevent mass school shootings (Isbell et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2020; Rajan & Branas, 2018).

Participant Selection, Sample Size, and Criteria

The study's population consisted of Black parents living in Florida or the southeastern United States. The inclusion criteria was Black parents familiar with the arming teacher policy in school districts who reside in Florida or the southeastern United States. The study excluded parents who do not identify as Black and who did not live in the southeastern United States or Florida. This study did not include Black parents under

the age of 18 because minors are a protected population. The participants were verify that they met the inclusion criteria by returning their demographic questionnaire indicating self-identification as Black/African American, over the age of 18, a parent, residing in Florida or the southeastern United States, and knowledge of the arming teacher policy.

The targeted sample size was 12 adults familiar with the arming teacher policy in school districts. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods commenced the recruitment of participants essential for the data collection. Purposeful sampling is intentional; snowball sampling enables participants to refer eligible individuals when more are needed (O’Sullivan et al., 2017). Both purposeful (intentional) and snowball sampling are nonprobability methods (Ngozwana, 2018).

With 12 participants, the study had a small sample. However, the number was sufficient to capture perceptions, attitudes, and views through rich interviews and the essence and meaning of the phenomenon under study (Mason, 2010). Patton (2015) suggested that no specific number or rule exists for sample size in qualitative research. The recommended number for basic qualitative research is 10; however, a researcher could use fewer participants if saturation occurs (Patton, 2015).

Determining the appropriate sample size for this research study required data saturation to establish credibility (Sim et al., 2018). According to Guest et al. (2006, as cited in Sim et al., 2018), data saturation often occurs at 12 participants. However, Walker (2012) stated, “There is no consistent way across qualitative methods to use and/or determine saturation” (p. 38). Therefore, data saturation is unique to each study. Reaching an adequate number of participants in qualitative analysis can occur with a

sample size larger or smaller than the suggested 12. A researcher can determine data saturation in various ways. Data saturation occurs when the data become repetitive, no new or relevant information emerges from data analysis, the same themes appear repeatedly, and no new themes emerge from the data analysis and interviews. For this study, I recruited 12 participants and reached data saturation at the 10th participant interviewed.

Instrumentation

The researcher is the most important research instrument (Walker et al., 2013). A researcher must take responsibility for every aspect of the research study, from recruiting the participants, interviewing, collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data to publishing the findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Before interviewing participants, I conducted a mock interview with a colleague. The mock interview reinforced the need to pay careful attention to the process, participant vulnerability, and the diligence required for accurate data collection. I used the colleague's feedback to adjust the interview questions and improve my interview skills. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), skilled interviewing takes practice, reflection, and feedback. The quality of information obtained during an interview is only as good as the interviewer.

For this study, I used an interview protocol as I asked the participants questions. I designed open-ended interview questions in which each guided the following question. I left room for flexibility, follow-ups, and further probing, if necessary, during the one-on-one interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

One-on-one, semistructured interviews were the data collection method to gather the participants' views of armed teachers in school settings. All interviews occurred via Zoom. I audio-recorded the interviews with a Mac computer and sent the recordings to Rev.com, a transcription company. I made handwritten notes on the transcripts to identify preliminary codes and themes from each participant's interview responses. I saved, coded, and categorized participant audio recordings.

Data Collection

Data collection must align with the research question, purpose, and topic (Walden University, 2019). Each data collection method has strengths and weaknesses. A researcher must decide on the most suitable data collection method for obtaining the information needed for the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I collected data align with the topic under study based on the gap in the literature, the research purpose, questions, and problem. My data collection came from semistructured interviews with open-ended questions.

I allotted 45 to 60 minutes for each interview with some flexibility to ask follow-up questions with the participant's consent. I recorded the interviews using Zoom web technology to capture the participants' verbal communication. I also took detailed handwritten notes during the audio interviews. I had the interviews transcribed verbatim and upload the transcripts into a computer file. I maintained electronic folders for the audio notes and organized them in a simplistic form. Moreover, an interview guide allowed me to take notes of the interviews, the participants' conversations, and my feelings during and after the interviews.

Methodological triangulation was an important step in this study. With methodological triangulation, a researcher utilizes more than one source of data to enhance the validity and accuracy of the participants' responses and generate a more comprehensive collection of data (Carter et al., 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Thus, I generated data from two sources (i.e., handwritten notes and audio recordings) to enhance accuracy. I transcribed the interviews, organize the data, place codes into categories, sort the categories into themes and patterns, and identify recurrent themes (Saldaña, 2016).

Participant Recruitment

The participant recruitment commenced after obtaining approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board; (05-25-22-0982182). I posted a public request on Facebook for anyone interested in volunteering to help with a dissertation on armed teachers in school settings. The post included the study's purpose and inclusion criteria. If insufficient participants respond to the Facebook post, I asked those interested in participating if they would refer other parents potentially interested in the study. I obtained the interested individuals' email addresses to send a consent form with study details, including participation requirements and data use, and a demographic questionnaire. The potential participants completed the demographic questionnaire, replied with the words "I consent", and return the demographic questionnaire to my email address before they participated. All individuals met the inclusion criteria (i.e., identify as Black, be a parent over the age of 18, live in Florida or the southeastern United States, and had familiarity with armed teachers in school settings). I invited the first 12 individuals who replied, "I consent," and sent me their demographic questionnaire to

participate in the study. As the researcher in this study, I conducted purposeful participant selection. The participants who met the criteria were scheduled for 45-to 60-minute semistructured interviews via Zoom.

Interviews: Semistructured

Interviews are a standard data collection method of qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One-on-one interviews have open-ended questions to gauge and facilitate in-depth discussion about the participants' emotions, feelings, attitudes, experiences, and opinions about the phenomenon under study. Interviews are individualized, present less bias, achieve a higher response rate, and enable the researcher to record the respondents' words. Interviews can occur in person or via telephone, audio conferencing (e.g., Zoom), or instant messaging (e.g., Messenger app). Interviews provide the opportunity to establish more intimate relationships and rapport with the interviewees, uncover previously unknown ideas and issues, and dive deeper into the participants' responses. Semistructured interviews allow researchers to elicit in-depth responses via questions and probes about the participants attitudes and perspectives of the phenomenon (Gill et al., 2008; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews allow the opportunity to listen to the respondents' points of view. Lastly, interviews enable researchers to ask follow-up questions to clarify ambiguities (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participants interviewed in this study were Black parents from the southeastern United States or Florida.

I commenced each interview by introducing myself, my role as the researcher, the purpose of the study, the rules of privacy and confidentiality, and the expected length of the interview. I also reviewed the participant's demographic questionnaire, their email

with the words “I consent”, and answered any questions before starting the interview. All participants received an emailed copy of the consent form presenting the study’s purpose, interview procedures, voluntary nature of the interview, risks and benefits of participating, and the means of maintaining privacy. I reviewed with the participants how the interviews would occur and the expectations for the interview (e.g., timeframe). I thanked the participants for their time and participation after the interview and asked if they had any questions. I also debriefed them on the next steps in the study, including sending them their transcripts and audio recordings via email to verify the accuracy of the data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Due to the possibly sensitive nature of the study, I suggested the participants contact a counseling agency if they felt or experienced any emotional pain or discomfort from their interviews.

Participants’ Informed Consent

Individuals must consent to participate in the research study before data collection occurs (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participants received a consent form indicating the voluntary nature of participation, that they would receive compensation in the form of a \$10 Chick-fil-A eGift card for participating, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time for any reason. Providing all relevant information in the informed consent document enabled the participants to decide whether they wanted to participate. I explained the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. I also presented the expectations for the research, including the time commitment and confidentiality. The participants knew that the final study would not include any identifying information and that they would remain anonymous. I maintained strict confidentiality and participants’

privacy throughout the study. I described the study to the participants and discussed the purpose and timeline of the data collection process. The participants consented to the audio recording of their interviews. The participants also consented to participate by replying “I consent” via email, and I forwarded them a copy of their completed demographic questionnaire and email reply “I consent” for their records. I shared the interview recordings and full transcripts with the participants upon request and for data accuracy. The participants also learned about the research goals, including publication. The participants received an email link upon publication to view the final document.

Potential Risks, Benefits, and Harm

Researchers must follow ethical guidelines in research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, researchers must anticipate and acknowledge the potential risks, benefits, and harm of participating (Draucker et al., 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Researchers can safeguard the participants and minimize risk and harm by remaining straightforward and transparent about the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers must also honor promises, not pressure individuals to participate, and answer all the questions they might deem emotional about or feel reluctant to answer. Researchers should not exploit the participants by publishing the data known to cause emotional, physical, or psychological injury, job loss, loss of income, potential arrest, embarrassment, or victimization, even if they consider such data beneficial to their studies. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), “Some truths are not worth the pain that they cause; others might be necessary for the pain they can prevent” (p. 90). Researchers must remember their ethical obligations to the participants and readers and utilize the

risk-benefit ratio. As the researcher, I weighed the study's potential risks, harms, and benefits for the participants. Moreover, I acknowledged all the benefits and informed the interviewees that their participation could be an avenue for influencing social change.

Data Analysis

Data analysis from the participant interviews commenced via manual coding, qualitative data analysis software (QDAS), and the Rev.com (2010) transcription service. The transcribed interviews produced vast quantities of data. I manually reviewed the transcribed interviews by reading and rereading the transcripts line by line to find notable words or phrases. I looked for commonalities, repeating concepts, and emergent themes in the interviewees' perceptions of armed teachers in school settings. The data was then simplified, and the responses were organized, categorized, and labeled into relevant words, sentences, and phrases in more straightforward terms to understand the essential information. Simplifying the sentences enabled me to identify keywords and phrases that repeated, stood out, and had similarities; those keywords and phrases became codes.

Next, I grouped the codes and assigned labels and categories to those words and phrases. I moved from inductively coded units to larger representations, including categories and themes, which required an understanding of distinguishing between codes, themes, and categories (Saldaña, 2016). Codes are verbatim words and phrases from respondents' answers or conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers can code words, phrases, and even sentences to represent a single idea. Categories are grouped patterns of observable data that emerge after coding. Categories comprise codes, and each

category reflects similar characteristics (Saldaña, 2016). Themes are words or phrases representative of broader contextual ideas.

Placing codes into categories and into themes helped me organize and group concepts to simplify the data analysis of the research participants' responses (Saldaña, 2016). I took the codes verbatim from the interviewees' responses. The codes and phrases represented a single idea, which I used to describe broader contextual ideas. I used Microsoft Excel for data analysis after manually coding the data. I identified emergent patterns and themes important to the research questions from the categories.

Microsoft Excel is a helpful tool for coding words and phrases manually (Meyer & Avery, 2009). Microsoft Excel is also a good program for reading files, putting data into tables, arranging data chronologically, and adding values to codes for straightforward qualitative data analysis. Thus, I used Microsoft Excel during the coding analysis. QDAS was another approach to facilitate qualitative data analysis, process the interview content, and code the data (Predictive Analysis Today, 2016a). I imported the data into the NVivo computer-assisted QDAS after transcribing the interviews. NVivo was easy to navigate, facilitating qualitative transcript analysis. I created a word tree of recurrent words and phrases to find themes (Boston University, n.d.). Using NVivo saved time during the data analysis and thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016). I moved the data analysis files into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and saved and stored the documents on my computer to preserve and back up all data collected (Boston University, n.d.; Predictive Analysis Today, 2016b).

Data Storage

At the time of this study, the COVID-19 pandemic had caused a worldwide shutdown. Therefore, web-based conference technology was the best option to keep myself and the participants safe and limit exposure to the virus. I used Zoom to conduct and record the one-on-one semistructured interviews. I immediately downloaded each recorded interview into an electronic folder and deleted the original from Zoom to maintain privacy and confidentiality. I stored the files containing all data to my USB flash drive as well as my computer's external hard drive and placed the flash drive in a locked safe in my home office.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential component of qualitative research and data analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Trustworthiness is a means of ensuring the quality and credibility of a study and its data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020) and occurs when researchers record participant responses with precision and analyze the data with meticulous attention to detail and accuracy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to take steps to achieve trustworthiness in a study and its findings. There are four criteria for enhancing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Houghton et al., 2013; Kubiak et al., 2017).

Credibility

Credibility is the believability and appropriateness of a study of a world issue or phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested establishing qualitative credibility with well-suited research designs and data collection instruments,

such as interviews. Credibility aligns with internal validity, both of which researchers can strengthen through triangulation and member checking. In this study, triangulation entailed gathering data from two sources, handwritten notes and audio recordings (Zoom) of participants' interviews. The data collection methods contributed to the accuracy, validity, and credibility of the data. I also enhanced the study's credibility and validity by providing the interview transcripts to the participants to review for clarity, accuracy, and suggested changes.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested achieving credibility by reporting a study's findings transparently. After meticulous data collection and analysis, I kept my interview notes and recordings readily available if anyone wished to see the data. However, the data did not include any participants' personal identifiers. Lastly, I kept a journal to record a detailed summary of the transcribed interview notes, how I moved from codes to categories and themes, and the data collection and data analysis processes.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research focuses on the relevance and usefulness of the findings, meaning that a different researcher could apply the findings in a different setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the researcher, I provided a thick description of the full research process as well as a descriptive account of the participant interviews, criteria, demographics, interview procedures (excluding personal identifiers), data analysis, and results. With a detailed (thick) description of the methodological process, future researchers could utilize this study for other similar and related future studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is the strength of the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Dependability means the data are accurate data and the findings consistent and trustworthy so that other researchers could duplicate the study and produce similar findings. In this study, verifying the dependability of the research consisted of keeping an audit trail. The audit trail provided a step-by-step, chronological account of each stage of the research process, from the design of the study to the data collection and the data analysis sequences (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The audit trail also provided the rationale for the chosen research design, data collection methods, and data analysis processes. An audit trail was the means used to track and verify the accuracy of the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is another criterion for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Confirmability is a researcher's ability to check the data throughout the study to establish the truthfulness of the data and the accuracy of the interpretations (Forero et al., 2018). Confirmability is also the degree to which other researchers can corroborate the accuracy of the findings (Forero et al., 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research. Thus, as the researcher, I was an integral part of the research study. Therefore, I continuously practiced critical self-reflection, also known as reflexivity, throughout the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reflexivity commenced via journaling to address personal biases, perceptions, attitudes, and views about the research subject to avoid their influence on the

interpretations of the data. Moreover, I established the confirmability of the study's findings with triangulation and an audit trail (Forero et al., 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I analyzed the authenticity of the participants' responses and confirm that the study reflected the participants' narratives and not my words and perceptions.

Ethical Challenges and Procedures

Researchers must remain cognizant of the ethical challenges in all stages of the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Protecting participant privacy (confidentiality), minimizing harm (do no harm), and respecting the participants' perspectives, experiences, attitudes, and views are steps to a researcher's reputation and research. Qualitative researchers, in particular, must remain mindful of ethical challenges because they have a more hands-on approach with the participants.

As the researcher, I sought IRB documentation on the ethical standards to ensure that I complied with all protocols, rules, and regulations. I remained conscious of not harming the participants, maintaining their confidentiality and privacy, and obtaining their informed consent. The participants knew that I would uphold their confidentiality and privacy by not including personal identifiers in the data analysis and findings. Additionally, I clarified the study's purpose, nature, benefits, and research procedures in the consent form.

Moreover, I remained aware of the nature of the study and the topic's sensitivity. I recognized that asking questions about armed school teachers, Black students, implicit bias, and school violence could be uncomfortable topics that could cause psychological

stress. The research questions could also trigger emotional issues, painful feelings, and memories of mass school shootings, which have affected countless U.S. communities. According to O'Sullivan et al. (2017), "This risk information should include mention of possible discomfort, anxiety, unwanted information about oneself, or inconvenience" (p. 258). Therefore, the consent form indicated possible psychological risk of participating in the study. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Lastly, the consent form included my contact information for questions or concerns.

Summary

The goal of this basic qualitative exploratory study was to understand Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. Chapter 3 presented the study's methodology, design rationale, basic qualitative research design, role of the researcher, instrumentation, data collection, participant recruitment, semistructured interviews, and informed consent. The chapter included the potential risk, benefits, and harm of participation; trustworthiness; and ethical challenges and procedures. The basic qualitative approach was the most appropriate to explore Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. Semistructured interviews were the data collection method used for this study. Participant selection occurred via purposeful and snowball sampling and continue until data saturation occurred. I used triangulation (web audio recorder on Zoom, and manual notes). In this chapter, I acknowledged the ethical challenges and procedures, as well as issues of trustworthiness. Chapter 4 presented the data collection, data analysis, research questions, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The next chapter also included the coding summary as well as direct participant quotes.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand Black parents' perception of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings. I aimed to understand how Black parents perceived the arming teacher policy impacting Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Lastly, I also aimed to understand how policies for arming teachers possible cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns.

The first overarching guided research question: What are Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings? The first set of sub-questions that guided this study:

Sub-question #1: What are your concerns if any about Black students' well-being if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?

Sub-question #2: What is your perception of the safety of Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school setting?

Sub-question #3: What is your perception of the potential consequences positive or negative toward Black students when policies permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings?

Sub-question #4: What do you perceive are risk factors for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?

Sub-question #5: What are your feelings as a parent of a Black student who may attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?

The second overarching guided research question: How do Black parents perceive policies that permit arming teachers in school settings impacting Black students? The second set of sub-questions that guided this study:

Sub-question #1: What impact positive or negative will arming teachers in school settings have on Black students?

Sub-question #2: What impact does implicit bias have on teacher and Black students' interactions if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?

Sub-question #3: How would you perceive policies that permit teachers carrying firearms in school settings impacting Black students' social-emotional learning, academic achievement, or school climate?

Sub-question #4: How do you perceive race, gender and social-economic status impacting a teachers' willingness to shoot a firearm when there is a perception of threat of danger to self or others?

Sub-question #5: What assumptions do you believe, if any that teachers make about Black students that could impact the decision to use a hand gun when firearms are permitted in school settings?

In this chapter, I discussed the study's setting and participants' demographic information. This chapter also included a description of the data collection and data analysis process, a review of the evidence of the trustworthiness of the study, and concluded with the study findings.

Study Settings

I recruited 12 participants for the research study via Facebook, a social media platform. I posted a recruitment flyer on my Facebook page and made it public. Several potential participants commented on the Facebook recruitment post that they were interested and willing to volunteer for the study. I messaged these individuals privately utilizing a Facebook messenger thread, asking for their email addresses so that the demographic questionnaire and the informed consent document could be emailed. If the participants met the criteria for the study and agreed to voluntarily participate, they emailed back the completed demographic questionnaire and the words “I consent.” Once the demographic questionnaire and the words “I consent” was received, I scheduled a one-on-one 45-60 minutes semistructured interview with each research participant. All interviews were conducted via the Zoom audio conference platform. Zoom was chosen as the platform to conduct the interviews due to the geographic location of the participants and prior COVID-19 protocols to ensure safety for the participants and me. Participants were asked to schedule a time and day that was convenient to participate in the research study. Participants were reminded that the interviews were recorded, and thus, participants would need a quiet place away from distractions. Additionally, the participants were also reminded that as the researcher, I was required to protect their privacy and confidentiality. Thus, it was advantageous for the participants and me to have a safe place and private location to keep their privacy protected and identity confidential.

Interviews were conducted on July 23, 2022, through September 8, 2022. After September 8, no other participants were needed for the study because I reached saturation

at 10 participants. The first interview was scheduled within two and a half weeks of the initial email response for participation, receiving the demographic questionnaire back, an email with the words “I consent” and the participant's availability. After each interview, research participants were emailed a Chick-fil-A eGift card.

Demographic Data

The study participants were 10 individuals who self-identified as Black and resided in Florida or the southeastern United States. All participants were over the age of 18, a parent, and had some familiarity with the arming teacher policy in school districts.

Data Collection

One-on-one, semistructured interviews were conducted with each of the 10 participants through the Zoom audio conference meeting platform. Before each interview, I introduced myself and reviewed the demographic criteria and the consent form. I reminded each participant that their identity would be kept confidential. Then I assigned each participant a standardized numerical identifier, P1-P10, and utilized these identifiers for the individual recorded interviews and transcripts. The average duration of each interview was 25 minutes. During the interview process, I generated data from two sources; handwritten notes and interviewed audio recordings. Utilizing handwritten notes and audio recordings helped me enhance the data's accuracy and capture critical facets of the participants' perceptions and feelings related to the research questions. During the handwritten note-taking process, I kept track of unfamiliar words and any follow-up questions I needed to ask. Also, during the interview, I informed each participant that they could ask questions for clarity and asked me to repeat a question at any time. After

each interview, I debriefed the participants on the next steps in the study, including sending them their transcripts and audio recordings via email to verify the accuracy of their words and to make changes or ask any questions. In addition, I informed the participants that at the conclusion of my research and once my study is approved, I would send them a copy of the summary of the data findings.

I transcribed all interviews using Rev, a transcription service, and then saved the interviews and audio recordings to a USB flash drive and my computer's external hard drive. After reviewing the transcripts with the audio recording, I emailed each participant a copy of their transcript and audio recording to confirm their transcript was accurate. All 10 participants confirmed that the transcripts were correct and no changes were needed. P10 stated, "I believe the essence of my thoughts have been captured. Thank you for the opportunity to participate." P2 was asked to elaborate on a statement for clarity. I asked this participant what was meant by "some teachers having immaturity about themselves." Lastly, no unusual or unexpected circumstances occurred during the data collection process, and no deviation arose from the data collection plan presented in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

After all interviews were completed, the audio recordings from Zoom were transcribed verbatim by Rev.com, a professional speech-to-text transcription service, under strict confidential agreements. Once the interviews were transcribed, I reviewed each transcript with the audio repeatedly, and familiarized myself with the data. Thereafter, I was able to conduct an initial analysis and identify commonalities and repeating concepts. Next, I was able to identify and take note of preliminary codes and

emergent themes from each participant's interview responses. In a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, I utilized three columns: one for codes, another for categories, and the last for themes, and I color coded each column to allow for identification. These initial steps helped simplify the data and provided for a more detailed analysis of the participants' answers to the research questions.

QDAS was another approach utilized to facilitate the qualitative data analysis. I conducted a six-step, inductive thematic analysis of the data as outlined by Braun and Claud (2006). Thematic analysis is a common methodological approach in qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; Ravitch & Carl, 2016); it is widely used and is adaptable to a wide range of theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clark, 2006). First, I imported the data into the NVivo computer assisted QDAS where I read and reread again all of the interview transcripts to gain additionally familiarity with the participants responses. Second, I simplified sentences and identified keywords and phrases that stood out. I organized, labeled, and clustered interesting and relevant words into meaningful groups; these words and phrases generated codes and aided in understanding the essential information that was relevant to the Black parents' perception of teachers carrying firearms in school. Each pertinent data extract that contained adequate information to convey explicit connections was assigned to an NVivo node, which represented an initial code.

As an example, of the initial coding process in step 2 of the data analysis, P1 stated during the interview "As far as negative consequences, yeah, a student getting injured or possibly being shot." The significance of this response was that it gave an

answer to the question what are black parents' perception of consequences when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. P1 described an act of violence, being shot as a consequence. P3 answered the question regarding Black parents' perception of potential consequences towards Black students when policies permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings by expressing "they'll be in greater danger of being shot." This response was a likeness to P1's response, in that it pointed out that being shot was a potential consequence for policies that permit the arming of teachers in school settings. The likeness between the two responses was further supported by eight of the participants utilizing the terms maimed, attacked, and assaulted interchangeably as acts of violence when discussing consequences. Other responses were discussed and coded separately. P1's and P3's response was therefore assigned the same initial code: acts of violence. Clustering the data helped clarify the findings, in a total of data excerpts were assigned to 26 codes and 139 data references of codes. (see Table 1)

In the third step of the analysis, all data was identified and collated, related codes were grouped into themes and aided in describing broader contextual ideas with similar meaning. For example, the code racialized violence was grouped with three other codes fear, threat, and gun protection. These three codes were identified as related because they all referred to consequences for permitting armed teachers in school settings. NVivo software program allowed me to group the codes into child nodes beneath the same parent node, which represented the newly formed theme. A total of 6 themes were formed and 23 codes. (See Table 2)

The fourth step of the analysis involved reviewing the themes for accuracy and possible refinement. The themes were compared to find likenesses and differences to ensure the themes were clear, identifiable, meaningful, and supported the data. Additionally, the nodes were reevaluated for clarity and to ensure that each node represented a single idea and needed no further breakdown into multiple themes.

The fifth step of the data analysis process involved defining the meaning of the themes and then naming each; also, looking for any possible sub-themes. Additionally, the codes assigned to each theme were reviewed again and compared to the research questions: What are black parents' perceptions of policies that permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings and how do Black parents perceive policies that permit arming teachers in school settings impacting Black students? As an example of this process, the theme with the initial label consequences for armed teachers was renamed; Black parents' perception of potential consequences when teachers are armed in schools. Table 2 denotes how the codes were clustered to form the overarching theme.

The sixth step of the analysis involved producing the report and results provided in this chapter. The report of results was organized by theme. The discussion of each theme included direct participant quotes as evidence of the data. Lastly, there were no cases of discrepancies that emerged during the data analysis and no evidence emerged that contradicted the results.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential component of qualitative research and data analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and was essential in ensuring the validity of the data and

the credibility and quality of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020). The below subsections describe the procedures used in this study to enhance each component of trustworthiness.

Credibility

Credibility is the believability and appropriateness of a study of a world issue or phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This study's credibility was enhanced with triangulation and member checking. Triangulation is utilizing one method with distinct strategies connected with the method of choice (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, the method of choice was interviewing, and the different strategies were handwritten notes and audio recordings. Notetaking allowed for clarity and elaboration of details when a concept needed to be understood. Notetaking also helped me gather additional information from the research participant, making sure that, as the researcher, I was thorough in my data collecting. The audio recordings were used to capture the participant's responses to the research questions in real-time and in their own words. The audio recordings were then transcribed by a professional transcription service with excellent speech recognition transcription accuracy (Rev.com, n.d). Rev transcription service helped ensure that the participants' words were verbatim, assuring that the data correctly represented the words of the participants.

Member checking is a technique used to check the accuracy and credibility of participants' answers (Sutton & Austin, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Member checking for this study involved emailing each participant a copy of their transcript and audio recorded interview and asking them to review, verify the accuracy of their words, and

make any necessary corrections. All participants agreed that the transcripts were accurate and that no corrections were needed. Thus, the likelihood of incorrect data is reduced, and the credibility of the data is enhanced.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is essential to the relevance and usefulness of the findings, meaning that the results can be replicated in different settings with different researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the researcher, I established transferability by providing a copious and descriptive account of the participants' interviews by presenting direct quotes to confirm their perception on the phenomenon studied. Additionally, transferability was confirmed by providing a detailed account of interview procedures, criteria, demographics (excluding personal identifiers), data collection and data analysis process, and results, as defined this chapter. Transferability was also validated through a thick description of the complete methodological process, as outlined in Chapter 3. With a detailed (thick) description of the research process, future researchers could utilize and replicate this study for other similar and related future studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the reliability, replicability, and consistency of the strength of the data over time using the same method (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, dependability was achieved by providing a detailed and transparent description of the rationale for the chosen research design, including all aspects of the study's methodology as outlined in Chapter 3 and the data

collection methods and data analysis processes as outlined in this chapter. Additionally, I utilized audit trails. An audit trail was used to track and verify the accuracy and integrity of the study, so future researchers can duplicate the study and produce similar results. Audit trails provide a chronological sequence of steps from the research study's start to the development and then to the reported results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Confirmability

Confirmability establishes the truthfulness and accuracy of the interpretations of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016); this is achieved when the researcher has checked and rechecked the data throughout the study (Forero et al., 2018). Confirmability of the findings in this study was established with triangulation and audit trails. I utilized triangulation to verify the accuracy of the participant's responses to the research questions. I checked and rechecked the interview responses and compared the transcripts with the audio recordings to ensure that the interviews were transcribed correctly and assure the participants' narratives were captured rather than my words and perceptions. Additionally, I practiced critical self-reflection, also known as reflexivity throughout the research process (Korstjens & Mosser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I journaled and kept audit trail notes as I described my personal biases, perceptions, attitudes, preconceived assumptions, and views about the research subject. Critical and constant self-reflection helped eliminate potential bias that could have influenced the findings, further establishing confirmability.

Results

This basic qualitative research study aimed to understand Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. I also aimed to understand how policies for arming teachers could cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns. During individual Zoom interviews, 10 Black parents participated in the study and shared their perceptions of the arming teacher policy. The participants' responses contributed to addressing the research questions. Chapter 1 introduced two central research questions that drove this study; those specific questions were:

RQ1: What are Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings?

RQ2: How do Black parents perceive policies that permit arming teachers in school settings impacting Black students'?

Six major themes emerged during the data analysis. (Theme 1) Black parents' perception of unintended consequences when teachers are armed, (Theme 2) Black parents' perception of the physical safety and well-being of Black student (Theme 3) Black parents' perception of the risk factors, and (Theme 4) Black parents' feelings about armed teachers addressed research question number one. (Theme 5) Emotional and psychological factors impacting school climate and learning and (Theme 6) Impact of race and implicit bias on teacher-student social interactions addressed question number two.

Theme 1: Black Parents' Perception of Unintended Consequences When Teachers are Armed

The first theme addressed Black parents' perception of the unintended consequences for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Eight participants indicated that negative consequences are a reality for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Only one of the participants perceived a negative and positive consequence that could result from permitting teachers to carry firearms. The consequences participants cited as negative were acts of violence, fear and feeling threatened, and exposure to gun danger. The consequence discussed as positive was gun protection.

Four participants discussed various forms of acts of violence as consequences for permitting teachers to carry firearms. P1 stated, "as far as negative consequences, yeah, a student getting injured or possibly being shot." P3 agreed with P1 in stating, "they'll be in greater danger of being shot, maimed, or murdered." P1 and P3's responses suggested that Black students can ultimately lose their life when a teacher is permitted to use a weapon. P6 notable stated, "the perception is that teachers are smart enough and capable of making life-or-death decisions." P6 response suggested that it is assumed when teachers carry weapons in the classroom that they are intelligent enough to make a rational judgement call to deploy their weapon if necessary. P4 provided further evidence that acts of violence were perceived as a negative consequence of permitting teachers to carry firearms in schools, stating, "the concern of a consequence will be my child being or, excuse me, not my child, a child being aggressed, assaulted, or confronted with a

weapon.” Consequently, according to the four participants, negative consequences, such as potential acts of violence towards black students, would result if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

Two participants reported fear and feeling threatened, as consequences if teachers are permitted to carry firearms. P2 perceived that the problem of safety for black students is not outside the school, but inside the school, and thus permitting teachers to have firearms in the school is problematic and provides a good chance that Black students could feel intimidated. P2 said:

Well, there are more altercations between students and teachers, and students on students than somebody coming inside the classroom or the school to try to harm them. And so, with that being said, it gives the opportunity for negative consequences of whether students feel threatened by a teacher that's got a gun on their hip.

P2 also said:

I think there's more opportunity for something negative to happen between the student and the teacher than some outside person coming inside the class or coming inside the school with the intention of hurting the students or even the teachers. So, I think you know again; that there are more negative consequences than positive based on the ratio.

P2 perceived again that the problem is not outside the classroom but inside the school and, given the likelihood of a situation occurring inside the school between a teacher and a student is a cause for concern because something negative could result from

poor teacher-student interactions. P5, collaborated with P2, that feeling threatened can potentially create a problem when teachers are armed in the classroom. However, P5's response suggested not only do Black students feel threatened, but teachers do as well. Nonetheless, the consequence affects the Black student if the teacher allows feelings to overtake judgment. P5 stated:

All it takes is for a student, the Black student, to be aggressive in nature and something wrong could go with that from that particular standpoint, because we already know that it is said that we have anger issues, so the child says no, I'm not gonna do something. The child stands up and walks towards the teacher; the teacher feels threatened. Whose's to say the teacher won't pull the weapon or use the gun.

P5 perceived that teachers who carry firearms and feel threatened ultimately can pull out a weapon and possibly use it against a Black student. P7 expressed concerns about Black students' fear when teachers have firearms. P7 stated, "I know sometimes our kids get a raw deal, and again if you add a weapon to that, now, they're not only fearing am I gonna make the grade, but got-dagg-it am I going live through the day." P7's response implied that Black students have enough to worry about academically, but now they have to agonize if they will make it back home once school ends if teachers are permitted to carry firearms.

Two participants perceived that exposure to danger was a potential consequence if teachers were permitted to carry firearms in schools. P8 expressed that the consequences of having teachers in schools with firearms would result in Black students not being safe

and being placed in harm's way. P8 also expressed that because Black students would be affected by these policies, it is pertinent that Black parents and Black teachers are included in the decision-making of policies that permit teachers to carry firearms. P8 said:

I think the perception would still be negative, or at least have a negative connotation for our students. Again, in discussions that we've had before, my friends who are educators and my friends who are not educators, it is just really the perception that our kids will be in danger and they will still not be safe, so I just think that when they put these policies into place, they need to include Black parents and Black educators in doing so.

P3 agreed with P8's perception stating that not only will Black children be in danger, but in more danger if teachers have guns in the classroom. P3 stated that "our students, our Black students, our children will be more in danger in a classroom with an armed teacher." P8's and P3's responses implied that permitting teachers to carry guns in the classroom would likely cause Black students harm or injury and that before these policies are implemented, Black educators and Black parents should be given an opportunity for inclusion because Black students would ultimately bear the brunt of the negative consequence resulting when teachers are armed.

P1 was the only participant that perceived a negative and positive consequence for Black students if teachers were permitted to carry firearms in school settings. P1 stated:

I think if there is maybe some sense of a cognitive consequence? Perhaps if there is a threat toward a Black student and the teacher is aware of that particular threat,

especially with somebody like outside of the school or something trying to harm like a student that the teacher having a weapon could possibly, you know, protect that student; that possibly could be a positive outcome or for this particular type of situation, but yeah, but it is definitely situational for the most part so.

P1's statement implied that if teachers mentally process a situation that is taking place outside the school and the situation is negatively impacting the black student, then the firearm could be used for something good; protecting the Black student.

In summary, the findings indicated that Black parents' perception of policies permitting teachers to carry firearms in schools, particularly the classroom, negatively affects Black students. Black students would be in danger of loose of their lives, being hurt or harmed, and living in constant fear of the possibility of not making it home from school. Additionally, Black parents perceived that before permitting teachers to carry a firearm, the thoughts of Black community members must be considered.

Theme 2: Black Parents' Thoughts of the Physical Safety and Well-being of Black Student

The second theme addressed the safety and well-being of Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. All participants expressed concern for Black students' safety when teachers are permitted to carry guns. All participants gave their thoughts on what safety looked like to them. Participants associated safety with adequate training, power struggles between teachers and Black students, placing armed teachers in the wrong schools, teacher diversity, and negative

labels. All participants perceived safety as an essential topic of discussion and needful if black students attended schools where teachers are permitted to carry firearms.

Three participants perceived negative labeling as a safety concern for Black students. P7 stated that “they would be too quick to see a threat, mainly with a Black student. More as a threat than ok, this really is just not so much culture, but this really is not a threat just because this child will not do what you say to do.”

P7's response communicated that a Black student's refusal to do what the teacher requested would justify the teacher labeling the Black student as a threat, and doing so could risk the students' safety. P6 also perceived that Black students are unsafe if teachers have firearms in the classroom and expressed the same view as P7 that labeling Black students poses a peril to their safety. P6 asserted, “I don't think they're safe. They already have a hard enough time being labeled and categorized as thugs and whatnot, so the slightest little imperfection and the teacher will grab a gun.” P6's response implied that teachers place negative labels on Black students that produce inaccurate views; stereotypical viewpoints could lead teachers to draw false conclusions about Black students leading to misconceptions and resulting in pulling out firearms, making Black students unsafe. P10 collaborated with the perception of P6 and P7. P10 stated:

I would say the safety of all students; but because of the negative connotation that society, American society has painted about children of color, especially children of color from poverty, it's just very concerning that there may be incidents that can result in harm or death of a child just because of misconceptions that already occur and then now when you add a deadly weapon to misconception in that

situation, I don't think it's....there's no situation that I can think of where arming teachers, especially arming teachers who work with students of color is a good fit.

P10's responses implied that years of false and negative opinions, as well as misunderstanding Black students would lead to unsafe situations, such as harm and death when teachers are permitted to have firearms in schools.

Two participants perceived that protection was a key factor in keeping Black students safe when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. One participant discussed the lack of protection, while the other participant discussed protection as a line of defense for Black students. P4 stated:

That they would get the same protection as any other student that attends that school, that's my perception. I mean, that's my ideal perception if they were to just, generally speaking. I guess this is just how my imagination goes with the question. If there was a situation where the Black student, excuse me being a Black parent, my Black student was in harm's way; I can't say without certainty that I know that my child would be protected over someone who looks different. By "circumstance", I was referring there being a situation that could pose for potential employment of a firearm was likely.

P4 communicated that given certain circumstances in which Black students are involved in a harmful situation and there is a lack of teacher diversity Black students would be placed in unsafe predicaments and not protected. P9 discussed protection of Black students as a facet of safety as well, but P9's perception was that Black students

would not be concerned about safety because a teacher with a gun is a line of defense. P9 stated:

Well, actually, I feel that most not knowing all, but I can say the majority of the students would feel safe that they know that a teacher is strapped with a gun and that can defend them against attackers when they come on the school side.” P9’s response implied that arming teachers with firearms was a measure of protection that could potentially benefit Black students. Thus, eliminating the need for concern of Black students safety when teachers are permitted to carry a firearm in school settings.

Two participants described the power struggle between teachers and Black students. They perceived that the equality of power did not exist and was a safety concern when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. P1 stated:

I think the safety is just uhm, you know, students feeling as though it's almost like I think about enslavement, there's this master type of dynamic. I mean, there's always been like a power differential anyway, but then I think it, you know, places like another layer to it where you know, sometimes the teacher may feel like, oh, you know I had to threaten or do something, and I'm justified for why I had to like threaten the student with the weapon, or I may have had to shoot the student and so, I definitely think that in some way the student would feel like, you know, I don't feel like that I'm safe.

P1 described the perception of Black students as subjugated to teachers, that teachers have superior roles and Black students have subordinate roles. These roles,

coupled with a teacher and a firearm, are a disaster waiting to happen. P1 communicated that teachers would justify their actions by intentionally expressing the possible will to inflict hurt or death. P1 went on to express that a dynamic of this nature results in Black students not feeling safe when teachers have firearms. P7 added to the perception of a power struggle between the teacher and student. P7 stated:

They're not posing a physical threat to you; they're just not complying with your wishes, so they are unable to distinguish the two, you know. They're just not being compliant, then they're being dangerous, and the teacher is unable to distinguish between the two.

P7's response implied that because there is a power imbalance between teachers and students, teachers struggle to distinguish a real threat from that of a student challenging their request.

Two participants perceived the lack of adequate training as a safety concern for Black students when teachers are armed in school settings. P2 and P5 both perceived that teachers would not receive enough training. P2 said:

What is my perception of their safety? Again, I'm just concerned how much training these teachers will have. These teachers are there to be teachers, so I'm just not sure how much training they will have. I'm retired military, and we had a lot of training on the safety of carrying and discharging weapons. P2's response suggested that teachers spent their time working on their craft, giving their attention to students, and preparing lessons, so there might not be enough time dedicated to firearm training, and the lack of adequate time for training puts Black

students in unsafe situations when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. P5's perception was very similar to P2's. P5 said:

It is how are they going to be trained, will they be able to retain the weapon if they are overtaken because I know that they would need weapons retention training to be able to retain weapons. So, the safety is the training. I don't think they'll have long enough training to be able to effectively do that as that job.

P5's response implied that inadequate firearm safety training would result in unsafe handling and possession of a firearm, and that teachers who do not receive a lengthy amount of training would not be capable of protecting Black students if the teacher was permitted to carry a firearm in a school setting.

P2 continued sharing that the additional concern for safety was about the way that a teacher might handle situations in school with Black students when the teacher has a gun. P2 described a hypothetical situation in which a teacher was accidentally hit and the reaction of the teacher resulted in a weapon being pulled. P2 stated:

let's say there's an altercation, a fight between students in the school, and the teachers are having a problem trying to break it up and get hit unintentionally. I'm concerned about how that teacher reacts knowing that they have a gun on them and what may result from that. They turn to take that gun out and point it at the kid or whatsoever, so my perception is I'm a little concerned about that. I'm more concerned about how much safety training they are going to actually get to know when and when not to pull that firearm. Cause the whole purpose is not for them to have a firearm to turn on a child.

P2's response implied that the teacher might overreact in a situation involving a physical altercation between students; responding inappropriately and abruptly could lead to disastrous and unsafe situations for Black students.

One participant associated the perception of permitting teachers with firearms in the wrong school (inner-city schools) as a potentially unsafe situations for Black students.

P3 stated:

I fear for their lives. I don't believe that they'll be safer in a classroom where the teacher is armed because the recent history of mass school shootings have not been in predominantly Black schools, so if we had teachers armed in inner-city schools, what are we arming them against and then the teacher has the opportunity to shoot one of our kids on their emotional imbalance, I don't like it!

P3's response implied that teachers with firearms should be kept out of inner-city schools where the majority of students enrolled are Black. The participant goes on to communicate that mass school shootings have not been perpetrated in inner-city schools; thus, permitting armed teachers in inner-city schools places Black students in unsafe situations.

P8 perceived that the general perception of Black students is that they are just not safe when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. P8 said, "my perception is that they will not be safe. I think their parents will have to be definitely more involved-checking in on students, going to parent teacher meetings, take the necessary steps to find out what is going." P8's response suggested that Black parents

have to increase their presence and become aware of policies that permit teachers to carry firearms; because these policies would ultimately impact Black students safety.

In summary, the overall findings indicated that Black parents perceived the safety of Black students encompassed many facets that concerned Black students' well-being. Although a firearm could be a line of defense for Black students, most participants asserted that Black students would not feel safe in schools where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. The training of teachers was pointed out as a necessity, so much so that one participant reflected on training received in the military and the allotted time needed to learn about carrying and discharging weapons; the conclusion was that teachers might not receive enough training to be effective in doing the job of protecting Black students in the event of outside situations. Power struggles between teachers and Black students, placing armed teachers in the wrong schools, teacher lack of diversity, and negative labels were also addressed, and the overall consensus was that faulty thinking could lead to the loss of life of a Black student when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in a school setting.

Theme 3: Black Parents' Perception of Risk Factors

The third theme addressed the perception of risk factors for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. All participants perceived that Black students are subjected to risk when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. All participants agreed that Black students are exposed to dangerous and volatile situations that increase their chances of endangerment when teachers carry firearms. The risk factors participants cited as problematic included access to weapons,

mental health, negative beliefs of Black students and emotional safety, (loss sense of permission to be vulnerable). Six participants perceived access to weapons as a risk factor when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. P2 said:

Well, I think the risk factors are what you know the risk factors are—just handling the weapon safely. you can't have a couple of classes and then put a gun on your hip, and then you have, 20, 30, 40 students around you, so there's a big risk there.

P2 also said, “there's a risk of your weapon being taken or stolen. There's a risk factor of the teacher putting a weapon down at a certain time and walking out of the classroom. It's just a lot of risk factors.” P2’s response indicated that it is essential that teachers know how to properly holster, hoist, employ, and store a firearm if policies permit the arming of teachers. P3 perceived “the risk are that where is the weapon located, and in what proximity is the weapon to the teacher, and is it double locked?” P2's and P3's responses implied that teachers must be cognitive of where their weapon is located and stored at all times so that the firearm is not found in possession of the wrong hands. P5 had a similar perception as P3. P5 said:

And as we know that when you're in school setting where they're gonna lock the weapons, where they gonna keep the weapons when they're not on their person or in their desk, or on their purse or on their side or wherever it may be, the storage of the weapons is going to be a major concern, because where they going to put them?

P5’s response implied that keeping a firearm in a secure location is paramount to keeping Black students safe. P9 said “so, it is up to that teacher to make sure that the gun

is secured and out of reach.” P9 response implied that the sole party responsible for securing a firearm and keeping the firearm under lock and key are teachers since teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. P3, P5, and P9 all perceived that gun storage is not only a risk factor but a major concern when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Additionally, P3, P5, and P9 concluded that securing the firearm could potentially protect Black students from unintentional shootings and other violent gun incidents. Therefore, teachers are duly responsible for ensuring the safety of Black students. P10 said:

There are multiple risk factors. Again, for all students, but you know you do have some troubled youth of color, and if they know that there is a weapon that the teacher has, and they gain access to that weapon, that's a problematic situation there where they may not have had access in another environment.

P10's response implied that some Black students have problems with behavior, and a firearm in the classroom might entice their curiosity to take it; if this happens, a problem could ensue, making the classroom unsafe. P3 and P5 corroborated P10's perception; P3 asked, “is it possible that any of the students could have access to the weapon?” and P5 stated, “the risk factor to me is someone getting that gun and using it.” P3, P5, and P10, all perceived that access to weapons was a risk factor when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings and that perhaps Black students would not have access to firearms under other circumstances. P7 shared “they're [teachers] now basically in control, so no matter what the situation is, if they can pull out a gun and they think it's gonna make something different or make a situation better, that's actually going

to be worse. P7's response reflected P3, P5, and P10. P7 also perceived that having access to a weapon is a risk factor, but P7 stated that the risk lies with teachers having access to a weapon and probably using it. P7's response implied that not only does student access to firearms pose a risk to the safety of Black students, but if teachers have access to firearms and improperly utilize their firearms, Black students are again subject to injury or harm.

Two participants sighted mental health as a risk factor when teachers are armed.

P10 said:

There are mental health issues, again, not just for children of color but just for children. So, there's just no situation in a public-school setting that I can think of that it's a good fit for educators to carry weapons regardless of the color of the child, but it does compound the issue when working with children of color.

P4 confirmed P10's response saying, "[it's]the mental health of the educator responsible for employing a firearm. Both P10 and P4 thought that the mental health of both Black students and teachers are risk factors for permitting teachers to carry firearms in school settings. P10 expressed the perception that Black students already have emotional, psychological, and social health problems. Thus, permitting teachers to carry firearms in school settings might worsen the mental well-being of Black students. P6 described mental health in the form of being on edge. P6 said:

Teachers are already on edge in schools as it is because it's so dangerous. Um, I don't exactly know how to put this (participant takes about a 30-second break).

Um, this is hard; if the police can't get the training that they need, how is a teacher

going to differentiate between, Uhm, their lives being at risk or just something that's not going right? And should I pull my gun now, or do I wait?

P6 response suggested that because teachers are already anxious, having a firearm in a school setting could affect their mental stability calling into question the right time to utilize a firearm.

One participant perceived negative beliefs of Black students as risk factors when teachers are armed. P8 said:

Risk factors would be behavior and family dynamics when it comes to whether they have a father in the home or not; or if they're being raised by grandparents. If they're coming out of foster care, a ward of the state group, anything that would come as a negative, but the one thing for sure would definitely be behavior and attendance records. People would look at those things already or when say we want to know who the bad ones are, or who we would consider troublemakers. I think all of those things would go into play because teachers will do the research. They'll look into a kid's file or look on the system and see what they have going on before they get to know them for themselves. I think that is why again, our parents have to be involved in these policy-making decisions.

P8 expressed that negative perceptions of Black students are a risk factor when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school. P8 also expressed that teachers are pessimistic towards Black students and always searching for unfavorable character flaws. Thus, embracing negative beliefs and permitting teachers to carry firearms would impact teacher-student interactions.

One participant sighted emotional safety as a perception of a risk factor when teachers are armed. P1 stated:

Risk factors would include, of course again, like the emotional safety feeling like they [Black students] do not have like the same sense of permission to be vulnerable even if they aren't like passionately expressing themselves, maybe a teacher again could probably assume that the student is being a threat, and potentially, you know, use that as a sense of discipline so their life would probably be at risk.

P1's response suggested that Black students lack trust in teachers and do not feel safe enough to open up and express themselves. P1 suggested that Black students could not be their authentic selves and establish positive relationships with teachers because teachers might view them negatively.

In summary, the findings indicated that Black parents perceived that access to weapons, the mental health of both teachers and students, negative thoughts and misunderstandings of Black students, and emotional safety are perceptions of risk factors for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. There were various examples of risk factors sighted. However, most participants agreed that improper storage of weapons, recklessly utilizing weapons, and irresponsibly handling weapons all contribute to the opportunity for students and teachers to access weapons, leading to exposure to danger and explosive situations. Mental health, negative thoughts, misunderstanding of Black students, and emotional safety were also perceived as risk

factors that could increase the possibility of harm, injury, or loss of life of Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

Theme 4: Black Parents' Feelings About Armed Teachers

The fourth theme addressed the overall perception of parents' feelings if their child attended a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Participants provided various views on how they felt as a parent. The participants' feelings ranged from P6 stating "there's no way in hell" to P7 saying "I'm not against it." Participants shared their reasons for opposing and supporting their decisions. Those reasons ranged from P6 stating, "I don't feel that it is a safe environment," to P7 saying, "I understand the need for it." However, regardless of the reasons provided, all participants concluded that providing insight into policies that permit the arming of teachers in school settings is important. The feelings participants cited as a parent of a child who might attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in a school setting include: feeling the need for increased training, feeling the need to remove the child or not permit the child to attend school, feelings of worry (e.g., lack of safety), and the need for continued awareness of arming teacher policies.

Four participants cited feeling the need for increased training. P2 stated, "it's got to be a lot of training here, and I'm just not sure the teachers have enough time to get that.

P5 stated:

I don't particularly care for weapons to be inside the school as far as teachers carrying. I would prefer a professional have it then someone that is just being trained maybe how I think it said 18 hours in one state, but they're gonna get of

training. That's not enough training even our military personnel go through more training than that and they are taught to be able to use a weapon and in certain conditions, if you're shooting at someone, it's totally different than you shooting at a piece of paper. When you're shooting at someone and you're being shot at your breathing is different, your control is different you don't see clearly and you could shoot anyone in, and my child is in that classroom. My child could be shot when you're trying to shoot someone else.

P2 and P5 both perceived that training is needed, but that time constraints might impede necessary training. P5's response suggested that if firearms are permitted in schools, a professional experienced with firearms is preferred. P7 stated:

My opinion would be that I would want them to have not just physical training but mental to be evaluated to see if they really should be carrying a gun around our children. So, I would definitely, want that training. I would definitely want that assessment, and it couldn't be just a one-time thing; you need to be checked for this, maybe even a couple of times throughout the year because things change throughout the year. I understand the need for it even though I have some strong feelings about it. I understand the need for it with everything that's going on in the world, so I'm not against it. I still just would want them to be trained and assessed for the mental capacity to be able to carry and to know when and when not to.

P7 response suggested that not only is physical training needed, but teachers need an evaluation for mental illness before being permitted to carry a firearm in a school setting. Additionally, the mental evaluation should take place periodically. P9 shared the

same sentiments as P2, P5, and P7, that training was a key component in their feelings as a parent of a child who might attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry a firearm. P9 stated:

Well, as long as I'm fully aware that particular teacher has been trained well, I wouldn't really be concerned it's safe for my child because this way, it's an extra guard. I will look at it as an extra guard with protection to make sure my daughter is safe.

P9's response suggested that armed teachers might not be a bad thing as long as training is provided.

Three participants stated that they would remove their child from the school or not permit the child to attend due to a lack of safety. P6 stated:

I have five young Black, Uhm, men. They're all out of school now, but if they were in school, there's no way in hell I let my children go to school because I don't feel that it's a safe environment. Uhm, like I said, you can't protect the kids from the police; how you gonna protect them from the teacher that's always on edge? If a kid drops a book, that's gonna scare them enough where the first thing they think let me pull my gun. No, I would have a major problem with that.

Major.

P6's response implied that Black students are not protected from police officers who rush to make judgment calls in the heat of the moment, resulting in grave mistakes; then, it would be infallible to think that Black students would be protected from a nervous teacher that has a firearm. P10 expressed the same sentiments as P6 and suggested that

the likelihood of their child attending a school where teachers are armed is unlikely. Moreover, the reason both P6 and P10 provided for prohibiting their child to attend school if teachers are armed was the perception of a lack of safety, which could result in the death of their child. P10 stated:

I more than likely, as a parent, would not want my child to attend the school where teachers carry weapons. You know, firearms are deadly. I think, you know, if they consider pepper spray or stun guns or, you know, something like that, I think I would be more willing, but something that's deadly, like a firearm, absolutely not. I would, as a parent, not want my child in that school and would have to think of an alternate schooling option for my child.

P10's response implied that firearms kill, and if there are alternatives to having teachers carry firearms, then perhaps the student could stay in school. P3 shared the same compassionate perception as P5, both being parents of a child who might attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. P3 said "I would not like it! I'll pull my child out of that school. I would send whatever paperwork, injunction, or whatever would be necessary to have my child transferred to another school, or we'll have to home school because their lives are in danger when a teacher is permitted to have a firearm in the class. From a Black student, it is the way our children are socialized and communicate, and the amount of movement they do is contrary to non-Black teachers, and it is too risky. P3's response indicated that the removal of the child from a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms was intended to keep said child from harm or injury.

Two participants shared that they would worry about their child's safety if their child attended a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

P1 said:

I think my feeling would be a little anxious because I never know, you know, one of the things that I learned like ok, so I have my master's in counseling but specialized in forensics. So, the first thing you learn is that everybody is a potential murderer. Everybody on this planet, I don't care how much you believe in God, I don't care how much love everything, family, nurture whatever; doesn't matter about race, doesn't matter about age everybody is a potential murderer and so, to kind of think that could possibly happen in a certain situation, sometimes I've watched like I can't even tell you how many times I watch videos where you know teachers have gotten into altercations with students, and I mean, I can even tell that the teacher you know recognized they had so much power and then they just started using it against certain students. But then I also have seen videos where like the student has become so disruptive where they've tried to like hit the teacher or harm the teacher, and you know the teacher is just like I don't want to sit here and allow somebody else's child to hit me and so yes from both angles it is a bit nerve-racking you know just as much as it was prior to you know this type of this policy being passed.

P1's response suggested that every person has the propensity to kill, including teachers. P1 also suggested teachers, when placed in certain situations, could tend

towards violence resulting in the possible death of a Black student when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. P2 said:

I'm concerned about what happens if the teacher is trying to break up a fight between two students and all of a sudden, the teacher gets hit intentionally or unintentionally, or if it's a child trying to fight the teacher, does that teacher forget about what the purpose of that gun is? Now they is thinking about protecting themselves, pulling that weapon on that child, and possibly shooting the kid, you know. So that's my concern if we're gonna, you know [permit teachers to carry firearms]. It's already done, from my understanding, in Florida.

Noteworthy in P1's and P2 responses was that both are worried about the teachers' potential negative reaction to possible altercations in school, the authority and power that teachers have, and their ability to influence the outcome of a situation that could potentially result in the harm or death of a Black student.

Two participants expressed the perception of the feeling of understanding the need for permitting teachers to carry firearms in school settings. P4 said:

So, given the current social climate, it does come with some understanding of, I guess, a step in the I won't say it's in the right direction, but accepting a step in the direction of resolve for potential threats inside of schools.

P7 added, "I understand the need for it even though I have some strong feelings about it. I understand the need for it with everything that's going on in the world, so I'm not against it." Both P4's and P7's responses suggested that they understood the need for teachers with firearms in schools given the current school climate as one of school gun

violence and threats of gun violence. P4 also expressed the perception that although there might be a need to permit teachers to carry firearms to protect Black students understanding the need does not overshadow the perception that Black students would still bare the negative impact that could result if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in schools. P4 stated:

Given the status of the question, me being a Black parent, I don't know what that looks like for my child or anybody else's child. Again, I don't foresee any circumstance where there's no doubt that would be a bad outcome with the Black student on the receiving end of that exchange or whatever that situation looks like.

One participant perceived that continued awareness of policies that permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings is necessary when Black students might attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. P8 said:

I am a mother of a daughter and a 13-year-old son, and right now, my son does not have a discipline record. My daughter doesn't either, but when things like this come into place. You just have to be on guard and be prepared for whatever comes, and we still have those conversations with our children about keeping your hands outside of your pockets when you're around, take your hood off, and being careful what you say to little White girls and the such. I think that as a parent, anything that is in place now, we would really have to be on top of it, even more, when teachers are allowed or if they're allowed to have weapons in the classroom.

P8's response implied that Black parents should keep abreast with policies that permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings and that Black parents must protect their children when their children might attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms.

In summary, the findings indicated that Black parents felt the need for increased training, felt the need to remove their child or not permit their child to attend a school where teachers are armed, felt there is a need for continued awareness and understanding of the need for teachers carrying firearms in the classroom. Participants also explained their reasons for how they felt as Black parents about the policy. There was a mixture of answers and emotions (e.g., confusion, relief, and disgust) as participants provided their perceptions for opposing and supporting school teachers with firearms.

Theme 5: Emotional and Psychological Factors Impacting School Climate and Learning

The fifth theme addressed the emotional and psychological factors impacting Black students' school climate and learning when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. All participants expressed their thoughts and concerns about the school climate and learning environment for Black students possibly attending schools with armed teachers. Participants perceived various factors would impact Black students when permitting teachers to have firearms in schools. The factors provided in the discussion by the participants represented emotional factors and psychological factors. The emotional factors are having anxiety (feeling uncomfortable), feeling frightened (fear and being afraid, nervous), and feeling unsafe. The psychological factors are unable to concentrate,

being distracted, mesmerized, and unable to focus. Seven participants referenced emotional factors, and five participants referenced psychological factors. P1 stated:

I think this idea for a lot of Black students to kind of like work twice as hard; that type of dynamic, but I definitely think that there would be like now an additional type of like you know that like I think that their anxiety levels would be at a much higher level because they don't know how that person would respond to them if they feel like they are perceived as like a threat or issue.

P1's response suggested that Black students worry about their academics and thus work twice as hard to achieve academic success. Now there is a teacher with a firearm added to the equation, and the worry for Black students intensifies as they try to balance scholastics and think of their safety. P1 also perceived that black students would feel like they had entered a prison instead of a school. P1 said:

Then as far as the climate, I think again that they would kind of place like this idea that like I don't feel like I'm in school anymore. I feel like that I'm, you know, in some form of like it would just kind of come across as like I don't know like I don't want to even say like a prison.

P6 stated a similar perspective as P1. P6 perceived that Black students would have anxiety symptoms (feeling on edge) because teachers are targeting them, and feelings of nervousness would impact Black students' learning and the school climate.

P6 stated:

Kids are gonna have a harder time learning because they're always gonna be on edge about being targeted. It's definitely gonna mess with I think it would mess

with children socially because, again, your targets. I don't think it's a win-win situation for Black children, period. They're just hard to explain. I don't know how you go to school with a target on your back; that's got to make learning hard. Just being productive would have to be hard if you're poor.

P6 response implied that Black students would have difficulty learning and interacting with teachers and other students because the classroom environment would create an atmosphere of nervousness in which Black students are treated impartially compared to their counterparts. P8 shared a similar perspective as P1 and P6. P8 stated, “I feel like the anxiety levels will grow stronger because children will not want to go to school and won't feel safe at school.” P8’s response suggested that the level of anxiousness for Black students would increase due to teachers carrying firearms in school settings. Additionally, P8’s response also suggested that Black students would choose not to attend school because they would feel unsafe. P9 corroborated P8's response, stating:

I don't really think it will change the academic part of it. I think the Black race will continue doing what they do because of safety. I think all students really want to be safe. So, I don't think it will affect academics at all. Overall, I think all students, including our Black race continue to do what they do best to get their education. As far as reaching for the skies, looking at what they are, why they are in school, and getting their education. Move a little further in their journey, so they know what they need to succeed where they need to be. So, what I am saying is as far as academics, with them having the gun and the policy, they would continue to work hard to succeed and pass. Hence, they know their next journey and where they want to be in life.

P9's response suggested that Black students want to feel safe in school, and regardless of the status of teachers and firearms in the classroom, Black students would continue to pursue their education and future endeavors; that working hard is the focus, not teachers with firearms in the school. P10 also communicated safety concerns. P10 stated:

Oh, that is a complex question. So uhm school climate let's address that first I don't perceive African American Black students, students of color, recognizing or embracing the fact that a teacher now carries a weapon, that it somehow enhances or promotes a safe learning environment for them. Mind you haven't surveyed students to ask that question, but I just can't see a situation where they would feel now safer knowing that their teachers are carrying a weapon. So, if the student is not feeling safer because the teacher has a weapon that is going to have a negative impact on school climate. A negative school climate will lead to students underperforming so a student may already come in with a learning deficiency or learning difference that causes a difference, a deficiency in learning and then knowing that they're walking into an environment where they already feel unsafe because of a teacher having a weapon that then also has a negative impact on student achievement. A negative impact on student achievement and school climate, school climate and student achievement go hand in hand when it comes to social-emotional learning. So, if the student doesn't feel good about coming to school 'cause, they don't feel safe because they're underperforming already, and they're not feeling safe, so they're not even performing at a level that they could

perform if they were to even feel safe that whole feeling of not feeling safe being an underperforming student is going to also have a negative impact on their socially emotional learning, so those three things are interconnected in bringing about an overall, in my opinion, negative impact because of the fact of a teacher having a weapon. I can't think of a situation in where students will feel safer themselves knowing that their teachers are carrying a weapon because it would then have the opposite effect if in fact, students felt safer knowing that their teachers were carrying a weapon, then everything I said would have the opposite effect. They feel safer knowing that their teachers have a weapon so, therefore they feel like they're in a safe learning environment, which will improve school climate, which will improve student achievement, which will improve their social-emotional learning. So, it would be the opposite effect, but I don't see a situation in where students knowing that their teachers are carrying a weapon would make them feel safer at school.

P10's perception of what impacts school climate and learning for Black students indicated feelings of safety. P10 expressed that teachers carrying weapons would not promote a safe learning environment or a positive school climate for Black students. Thus, academic achievement is affected, and if one area of educational enrichment is affected, so are the other areas that encompass everything surrounding attending school.

Two participants perceived that students would feel uncomfortable (emotional factor) in schools that permit teachers to carry firearms. P2 stated, "they can't feel

comfortable inside their classroom or a teacher is being very aggressive with the students because they now have a gun on their hip.” P3 stated:

My concerns are that all of the emotional impacts are going to end up on the children being afraid to be themselves. They’ll not be able to be comfortable; they cannot learn and grow in an environment where they know their teacher has a weapon and that if they get out of line, the teacher could pull the weapon. What is gonna stop the teacher from pulling the weapon?

Both P2's and P3's responses suggested that permitting teachers to carry firearms in the classroom would produce feelings of uncomfortableness would, prevent Black students from essential academic learning, and make them powerless to improve their growth of skills, knowledge, and experiences that are important to their future career and life in general.

Four participants perceived factors such as being incapable of concentrating, being distracted, mesmerized, and unable to focus (psychological) would impact Black students when teachers are permitted to have firearms in schools. P2 stated:

Well, I mean. I'm not a student, so I don't know. Still, I keep going back to, you know, having a weapon inside a classroom or a teacher. I'm concerned about the atmosphere and can the student really concentrate because that's going to be something they're not used to. They see a teacher walking around with a weapon inside the classroom. I think that's going to affect them. It can even become a distraction, and I'm not sure the teacher is going to be hiding this weapon whatsoever, but again, the students are going to know there's a weapon inside that

classroom, and so I think it's going to affect them. I think it's going to affect them academically.

P2 also communicated:

Well, it goes back to everything I just said. I think it's going to affect the climate and the environment inside the classroom. I'm just concerned that they're gonna already be mesmerized and frightened, and so, if you're frightened, you sitting inside of a classroom when you're frightened, or you mesmerized by somebody that is sitting up there with a weapon then how much are you [the student] going to be concentrating on learning or listening?

P4 paralleled P2's perception. P4 stated, "I don't foresee them being able to focus on just normal day-to-day high school stuff if there were circumstances where they had this educator, and they knew that there was a conflict with, but had access to a firearm." P2's and P4's responses implied that attending a school where teachers are permitted to carry a firearm in the classroom is not a normal occurrence, especially if Black students could see the gun. P2's and P4's response also implied that it would be very hard for Black students to concentrate on their studies, as their attention would focus on the teacher and the firearm instead of learning and listening. P4 also referred to Black students losing their focus on learning while in school because of being singled out by teachers. P4 shared:

I definitely see it swinging or impacting them in terms of, I guess, in a way oppressed, if you will—just the general idea of being fearful of what may happen to them given the now. How there are still instances where there is conflict within

the schools where Black students are singled out whether it be because of looks or more recently, how they wear their hair. Granted, not to say that said educator may feel or not feel this way; where an educator may have a personal issue with a student. It's just the, I guess the probability 'cause I don't foresee them being able to focus on just normal day-to-day high school stuff if there were circumstances where normal day-to-day high school stuff if there were circumstances where they had this educator, and they knew that there was a conflict with, but had access to a firearm.

P4's response suggested that it is conceivable that Black students are treated differently than their counterparts because of their complexion and their afro-textured hair; and that the setting apart of Black students and a possible clash with a teacher who possesses a firearm could result in Black students losing their focus on school learning. P5 agreed with P4, explaining that Black students are always focused on being targeted and whether being targeted would impact their survival; thus, focusing on how to remain alive instead of thinking about school work affects their learning and school climate. P5 stated:

I do. Because now they're always thinking am I going to be a target? Am I going to get into a situation where I may be shot because of my skin color, my race, or because of my gender? Because as Black males, we are always picked out and always seem to be the aggressors and always seem to be the bad kids. So that right there alone will affect them [Black students] and their studies because

they're not thinking about school. They're thinking about a person with a weapon in authority.

P5's response implied that teachers targeting Black males is not new and that being singled out for negative attention or attack combined with daily thoughts of potential violence impacts Black students learning. P4's and P5's responses stated similar perceptions.

In summary, the findings indicated that emotional factors (anxiety, feeling frightened, and feeling unsafe) and psychological factors (being distracted, mesmerized, and unable to focus) impacted school climate and learning for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Emotional factors was the overall perception identified as impacting Black students learning and school climate. Participants communicated their concerns and provided their perception of how Black students could not flourish in an environment in which they are targeted for mistreatment. Participants also perceived a concern that the school climate was not conducive for Black students because it produced periods of nervousness and worry about a potential imminent negative outcome for Black students if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

Theme 6: Impact of Race and Implicit Bias on Teacher-Student Social Interactions

The sixth theme addressed the impact of race and implicit bias on teacher-student social interactions when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. All participants perceived that implicit bias, stereotypes, negative attitudes, and negative thoughts impact teacher-student social interactions when teachers are permitted to carry

firearms in school settings, resulting in black students' unfair and aggressive mistreatment, often leading to deadly ramifications. Participants overwhelmingly perceived that Black students are at a disadvantage when their behavior is seen as threatened or aggressive, which could cause physical acts of aggression from teachers related to the perception of harmful stereotypical ideology. Participants expressed the perception that persistent patterns of racial and implicit bias towards Black students affect the teacher's behavior, poor judgment, and decision to deploy their firearm and that teacher unawareness of how race and implicit bias impacts student-teacher social interactions adds to the continued influence of White privilege and power. Seven participants perceived that implicit bias and stereotypes impact the aggressive treatment of Black students. Two participants perceived that negative feelings held by teachers about black students that result in implicit bias impact teacher-student social interaction and could lead to Black students being shot. Two participants also perceived that implicit bias leads to punitive practices and punishment from teachers issuing disciplinary consequences to Black students. One participant perceived that implicit bias, stereotypes, and negative attitudes impact the power struggle and maintenance of White authority,

P1 stated:

There's too much research out there too have already shown that especially when the teacher isn't of the same color, so they [teachers] don't really like, have that insight they are more likely to assume that that student is going to hurt them or attack them. So, their best instinct is to protect themselves because they feel scared, and so I definitely know that that is like such a theme that continues to

carry out, and a lot of times, people are not addressing them as they should. Me personally I feel like people of who are nonmelanated enjoy using stereotypes in some aspect to justify why they should come quote-on-quote protect themselves, but they don't really know what may be behind the students' reaction or anything of that nature. You know, the average teacher is a woman, a female, and White, and so you know, there's always been that kind of stereotype that has lingered on and created like this type of illusion because that's not always how it is.

P1's response suggested that teachers who do not resemble Black students and lack intuitive cultural understanding assume the negative about Black students to justify harming them. P1 also stated:

It's like their initiatives like no if I feel threatened, I'm killing, and so I know that that is like the stereotype and that's the implicit bias that they're more likely to feel like their life is a threat with a Black student because of the long history of stereotypes that have been placated in America versus someone who's White. But the interesting part is that we're not seeing Black kids and children bomb and blow-up schools or shoot up schools and things of that nature, so how come they haven't been able to check the implicit bias? So, why is it still there?

P1's responses suggested that there might not be a real threat from Black students towards the teacher, but that because there are well-known historical biases and widely held negative beliefs about Black students in education, teachers falsely assume that there is a threat to their life and justify using a firearm for protection. P1 also asserted that it is

not Black students who are involved in mass school shootings; thus, teachers should make an effort to challenge their implicit bias.

P3 perceived that implicit bias is not good, that it exists, and that implicit bias thinking produces negative stereotypes about Black students and negatively impacts Black students and teacher social interactions. P3 stated:

Because it is a real thing, and that is the main reason that I would not want teachers to be armed in school with Black students, and even when the teacher may not be White, even if it is a Black teacher, depending on where they grew up, where they were educated, and how immersed they are into the white culture, they may have those types of prejudices against Black children also. It is not safe; it is not good.

P3 also said:

The perception of White men and White women about our poor Black boys is that they are troublemakers. They are dangerous, that they have no, very little intelligence and capability to succeed not but in the classroom but in life. So you partner that they step to me, I know what to do.

P3's responses implied that Black students, regardless of the teacher's race, still experience various types of stereotypes. P3 also expressed that teachers who stereotype Black students do so because they identify with the White-dominant culture, have experienced a different style of education, and might have grown up in an area quite different than that of the students they are teaching; therefore, believing widely held negative beliefs about Black students could be dangerous when the teacher is permitted to

carry a firearm. When P4 was asked about the impact of implicit bias on Black students and teachers' social interactions, P4 stated:

That idea alone is kind of scary, but um, (long pause) I would say that the impact will be generally negative or a telling of both the teachers. That implicit bias of both the student and teacher would be telling given any conflicts or interactions. In my mind, the worst-case scenario is an educator who has an implicit bias that correlates a threat with a Black student. Uhm, just giving the broad implicit bias that comes with a black face. Ah, I think the impact will be great and definitely negative.

P4's response suggested teachers who hold unconscious negative thoughts and associated stereotypes about Black students might assume that Black students are a threat and react recklessly, endangering the lives of Black students. P5's perception of the impact of implicit bias on Black students and teachers' social interactions was very similar to P4's in stating that unfair and preconceived ideas about Black students would produce bad results. P5 stated:

Well, we already know implicit bias is a deep thing, because black is always considered bad, white is considered good so that the bias is that all Black students have issues and anger issues and problems. So those implicit the way that they think is going to be nothing good towards our students.

P5's response implied that the concept of Black denotes a negative connotation and therefore creates the opinion that Black students are aggressive. P5 went on to express those negative thoughts of Black students are not a good thing when teachers are

permitted to carry firearms in schools. P6 perceived implicit bias targets Black students to receive unfair treatment which impacts Black students and teachers' social interactions.

P6 reported:

Black kids already get a bad rap regardless; I don't care what the situation is; they are always the first to be deemed the problem. So, I definitely don't think they're gonna get a fair shake when situations occur. If it's a Black-on-White fight, of course, the Black person is gonna start it first. So, they're gonna get hit first, or shot first, or reprimanded first; let's start there. We already have a target on our backs, so our kids aren't going to get a fair shake in any situation where teachers are allowed to carry a gun.

P6's response suggested that Black students are consistently viewed as difficult and when involved in an altercation with their White counterparts the Black students are never given the benefit of the doubt and thus the response from teachers are one of violence and rebuke. P7 perceived that implicit bias adversely impacts Black students and teachers' interactions and that teachers' thinking badly about Black students creates an unsafe environment for Black students when teachers have firearms. P7 expressed:

I think it could be detrimental because if I know I'm already not depicted or welcomed in the school because I am a young Black male or female, or because I'm already said to not want it, I didn't come to learn, or I came to do this, that, and the other; I came to do everything but learn, and now I know you [the teachers] are armed first with your opinion. Now you have this firearm as well. Now I have to fear for my safety because you might just say, you know, you may

be thinking I'm getting smart and I'm not giving you an answer, or I'm acting the way the only way I know to act, but you're taking it as aggression.

P9 perceived that implicit bias could have a notably negative impact on Black students and teachers' interaction when teachers allow their biases to influence how they treat Black students. P9 said:

Well, that is to me it varies. It can have an extremely high impact, but in some cases, you have those teachers that are just there to assist and make sure they protect the students and themselves in the school sites. If a teacher is influenced by his or her attitudes and stereotypes that they hold based on their experiences, can cause bad judgement, decisions, and behavior, which could lead to wrongful killings.

P9's response implied that adverse treatment of Black students was predicated on what teachers believe, think, and ultimately how they judge a situation with Black students. P9's response also implied that some teachers might not exhibit bias toward Black students and would use the firearm to keep Black students and themselves safe from harm. P10's perception of the impact of implicit bias was no different from the other six participants. They all perceived that implicit bias negatively influences teachers' behavior towards Black students and their interaction with Black students. P10 stated:

Implicit bias has an impact regardless if the teacher has a weapon or not because of how implicit bias plays a part in how teachers interact with students. Adding a weapon to that complicates the issue even further; it compounds it and makes it even more hazardous because now you put an implicit bias, which is an opinion

that's not based on fact, into a situation where now you also have... which an implicit bias is also a judgment right, and it's a misrepresentation often a skewed judgment that is not the truth, and then now you add a weapon into that, again the misjudgments or, you know, can happen or misrepresentation of a situation can happen, especially when there's already a person who has an implicit bias against, you know, children of color or even adults of color for that matter because, you know, that's just another angle that needs to be considered. Like it's just that it would be, in my most professional terms, a hot mess. It would be a hot mess. Yes, you could quote me on that. P10's response suggested that with or without a firearm, Black students still suffer from inequitable treatment as a result of implicit bias and that permitting teachers to carry firearms only complicates a situation that is already unsafe.

Two participants perceived that implicit bias leads to punitive practices and punishment from teachers issuing unfair disciplinary consequences to Black males and Black females. P1 stated:

Then disciplinary-wise, like, even if there's like something that kind of transpired in the school Black females are like disciplined, like much stronger than other people, and so nobody is like really paying attention to that situation. I often do not hear a lot of stories or even people trying to use some form of discipline toward White males or White females at all, like I barely at all, and so I think that you know if these laws are being permitted, go to what is being shown the most. If you guys [teachers] are so scared and worried, well, then that means that we

need to pay a little bit more attention to the White men and females a little bit more.

P1's response implied that Black girls are overwhelmingly disciplined for school infractions more often than their counterparts. P1's response also implied that the punishment of White males and females for school-related violations appears almost nonexistent and that if teachers are permitted to carry firearms, the focus should not be on Black students but on their counterparts. P2 expressed a similar perception as P1 in that implicit bias towards Black students impacts discriminatory disciplinary practices, that Black students' and teachers' interactions significantly impact disciplinary treatment, and that adding a firearm only complicates things. P2 stated:

Well, I think it's going to be a huge impact because there's already bias. Studies have shown that more Black kids are suspended and in-house suspension. It shows Black students are affected more by disciplinary actions than their counterparts, so with knowing that, now we're talking about putting a gun on inside the classroom with teachers, not of color, and looking at our young Black men and young boys in a negative manner the bias kicks in. Teachers saying too that maybe they're going to be more aggressive and taking disciplinary action on a Black kid that's being maybe uncooperative.

P2's response suggested that teachers are unwilling to control their emotions and reactions when they encounter various behaviors of Black students, assuming that every behavior from Black students is aggression. P2 also implied that Black students are already experiencing disproportionate amounts of

disciplinary infractions, including in and out-of-school suspensions, and now adding a firearm will only make problems much worse for Black students.

Two participants perceived that negative feelings held by teachers about Black students that result in implicit bias impact teacher-student social interaction and could lead to black students being shot. P5 stated:

So, the threat is if it is a Black person. I believe that they will shoot the Black person quickly and not because the Black person can harm them more than anyone else. I believe that they will shoot them because of how we are perceived we are perceived to be a threat. We're perceived to be violent. We're perceived to be up to no good. So, I believe that they would shoot us quickly.

P5's response implied that the concept of Black denotes a negative connotation and therefore creates the opinion that Black students are aggressive. P5 went on to express that those negative thoughts of Black students are not positive when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in schools. P7 added to the perspective of P5, communicating that implicit bias impacts the perception of Black students as aggressive, and biased perceptions could lead to negative teacher-student social in the form of a teacher brandishing a weapon assuming that there is a threat. P7 stated:

I think that it plays, sad to say, it plays a big part because you automatically think that those are the people that is going to be violent so, those are the ones that you're not going to take a chance with. You're going to come out; you know when we say 'come out your bag. Yeah, that's not necessarily; no, that's not true. So, I think it has an impact, a high impact actually on if a teacher will take measures to

shoot a student or deploy a firearm to hurt a student to stop what they perceive as a threat.

P7's response implied that the perpetuation of ideologies of Black students as being aggressive, violent, and threatening continues to affect how teachers judge and react to Black students and that those biased judgments could lead to Black students being killed when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

One participant perceived that implicit bias, stereotypes, and negative attitudes impact the power struggle and maintenance of White authority, power, and privilege. P8 expressed the perception that implicit bias would negatively impact Black students and is associated with teachers believing that Black students should be feared, that Black students are inferior, and are powerless over teachers who have firearms, thus impacting Black students' and teachers' social interactions. P8 stated:

Implicit bias is just like we talked about in the last question. You know, I [the teacher] am afraid of you [the student]. You have done this in the past. I have the right now to defend myself against you because you did this as a Black male, or I am in fear, I am superior to you. I'm in charge. I'm the one with the gun. I am going to handle this the way that I want to handle it. Or the law says that I can, even if it is not the threatening per se situation you can't do anything now, cause I got the gun!

P8's response implied that teachers' implicit bias would justify their ill-treatment of Black students, believing that the law would be on their side because they are

convinced, they have the authority and power to utilize a firearm for protection even if there is no perception of danger to life.

The findings indicated that persuasive harmful stereotypical ideologies about Black students could impact teacher-student social interactions. Participants perceived that implicit bias often results in erroneous beliefs about Black students, and implicit bias affects teachers' judgment, behavior, and reaction toward Black students, who are perceived as violent and aggressive. The findings also indicated that participants perceived teachers' lack of awareness of their implicit bias is demonstrated in their authority, privilege, and power to arbitrarily decide to brandish a firearm, potentially shoot a Black student, and justify doing so because of a perception of threat. Moreover, participants also perceived that unchecked implicit bias impacts the unfair treatment of Black students and teacher-student social interactions.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to understand Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings. I also aimed to understand how policies for arming teachers could cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns. The first overarching guided research question utilized to guide this study was: What are Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings? Four major themes emerged during the data analysis process to address the question.

Theme 1 was: Black parents' perception of unintended consequences when teachers are armed. Participants indicated that negative consequences are a reality for

Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. The consequences participants cited as unfavorable are acts of violence, fear and feeling threatened, and exposure to danger. One participant perceived negative and positive consequences that could result from permitting teachers to carry firearms. The consequence perceived as positive was gun protection. The overall findings indicated that Black parents' perception of policies permitting teachers to carry firearms in schools, particularly the classroom, negatively affects Black students. Black students would be in danger of loss of their lives, being hurt or harmed, and living in constant fear of the possibility of not making it home from school. Additionally, Black parents perceived that before teachers are permitted to carry a firearm, the thoughts of members of the Black community should be considered.

Theme 2 was: Black parents' perception of the physical safety and well-being of Black students. Participants expressed that adequate training, armed teachers in the wrong school (inner city), negative labels, and protection or lack thereof are concerns.

The overall findings indicated that safety and training are concerns of Black parents. Although safety could be a line of defense for Black students, most participants asserted that Black students would not feel safe in schools where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Adequate training was pointed out as a necessity, so much so that one participant reflected on training received in the military and the allotted time needed to learn about carrying and discharging weapons; the conclusion was that teachers might not receive enough training to be effective in doing the job of protecting Black students in the event of outside situations. Negative labels, misunderstandings, and poor teacher-student

interaction are also addressed, and the consensus was that faulty thinking could lead to the loss of life of a Black student when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in a school. Participants also said that most school shootings have not happened in inner-city schools, thus

Theme 3 was: Black parents' perception of the risk factors. The overall findings indicated that access to weapons, the mental health of both teachers and students, emotional safety, and negative thoughts and misunderstandings of Black students are perceptions of risk factors that could increase the possibility of harm, injury, or loss of life of Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Additionally, most participants agreed that improper storage of weapons, recklessly utilizing weapons, and irresponsibly handling weapons all contribute to the opportunity for students and teachers to access weapons, leading to exposure to danger and explosive situations.

Theme 4 was: Black parents' feelings about armed teachers. The overall findings indicated the need for continued awareness, feelings of being worried, feeling the need for increased training, feeling the need to remove the child or not permit the child to attend school, and understanding the need for firearms are perceptions from Black parents whose children might attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. There was a mixture of answers and emotions (e.g., confusion, relief, and disgust) as participants provided their perceptions for opposing and supporting school teachers with firearms. Participants also explained their reasons for how they felt as Black parents towards arming teachers policies. Lastly, the majority of

the participants perceived that if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings, they must have adequate training and periodic mental health evaluations.

The second research question used to guide this study was: How do Black parents perceive policies permitting arming teachers in school settings impacting Black students? Two overarching themes emerged during the data analysis to address the second research question.

Theme 5 was: about emotional and psychological factors impacting learning and school climate. In summary, the overall findings indicated that emotional factors (anxiety, feeling frightened, and feeling unsafe) and psychological factors (being distracted, mesmerized, and unable to focus) impacted school climate and learning for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Emotional factors are the overall perception identified as impacting Black students learning and school climate. Participants communicated their concerns and provided their perception of how Black students could not flourish in an environment in which they are targeted for mistreatment, constantly having to focus on their survival while attending school because of the fear of what might happen if the teacher decided to pull out the firearm and use it. Participants also perceived a concern that the school climate was not conducive for Black students because it produced periods of nervousness and worry about a potential imminent negative outcome for Black students if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

Theme 6: the impact of race and implicit bias on teacher-student social interactions. The overall findings indicated that persuasive harmful stereotypical

ideologies about Black students impact teacher-student social interactions. Participants perceived that implicit bias often results in erroneous beliefs about Black students, which would affect a teacher's judgment, behavior, and reaction toward Black students, who are perceived as violent and aggressive. The findings also indicated that participants perceived teachers' lack of awareness of their implicit bias is demonstrated in their authority, privilege, and power to arbitrarily decide to brandish a firearm, potentially shoot a Black student and justify doing so because of a perception of threat. Lastly, participants perceived unchecked implicit bias impacts the unfair treatment of Black students and teacher-student social interactions. Chapter 5 was a presentation of the conclusions derived from these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand Black parents' perception of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings. As the researcher, I aimed to understand how Black parents perceived the arming teacher policy impacting Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Lastly, I also aimed to understand how policies for arming teachers could cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns.

The study findings might provide valuable information that could be used to address the arming teacher policy. Chapter 1 presented the study's background, problem statement, and purpose. The chapter also included the study's research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions of key terms, as well as the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance of the study, and the social impact. Additionally, chapter 1 highlighted the gap in the research and the need to fill the research gap. Chapter 2 presented CRT as a theoretical framework for guiding the study. Chapter 2 was also a review of existing literature into mass school shootings, arming teachers, Florida policies for arming teachers, and teachers' implicit bias and negative perceptions of Black students. Chapter 3 presented the study's methodology, including the setting, participant selection, sample size, and criteria. Chapter 3 contained the research design and rationale and my role as the researcher. The chapter also included the study's methodological procedures used in data collection, data collection strategies, and data analyzing, as well as the means of establishing trustworthiness, and ethical

challenges and procedures. Chapter 4 included a description of the research participants, and a detailed account of the data analysis process from initial coding to generating of overarching themes. The current chapter included an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, the implications of the results in terms of the literature and CRT theory, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The main questions that guided the study were the following: What are Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings, and how do Black parents perceived policies that permit arming teachers impacting Black students? The research questions were expected to evoke an understanding of how armed teachers in school settings could impact Black students, give a voice to Black parents, and provide a means to hear their perception of the arming teacher policy. Although researchers explored various stakeholders' perception of the arming teacher policy (Olive, 2019; Winston, 2016), little or no literature had addressed Black parents' perception of arming teacher policies in schools (Minshew, 2018). Two research questions were developed to identify and explore Black parents' perception of policies for arming teachers in schools and the impact on Black students. In response to identify and exploring Black parents' perception, six themes emerged from the current study. Theme 1 was Black parents' perception of unintended consequences when teachers are armed, Theme 2 was Black parents' perception of the physical safety and well-being of Black students, Theme 3 was Black parents' perception of the risk factors, Theme 4 was Black parents' feelings about armed teachers, Theme 5 was emotional and psychological

factors impacting school climate and learning, and Theme 6 was the impact of race and implicit bias on teacher-student social interactions.

The first theme that emerged from this study was Black parents' perception of potential unintended consequences when teachers are armed. The findings of this study demonstrated that Black parents perceived that several unintended consequences would impact Black students who might attend schools where policies permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings. The consequences participants perceived as concerning were racialized violence (e.g., murder, shot, assaulted) towards Black students, fear of teachers with firearms and feeling threatened by teachers with firearms, exposure to danger (e.g., harmed or death), and gun protection. These findings support the literature identifying unintended consequences for students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in a school setting (DeVos et al., 2018; Jonson et al., 2021).

The findings of this study demonstrated that Black parents perceived that Black students would encounter racialized violence (e.g., shot, murdered, assaulted) as a consequence of attending a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. This finding supported the literature that stated that when firearms are introduced into schools where Black students are in attendance, an environment of racialized violence increases (Minshew, 2018). Minshew (2018) stated that extensive research already demonstrates that Black men and women are disproportionately impacted by shooting deaths from individuals in authority and that adding a firearm to a school environment only impacts the continual violence that Black students already encounter from individuals who are in control.

The current study also found that Black parents perceived fear of teachers with firearms and feeling threatened by teachers with firearms are unintended consequences for Black students attending schools where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Shamserad et al. (2020) findings were consistent with the current research findings by reporting that arming teacher policies would increase fear for Black students. Shamserad et al. also reported that the combination of race and school security measures (e.g., arming teachers) impacts students' fears. McCuddy et al. (2022) argued that students who attend schools where teachers are permitted to carry firearms would have an increase in levels of fear and that rather than creating a safe school environment, policies, such as arming teachers, add to a climate of fear. Thus, based on previous research, it is evident that fear is a factor for Black students when teachers carry firearms in schools.

Participants in the current study also perceived that exposure to danger (e.g., being placed in harm's way) was an unintended consequence when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Minshew's (2018) findings were consistent with the current findings that indicated arming teachers pose a severe danger to Black students, especially in states like Florida that have Stand Your Ground Laws and lawfully permit individuals to use deadly force against a perceived threat. In the findings, Minshew (2018) asserted that if Black students are perceived as a threat, even when the threat is not viable, the teacher might shoot the student.

Participants perceived that gun protection was an intended consequence for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Baranauskas's (2020) findings were consistent with the current research. His findings revealed that the

justification for the arming teacher policy was that it was a means of protection and was necessary for self-defense in a school shooting incident. McCuddy et al. (2022) reported that permitting teachers to carry firearms in school settings is for self-protection and protecting other staff and students. Therefore, we can conclude from Baranauskas's (2020), and McCuddy et al.'s (2002) findings that guns could be used to protect Black students when teachers carry firearms in school.

The current study's findings indicated that Black parents' perception of the physical safety and well-being of Black students is concerning when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. These concerns included inadequate training, placing armed teachers in inner-city schools, negative labels given to Black students, and the protection of Black students. Everytown for Gun Safety (2021) findings were consistent with the current findings indicating that teachers with firearms posed a potential safety risk to the well-being of students when they did not have enough hours of training to prepare them for a crisis with an active shooter and that the lack of training poses a threat of mishandling of a firearm, that could result in an accidental shooting and the misfiring. Everytown for Gun Safety also reported that teachers permitted to carry firearms were not required to undergo the same extensive training and hours as law enforcement officials, and receiving fewer hours combined with inadequate training puts students' safety at risk. According to Jonson et al. (2018), no national standards guide how teachers permitted to carry firearms would be trained, what type of training, and the length of training teachers would undergo before carrying firearms.

The current study also found that Black parents perceived that placing armed teachers in an inner-city school where the predominant enrollment is Black would jeopardize the safety and well-being of Black students. These findings supported the literature and indicated that most mass school shooters were White males (Addington, 2019). Addington stated that the irony is that schools with the majority of enrollment being Black students were more likely to have security measures enforced than schools where most students are White. Addington further expressed that these measures were concerning and increased discipline and punitive consequences for Black students.

The current study also found that parents perceived that placing negative labels on Black students could result in harm or death when a teacher is permitted to carry a firearm. Labeling reinforces stereotypes and misconceptions of Black boys; according to Marsh and Walker (2022), labeling impacts teachers' perceptions and results in extreme punitive measures. Annamma and Morrison (2018) reported that teachers would act on stereotypes (e.g., violent, aggressive, dangerous), allow their biases to guide their interactions and behavior, and justify punishing Black students because of a perceived threat. As shown in previous research and the current study, Black students' safety and well-being are a cause for concern when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Gun protection, or lack thereof, was another factor Black parents perceived as impacting the well-being and safety of Black students when teachers were permitted to carry a firearm. Jonson (2021) supported the current research by reporting that it is believed that guns are a defense against further gun violence (e.g., active shooter) and that individuals who view guns as adequate protection to maintain safety in

schools favor teachers carrying firearms in the classroom. Desai (2019) also supported the current findings that negative stereotypes, firearms, and gun protection are all concerns for safety when teachers carry firearms. Additionally, Desai reported that racism exists in certain social groups and that the association of negative stereotypes results in students of color being criminalized and deemed undeserving of protection.

The current study found that Black parents perceived that access to weapons, emotional safety (loss of sense of permission to be vulnerable), mental health issues, and negative beliefs of Black students are risk factors for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Access to firearms presents several risk factors (e.g., death, unintentional discharge) for Black students attending schools where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. According to Jonson (2021), at least a dozen incidents have occurred where armed teachers have left firearms unattended and accessible to students. Additionally, Jonson reported that teachers unintentionally discharged their firearms, injuring themselves and their students. Similar findings were reported by Everytown for Gun Safety (2019); the findings suggested that several incidences of intentional and unintentional discharge of firearms resulted in injury and death. Everytown for Gun Safety also reported that access to weapons increases the risk of death by suicide and death by homicide. The current research also presented mental health issues as a risk factor for Black students and teachers that could result from attending a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. These findings were consistent with the previous findings that indicated placing guns in a school environment would present a risk to students' mental well-being (Rogers, 2018) and that firearms in

school settings present a mental health risk for teachers who are already dealing with work-related stress and burnout and now have to bear the burden of the responsibility of making decisions that could inflict injury or death upon students (Rajan & Branas, 2018).

The current study also found that Black parents perceived teachers' negative beliefs (e.g., troublemakers, lazy, undisciplined) of Black students are a risk factor when teachers are permitted to carry firearms. The current findings also revealed that Black parents perceived that when Black students do not feel safe, their emotional safety is at risk resulting in a mistrust of teachers. Annamma & Morrison, 2018 argued that some teachers have freely admitted that they have biased beliefs against children of color and that they believe that children of color come from communities and families that are lazy, that children of color are deficient in various ways, and their parents do not support their education. Marsh and Walker (2022) reported that teachers view Black students as troublemakers and that this type of negative thinking reinforces implicit bias and contributes to feelings of mistrust between Black students and teachers. In light of the current and previous research, in a nutshell, risk factors are concerning when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

The results of the current study demonstrated that Black parents have various feelings about their child possibly attending a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Those feelings include worrying about an unsafe environment, the need for continued awareness of armed teacher policies, increased training, the need to remove or prohibit their child from attending a school where teachers carry firearms, and an understanding of the need for firearms. The current research findings demonstrated that

feelings of worry were a reason most Black parents gave for wanting to remove or not permit their child to attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Annamma and Morrison (2018) reported that teachers often escalate minor behavior infractions of Black students, interpret the misbehavior as more problematic than it is, and that a mere refusal might be interpreted as a threat. Annamma and Morrison also reported that teachers misinterpret Black students' interactions due to implicit bias. Thus, the teacher's misguided response could reduce or remove protections for Black students, creating a more punitive and unsafe environment.

The current research findings also reported that some Black parents felt that teachers with firearms could protect their children in a shooting situation. However, parents also perceived that even with protection a firearm in the classroom could have a negative impact when teachers are permitted to carry a firearm in a school setting. Yack's (2018) findings were consistent with the current research study in reporting that teachers might accidentally discharge a firearm to break up a fight or misinterpret a student as dangerous or a threat and shoot the student. Additionally, Rajan and Branas (2018) reported that in a national study, parents of school-age children opposed teachers carrying firearms because of the negative impact that firearms would have in a classroom. The overall consensus in Rogers's (2018) findings and Yack's (2018) findings was that the outcome of firearms in schools could present the possibility of a loss of life and injury to students. This current study also reported the need for continued awareness of armed teacher policies as a concern for Black parents. According to Isbell et al. (2019), policies to arm teachers will continue to be at the forefront of political debates. All stakeholders

(e.g., parents) should be aware of the purpose, intent, implication, and impact these policies will have on students. Mancini et al. (2020) stated that parents' voices should be heard concerning legislative initiatives to arm teachers. It can be concluded that if allowing teachers to carry firearms in school continues to be a debated topic, as previous research declares, Black parents should be made aware of such policy initiatives and be allowed to voice their concerns and feelings about a law that could potentially impact their child's life. Finally, the current study's findings also indicated that Black parents felt that if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings, then training must increase. Roger (2018) reported that teachers must be ready and prepared for an active shooter crisis, that continued training is necessary, and that it is vitally important for teachers to undergo the same or comparable training as that of a law enforcement officer if they are expected to stop a would-be active shooter. Rogers's findings were consistent with how Black parents felt.

The current study found that emotional (e.g., fear, anxiety) and psychological (e.g., distractions) factors would impact Black students learning and school climate if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. The findings supported the literature that indicates students could experience increased levels of anxiety, fear, and psychological problems when teachers carry firearms in the school and that these negative feelings and problems are not conducive to creating a safe learning environment and equitable trusting school climate (Croft et al., 2019 & Jonson et al., 2020). Jonson et al. (2020) stated that arming teachers create an environment of emotional fear and anger which leads a student to believe that they are unsafe and that their learning is hindered.

Croft et al. (2019) explained that safety is essential to students' social, emotional, physical, psychological, and educational growth and success. However, when these components of educational attainment are impacted, students cannot grow and learn to their fullest capacity.

The findings from the current study established that implicit bias and stereotypes results in adverse treatment, disciplinary and punitive practices, power struggles and maintenance of White privilege of Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. teachers and Black students. The findings supported the literature that reported multiple researchers (Addington, 2019; Gregory & Roberts, 2017; Ritter & Anderson, 2018) have found evidence that Black boys and girls unfairly receive harsher disciplinary and punitive consequences than White peers, even for the same behaviors and infractions. Unfortunately, such negative consequences result from a teacher's perception of a Black student as dangerous or a threat to others. This research is important to note, especially as implicit bias could influence interactions between teachers and Black students (Skiba, 2015).

The current study's findings are consistent with previous research concerning how punitive school policies, practices, and ill-treatment could have pervasive, troubling, and harsh consequences for minorities, especially Black students, in U.S. schools and how these practices and policies are utilized to keep social control over Black students while maintaining White privilege. Previous studies have reported that racially biased stereotypes, racial prejudice, and negative bias thinking influence the negative effects of implicit bias on Black school children (Simon, 2014). Additionally, educational

researchers have utilized the CRT to acknowledge that implicit biases have resulted in power struggles, racialized violence, and a disparity in disciplinary and punitive practices for minority students (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and White privilege, power, and supremacy have shown that school policies, practices and laws do not provide benefits to Black students nor reflect their needs (Butcher, 2020). Furthermore, school policies and practices enable White superiority and control (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Current research findings and previous research results proposed that implicit bias and stereotypes impact how Black students are treated, impact disciplinary and punitive practices of Black students, impact the power struggle between Black students and teachers, and control the maintenance of White privilege. Thus, there is a need to apply the research to implicit bias in education and subjective attitudes of Black students when those in authority can carry firearms in a school setting. Implicit bias based on race and stereotypes influences the behavior of school personnel of authority and presents Black students as threatening, disrespectful, disruptive, and violent (Wegmann & Smith, 2019). Further, implicit bias produces negative interactions and contributes to already stressful encounters, which could result in the loss of life or severe injury (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019).

Limitations of the Study

The current study had several limitations. The first limitation was the sample size. The study's findings were taken from the responses of 10 (a small sample size) participants selected through purposeful and snowball sampling. Having a small sample size often indicates that the findings from the data might not be generalized to the larger

population. According to Vasileiou et al. (2018) a small sample size could threaten the validity and generalization of the study's results. However, the number is sufficient to capture perceptions, attitudes, and views through rich interviews and the essence and meaning of the phenomenon under study (Mason, 2010); and a small sample size could also generate richly textured data relevant to the research (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

The second limitation was the representation sample of participants in the study. Black parents were recruited for this study. Because the study only focused on Black parents, it did not include other parents' perception of the arming teacher policy and thus the results were not diversified or representative of other races. Further studies could be replicated with other racial groups to determine the impact of arming teacher policies on other student populations.

The third limitation was the limited geographic location of the participants. The study was limited to Black parents in the southeastern United States and Florida. Thus, the study excluded other geographical regions and states with Black parents and their perceptions on arming teacher policies and the impact on Black students. Due to the limited geographic location, the findings might not apply to other Black parents in different states, regions, and school districts, and therefore might limit the generalizability of the study. To address the geographic location, I encourage future researchers to replicate the study in other geographic locations throughout the United States.

The fourth limitation was due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Interviews occurred online through cloud-based audio conferencing communication platform-Zoom

instead of face-to-face and thus required different ethical considerations. According to Lobe et al. (2020) when converting from in person interviews to online interviews special consideration should be given to ethical challenges of research. Additionally, Lobe et al. mentioned that confidentiality is an ethical issue that should be considered because participant's interviews might be overheard. As the researcher to make sure that confidentiality was safeguarded participants were reminded that as the researcher, I was required to protect their privacy and confidentiality. Thus, I found a safe place and private location that could keep their privacy protected and identity confidential.

Recommendations

I recommend that future researchers extend the geographic location to other states and regions across the United States to understand Black parents' perception of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings and the policy's impact on Black students. The results of a new study could be compared with the current study's findings to determine if there are similar findings across different geographic locations.

Second, based on previous research and the findings from this current study, future researchers must continue to explore the impact of the arming teacher policy on Black students when teachers have implicit biases towards Black students. There has been extensive research on implicit bias in the classroom and its impact on teacher-student social interactions (Addington, 2019; Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Watts et al., 2004). Additionally, previous researchers have demonstrated that implicit bias negatively influences teachers' attitudes, perceptions, views, and beliefs that Black students are dangerous, undisciplined, and a threat. This type of negative thinking has resulted in the

disproportionate punitive treatment of Black students by individuals in authority (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Minshew, 2018). This current study was qualitative, and the results provided an abundance of rich data and gave voice to Black parents whose children might be impacted by arming teacher policies. Nevertheless, it is recommended that future researchers conduct a quantitative study to understand the relationship between Black parents' fear of safety for Black students and the impact of armed teacher policies and teachers' implicit biases.

Third, this current study only focused on Black parents' perception of policies that permitted teachers to carry firearms in school settings and the potential impact on Black students. Research suggests that other students of color, specifically Latino students, are negatively impacted by school discipline policies and practices (Marsh & Walker, 2022; Scott et al., 2017). Like Black students, Latino students have also been labeled by teachers and administrators as problematic. Such labeling contributes to the dehumanization of Latino students and results in negative teachers' decision-making about Latino students (Marsh & Walker, 2022). It is recommended that future researchers replicate this study to compare Latino parents' perception of policies that permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings and the potential impact on Latino students with that of Black parents' perspective and determine if the findings result in any similarities.

Implications

Policy Implications

Mass school shootings are a significant problem in the United States, leading to public outcry for politicians and other government officials to take a stance on gun

violence in schools. Amid the focus on preventing mass school shootings, often in the wake of tragedy, policymakers have tended to react to societal pressures and make quick decisions (e.g., arming teachers) about what they consider to be the best response to the problem (Rogers et al., 2018). Arming school personnel (i.e., teachers) was one proposed means for keeping U.S. schools safe from further gun violence (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). Thus, arming teachers has impacted public policy, indicating the need to find the best way to protect school staff and students from further mass school shootings. Politicians, other government officials, and stakeholders have not considered the many risk factors associated with educators carrying guns, especially the unintentional impact of such policies on Black students (Minshew, 2018). Additionally, it is unfortunate that research has been limited in understanding Black parents' perceptions of how such a policy could cause harm to Black students.

The current findings demonstrated that Black parents perceived that it is essential that legislatures and other state and government officials include the voices of Black parents in the decision-making process to arm teachers in America's primary and secondary schools, as their voices could potentially influence the arming teacher policy. Additionally, the results of this study revealed that Black parents perceived that they could not find anything positive regarding the arming teacher policy; that even when they thought safety could be a line of defense for Black students, most participants asserted that Black students would not feel safe in schools where teachers were permitted to carry firearms. The perception of unsafe situations for students amidst teachers carrying firearms has been supported by existing studies that assert unintended consequences and

risk factors could impact student safety when teachers carry firearms (Mancini et al., 2020; Minshew, 2018; Shamserad et al., 2021). Examples provided of unintended consequences, and risk factors were a climate of mistrust and fear between teacher and student, unauthorized persons gaining access to firearms, accidental firearm discharge, and other unintended consequences and risk factors (Mancini et al., 2020; Minshew, 2018; Shamserad et al., 2021).

Based on the findings of this study, the results could further our knowledge for understanding Black parents' concern for the safety of Black students when policies permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings. Furthermore, this current study could indicate the need for policymakers to recognize and consider the potential impact of armed teachers on Black students. Moreover, this study could encourage lawmakers to consider the unintended consequences and risk factors before enacting additional arming teacher policies and find alternative strategies to prevent mass school shootings and provide all students with a safe school environment.

Finally, legislatures and individuals supporting the push to eradicate and prevent mass school shootings across the United States by arming teachers must understand how enacting such a policy might have adverse effects on Black students and thus continue to identify and explore the arming teacher policy's potential impact on Black students.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have contributed to the ongoing literature on the use of CRT as a framework for identifying and analyzing policies and practices impacting students in schools worldwide (Gillborn, 2006; Landson-Billings, 2005). Additionally,

research in CRT has examined the influences of race, racism, and racial stigma on student-teacher interactions, teachers' treatment of students in educational settings, and the detrimental consequences of Black students' social interaction with authority figures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Landson-Billings, 1998). Furthermore, researchers have also used CRT to examine the influence of implicit bias and racial stigma on how educators discipline and punish Black students in reaction to perceived disciplinary problems or potential acts of violence (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Simson, 2014). The findings from this study give credence to the influence of implicit bias and negative perceptions of the threat of Black students, often causing educators and those in authority to mistreat these youth, sometimes with deadly ramifications. Consequently, as supported in the current study's findings, implicit bias and negative stereotypes impact adverse treatment towards Black students, disciplinary and punitive practices, and a power struggle and maintenance of White privilege.

The study findings might provide an avenue to continue utilizing CRT to examine the influence of implicit bias and racial stigma, including stereotypes and negative perceptions of Black students on how the arming teacher policy can have the unfair and harsh punitive treatment and potentially lethal consequences for Black students. As demonstrated in the literature, CRT is a means of challenging and explaining how punitive school policies, practices, and treatment could have pervasive, troubling, and harsh consequences for minority youth, especially Black students, in U.S. schools. Additionally, CRT could be a means of understanding the connections between perceived negative behavior, disciplinary problem, and violence toward Black students and the

potential consequences of arming teachers in school settings. Finally, understanding CRT and the tenet that racism is normalized in everyday practices could help encourage conversations about the implementation of gun violence prevention policies (e.g., arming teacher policy) that often do not consider the possible consequences on marginalized populations who already experience unfair treatment and racial disparity due to punitive policies and practices.

Implications for Social Change

Showing the potential impact of armed teachers on Black students by understanding Black parents' perceptions about policies that allow armed teachers in schools is a motivator for positive social change and addressing the significant problem of mass school shootings in the United States. Additionally, understanding the potential impact of policies that permit teachers to carry guns in schools could help indicate ways of creating a safer school environment for Black students. Lastly, researching such a debated topic could be a means of encouraging lawmakers and school district leaders to review their stances on the arming teacher policy and focus their attention on finding better approaches, alternative methods, and best practices for strengthening safety policies for responding to and preventing mass school shootings that do not subject Black students to additional harm, so all students can benefit from school safety measures.

Conclusion

This basic qualitative study aimed to understand Black parents' perceptions of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings. I aimed to understand how Black parents perceived the arming teacher policy impacting Black students when

teachers are permitted to carry firearms. Lastly, I also aimed to understand how policies for arming teachers could cause dangerous and lethal situations for Black students when teachers with implicit racial bias have guns.

Findings from the study indicated that Black parents are very concerned about what might happen to their children and other Black students if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Black parents have shared their concerns and perceptions to provide an in-depth understanding of how they felt about the safety and well-being of Black students, the potential consequences towards Black students, and the risk factors for Black students if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings. Additionally, Black parents also shared that they perceived policies allowing teachers to carry firearms in school settings would negatively impact Black students. The findings demonstrated that there was a perception that the arming teacher policy would impact Black students'-teachers' social interaction and impact how race, negative stereotypes, and implicit bias in connection with teachers with firearms create an unsafe school climate and fosters a learning environment of fear, intimidation, and insecurity for Black students. The findings also indicated that not all parents are against the arming teacher policy. However, all of the parents recognized the potential harm that teachers with firearms might cause if teachers are not adequately trained on gun safety measures and usage, lack mental stability and have not recognized and self-reflected on their own implicit biases that could lead to falsely judging a Black student as violent, aggressive and a threat, resulting in a rash overreaction and leading to potential shots being fired accidental injury or death. The overall results of this current study demonstrate that Black

parents perceived that Black students are already impacted negatively by persistent patterns of mistreatment, unfair disciplinary measures (e.g., in-school and out-of-school suspension), negative labeling (e.g., trouble makers, violent, undisciplined, family upbringing) and implicit bias from teachers (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Minshew, 2018). Thus, having a loaded firearm in the hands of teachers coupled with negative and offensive stereotypes marked by implicit bias would exacerbate the racial violence experienced by Black students and could lead to further dangerous consequences when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings.

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Appendix A: Research Flyer

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED for an Interview

Exploring Black Parents' Perception of Armed Teachers in School Settings



Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand Black parents' perception of armed teachers in school settings.

About the study

- One 45-60 minutes audio conference platform (Zoom or Vsee Messenger) that will be recorded
- You will receive a \$10.00 E-gift card from Chick-fil-A upon completion of your interview

To take part in this research, you must:

- Be a parent and over the age of 18
- Reside in Florida or Southeast United States
- Familiar with the arming teacher policy in school districts
- Self-identify as Black

Appendix B: Demographic Question for Research Study

1. Are you over the age of 18?

Yes No

2. Are you a parent?

Yes No

3. Do you self-identify as Black/African American?

Yes No

4. Do you live in Florida or the southeastern United States?

Yes No

5. Are you familiar with policies that allow teachers to carry firearms in schools?

Yes No

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Research Questions

What are Black parent's perception of policies that permit the arming of teachers inside school settings?

1. *What are your concerns if any about Black students well-being if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?*
2. *What is your perception of the safety of Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school setting?*
3. *What is your perception of the potential consequences towards Black students when policies permit teachers to carry firearms in school settings?*
4. *What do you perceive are risk factors for Black students when teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?*
5. *What are your feelings as a parent of a Black student who may attend a school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?*

How do Black parents perceive policies that permit arming teachers in school settings impacting Black Students?

1. *What impact positive or negative will arming teachers in school settings have on Black students?*
2. *What impact does implicit bias have on teacher and Black students interactions if teachers are permitted to carry firearms in school settings?*
3. *How would you perceive policies that permit teachers carrying firearms in school settings impacting Black students social-emotional learning, academic achievement, or school climate?*
4. *How do you perceive race, gender, and social economic status impacting a teachers' willingness to shoot a firearm when there is a perception of threat of danger to self or others?*
5. *What assumptions do you believe teachers make about Black students that could impact the decision to use a hand gun when firearms are permitted in school settings?*

Table 1*Initial Codes*

Initial Codes (Alphabetized)	<i>n</i> of participants contributing data (<i>N</i> =10)	<i>n</i> of data excerpts included
Access to firearms	7	23
Armed teachers in the wrong school (inner-city)	1	1
Continued awareness of policies that permit teachers to carry	1	1
Exposure to danger	3	4
Emotional factors	10	19
Emotional safety	1	1
Fear and threats	2	3
Feeling of being worried	2	3
Feeling the need to increase training	3	4
Feeling the need to remove or not permit student in school	2	2
Gun protection	1	1
Implicit bias and stereotypes impact negative treatment towards Black students	8	12
Implicit bias and stereotypes impact disciplinary and punitive practices of Black students	2	3
Implicit bias and stereotypes impact the power struggle and maintenance of White privilege	1	1
Inadequate training	2	5
Lack of gun protection affects safety	3	4
Mental health is an issue	2	2
Negative labels	3	4
Negative thoughts and misunderstanding of Black students	3	3
Protection or lack thereof	2	3
Psychological factors	3	6
Racialized violence	4	5
Understanding the need for firearms	3	4

Table 2*Cluster Codes and Overarching Themes*

Overarching Themes	<i>n</i> of participants contributing data (N=10)	<i>n</i> of data excerpts included
Theme 1: Black parents' perception of unintended consequences when teachers are armed <i>Racialized violence</i> <i>Exposure to gun danger</i> <i>Fear and threats</i> <i>Gun Protection</i>	9	10
Theme 2: Black parents' perception of physical safety and well-being of Black students <i>Inadequate training affects safety</i> <i>Armed teachers in the wrong school (inner-city) affects safety</i> <i>Negative labels of Black students affects safety</i> <i>Lack of gun protection affects safety</i>	10	14
Theme 3: Black parents' perception of risk factors <i>Access to weapons</i> <i>Emotional Safety</i> <i>Mental health is an issue</i> <i>Negative beliefs of Black students</i>	10	29
Theme 4: Black parents feelings about armed teachers <i>Feelings of worry</i> <i>Feeling the need for continued awareness of armed teacher policies</i> <i>Feeling the need to increase training</i>	10	25

Overarching Themes	<i>n</i> of participants contributing data (N=10)	<i>n</i> of data excerpts included
<i>Feeling the need to remove or not permit Black students in school where teachers are permitted to carry firearms</i>		
<i>Understanding the need for firearms</i>		
Theme 5: Emotional and psychological factors impacting Black students	10	25
<i>Emotional factors impact learning and school climate</i>		
<i>Psychological factors impact learning and school climate</i>		
Theme 6: Impact of race and implicit bias on teacher-student social interactions	10	36
<i>Implicit bias and stereotypes impact negative treatment towards Black students</i>		
<i>Implicit bias, and stereotypes impact disciplinary and punitive practices of Black students</i>		
<i>Implicit bias, and stereotypes impact the power struggle and maintenance of white privilege</i>		