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Equipping Teachers with Firearms to Promote Safety in U.S. Public High Schools

Sherman Lakeith Winston
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sherman Winston

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Review Committee

Dr. Anthony Fleming, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Melanye Smith, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Tanya Settles, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

Equipping Teachers with Firearms to Promote Safety in U.S. Public High Schools

by

Sherman Winston

MS, Ashworth University, 2011

BA, Grantham University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

Politicians and educators have debated the merits of arming U.S. school employees to counteract possible school shootings but have not reached a shared point of view. There are few academic studies that specifically explore arming educators in public school systems. Using the general theory of agenda setting, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding arming of educators between two independent school systems and consider whether arming educators enhances safety measures. An exploratory design was used in which data from two sample populations were compared: faculty ($n = 15$) from a school district in Texas, which allows educators to be armed, and faculty ($n = 36$) from a school district located in Alabama, which does not allow educators to be armed. Data were collected via an online survey and then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Safety procedures at both schools were also examined to assess the impact of arming educators on schools and communities using inductive coding and thematic analysis. Findings indicate that participants were not opposed to being armed if adequate policies and training are put in place. Further, the participants generally indicated they currently perceive that they are safe but welcome additional safety measures to prevent serious incidents from occurring. Finally, findings suggest that arming educators does not violate the generally accepted best practice of “run, hide, and fight” during critical incidents. Positive social change may be achieved through improvements to school safety in public school systems, and recommendations are made to school district administrators to engage in follow on research to determine appropriate policies and training requirements for educators in their respective districts.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late grandmother Ethel Dorsey who was very inspirational in my life by teaching me many life lessons. My life as it is now would not have been possible without her guidance and wisdom. In conjunction, my father and mother, Jimmy and Daisy Winston, who instilled solid work ethics and gave me the responsibility of being the oldest child and always told me to lead and set the example for my younger siblings to follow. It is my proud honor to be the first person in the family to hold the title of doctor. Thanks for all the loving and support throughout the years. To my lovely wife, Tonya, thanks for the support day in and day out; your constant motivation and encouragement kept me pushing until the end. Lastly, I cannot forget my brothers and sister. The conversation we had to motivate each other will never be forgotten.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Concerns about safety in U.S. schools have increased since the fatal school shooting in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School located in Newtown, Connecticut. Community members and parents often presume that schools are safe and that protocols are in place to prevent unforeseen events such as school shootings and major emergencies (Everett-Haynes, 2011). Some experts view it as imperative that U.S. schools develop safety plans to make their environments safer and more conducive to students' learning (see Stoller, Strauss, & Stanglin, 2012). U.S. schools have been instructed to generate safety plans in the wake of the Columbine and Sandy Hook shootings (The National Association of State Boards of Education, 2013). Several states, including Texas, Colorado, and Arkansas, have created plans of action to ensure that students are in a safe environment while attending school (Trump, 2010).

In this context, politicians and educators have debated the merits of arming school employees to counter-act possible school shootings. But, there is no consensus whether arming school employees is a good strategy.

In this qualitative case study, I explored the safety measures of two independent school systems located in the southern part of the U.S., Alabama and Texas. I addressed the question of whether lawmakers should consider arming educators as an alternative safety measure while schools go into a school-wide lockdown and wait for law enforcement to respond. This chapter contains background, problem of statement,

purpose of the study, research questions, definitions, delimitations, limitations, significance and summary.

Background

According to K12 Academics (2013), there were 40 shootings in U.S. schools between 2010-2013 resulting in approximately 75 deaths and over 72 injuries. The number of shootings appears to be increasing, based on the organization's figures. For the period from the mid-1700s to the early 1990s, a total of 145 U.S. school shootings resulting in 45 deaths and 32 injured personnel occurred (K12 Academics, 2013).

The U. S. Department of Education and U.S. Secret Service began collaborating to find ways of ensuring U.S. school safety in 1999. Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modzelski (2002) developed guidelines that can be used by schools to deter future violence or mass casualties. While conducting research, they discovered that most school shootings were planned and someone had knowledge prior to the attacks based on data from the Secret Service and Department of Education (Vossekuil et al., 2002).

According to Vossekuil et al. (2002), most perpetrators of school-based violence were bullied or humiliated by others at some point in their lives. The shooters showed their anger and sometimes told others about their plans to harm others. The National Survey of School Order and Safety (2006) also identified bullying, along with gang activity and student access to weapons, as factors contributing to why schools in U. S. are not safe. The report from the Secret Service and Department of Education suggests that school personnel should handle every threat properly and not make any assumptions as to

whether the plans will be carried out, as someone might get hurt whether the threat is valid or not (Vossekuil et al., 2002).

External and internal school structures have to be reviewed to better facilitate the flow of visitors when entering on school campus. Educators work hard to provide a safe environment for students to learn and to be successful (Paine, 2006). Reflective of these efforts, school officials have made changes to building structure and design plans to ensure that students, faculty, and administrators interact safely with one another (Zahn, 2007).

Though inside facilities are essential to ensure adequate safety, providing safety from the outside is equally important, such as adding security cameras (Fraser, 2007). Other concerns include students having weapons or possessing or using illegal drugs on school property (Bureau of Justice, International Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). School officials should develop plans to address several different situations such as gang activities, drugs, or illegal possession of weapons.

According to Trump (2010), most U. S. schools do not provide training such as lock-down procedures or active shooter training, leaving faculty members ill-prepared to respond to such incidents. Due to budget constraints, many school districts have cut back on safety and security measures (Eisel-Dyrli, 2010). Plans that had been implemented due to the Columbine massacre have been reversed in many schools due to budget cuts (Trump, 2010). Educators need to develop and ensure that crisis plans are in place in order to meet the safety needs of their schools and communities. Plans must be reviewed

on a regular basis and updated as required to ensure that current tactics and procedures are followed in case of an emergency (U. S. Department of Education, 2007).

Since the shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, there is increasing discussion of arming educators in public high schools or on any school property to counteract active shooter situations (Shah, 2013b).

Allowing educators to be armed in a school environment may deter violence and perhaps provide a safer place for learning, according to Trotter (2005). Researchers studying Drug Assistance Resistance Education and other programs have found evidence that employing school resource officers on campuses is associated with positive outcomes for students and their schools because of the proactive leadership these personnel provide (see Booth, Van Hasselt, & Vecchi, 2011).

One issue regarding armed educators is the required training for those carrying a gun and how to approach an intruder (Shah, 2013b). In response, legislators in several states have drafted legislation that would allow educators to carry concealed weapons and receive training to protect themselves and their students. In Harrold, Texas, educators have been allowed to carry concealed weapons in schools since 2008 (Brown, 2012).

Though researchers have identified advantages to arming educators in public school systems (Creason, Walmer, & Vaughn, 2014.), they have also identified many disadvantages and concerns from community members and school superintendents. These concerns include (a) students' accessibility to firearms, (b) possibility of accidental discharge, (c) shifting of educators' focus from teaching students to providing security,

and (d) the refusal of insurance carriers to provide coverage if weapons are allowed on school property (Creason, Walmer, & Vaughn, 2014).

As discussed earlier, several debates are on-going on whether arming teachers or staff would improve school safety. This research tries to bring to light the issues that schools face with safety and security issues and reduce the gap in gathering data that may be helpful in creating or improving means to providing safety for students, faculty, and administrators.

In this study, I will examine educators in U.S. schools should be armed to provide an additional measure for safety. I will focus on arming educators in high schools with the intent that information gathered can be used to determine necessary safety precautions if school districts decide to arm educators in lower-level schools.

Problem Statement

Debates among politicians and educators concerning arming school employees to counter-act possible school shootings indicated that there is no consensus whether arming school employees is a good strategy. Though there is no best practice to deter or prevent violence, security measures that prevent school shootings need to be in place to ensure safety for students and faculty. The responsibility for student safety falls on the school faculty. It is important that schools formulate and implement plans that address threats of violence. They also need to develop procedures for active shooters and emergency situations that may involve threat evacuation while students are attending schools. Most school systems have general safety procedures in place such as locking doors and using

metal detectors and security cameras (School Safety and Security Measures Statistics, 2014).

Since the Columbine and Sandy Hook shootings in 1999 and 2013, respectively, administrators implemented active shooter trainings in U.S. school systems to provide life-saving skills and safety for students and faculty until law enforcement are able to get to the scene (Police Research Forum, 2014). Educators who take active shooter training learn how to run, hide, and fight. Educators are taught to run and to evacuate the school campus if possible. If not able to run, they should hide; if all else fails, they should fight for their lives by trying to disarm the assailant. Doing these things gives law enforcement time to evaluate the situation prior to entrance for rescue.

Whether arming educators in U.S. school systems is a good or bad idea, it should be reviewed as an option to enhance security measures in schools. Similarly to implementation of active shooter training, it may provide added security and safety (Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, & Donner, 2011). Some U.S. school districts allow educators to arm themselves and have been without incident since 2008, with no negligent discharge of weapons reported (Buck, Yurvati, & Drake, 2013).

Due to budget constraints, most schools are not able to hire school resource officers for security; therefore, school administrators need to consider alternative security or safety measures such as arming educators that can assist with deterring and preventing violence incidents. This role of the administration should not be overlooked regardless of budget (Hill, 2013).

Each state and each school system is different regarding rules and regulations on whether firearms are allowed on school property. The Gun-Free School Act (GFSA) of 1994 was drafted with the intent of reducing gun violence on school campus by expelling students for less than one year for bringing firearms on school property. The Act was designed to force educators and administrators of school systems to formulate and implement safety plans. The GFSA was revised in 2002 to expel students for a minimum of 1 year. The GFSA ultimately failed due to many other states having their own policies regarding firearms on school property (CSG Justice Center, 2014).

Some experts recommend that school systems have plans in place to combat any given situation and provide training to those employed by the school system: therefore eliminating the need for educators to carry firearms (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010). The concept that is suggested by authors Borum et al. (2010) contradicts that response plans are not fully preparing educators and faculty on how to respond to every type of situation such as school shootings nor are they providing training in how to deal with intruders. According to some legislatures, arming educators should be explored as an alternate means to provide more safety for students, faculty and administrators.

Tragedies in U.S. schools, such as the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2013 and Marysville-Pilchuck High School in 2014, have brought forth several debates on school security and violence within the school system and with the politicians on a national level (Elliott, 2015). This case study research will address the need for schools to consider educators to be armed to provide an additional measure for safety and

the impact it will have on the school system. There is little research on arming educators in schools. To help fill this gap in knowledge, I wanted to explore educators and faculty concerns related to arming educators as a safety measure.

Though several schools do not allow educators to arm themselves, the perspective of those educators in school districts that allow them to carry firearms, such as Harrold Independent School District (ISD) in Harrold, Texas, will give insight on whether arming educators provides a better means of safety. The sample populations were taken from Harrold ISD and Chickasaw City School System located in Mobile, Alabama. I surveyed educators from both school systems to gather opinions whether educators need to be armed while school is in session and the impact of armed educators has on a school system. Chickasaw City School System was compared to Harrold ISD to investigate the mindset of educators being allowed to carry firearms on school property. This research allowed school systems to review the option of allowing educators to be armed and help provide future research material to determine if the schools are safer when educators are armed. While there are several articles concerning arming educators, there was very little research on this topic, due to the sensitivity of allowing weapons on school campus and the impact it would have on school systems as a whole.

This qualitative case study used an exploratory design to investigate the idea of arming educators from the perspective of employees from Harrold ISD and Chickasaw City School System to include the principal, superintendent, educators, administrators, and faculty members. Exploratory research was best suited where limited information was available (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative safety measure and to assess possible impacts on school systems. I compared the perspectives of educators working in a school district that allows educators to arm themselves to those of a school system that does not allow educators to do so.

Research Questions

I sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What safety measures are in place in your school to deter school shootings?

RQ2: How might allowing educators to arm themselves on school property assist in addressing safety concerns within the school?

RQ3: What impact, positive or negative, will arming educators have on a school system?

RQ4: What is the difference in having a human resource officer on a school campus versus arming educators?

Definitions

Educator: Someone who is employed full time.

Administrator: Someone who is employed and works in an administrative position such as counselor, assistant principal and principal.

Faculty: Someone who is in support positions or employed by the school system but not a teacher.

Human resource officer (HRO): Someone who provides supervision of the school house environment and deals with students that are not complying with school code of conduct. An HRO provides training in regards to safety and assist in school crisis or emergency situations.

Assumptions

The overarching assumption of this research was as follows: (a) the participants provided honest answers since the research is based on each participant's viewpoint; (b) educators from school districts allowing educators to arm themselves will give a wide variety of responses based on their perspective from each school; (c) educators from school systems that does not allow educators to be armed will give a wide variety of responses based on their perspective and (d) each participant will answer each research question being asked.

Scope and Delimitations

The delimitations in this research were as follows: (a) input came from educators, administrators, faculty only; (b) some educators have only limited experience in the school house setting and (c) substitute educators were not involved in the research.

Limitations

The size of the sample was a problem due to so many schools in the school system. The research is limited due to the following: (a) participants were taken from one school that allow educators to be armed and located 759 miles away from researcher as well as not all inclusive; (b) participants were taken from one school system that does not allow educators to be armed and not all inclusive; (c) the research is limited to a few

educators (d) not all participants responded to survey (e) population for each school were totally different and (f) demographics of school systems were culturally different.

Summary

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter 1 provides the introduction of the research. Alternative means of providing safety for students, faculty, and administrators are important. The next chapter will provide insight on gun violence and literature review on published information regarding arming educators.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to compare two school systems; one which allows educators to be armed and one that does not, to determine whether administrators and lawmakers should be considered arming educators as an alternative safety measure and to identify its possible impact on school systems. Conducting this research provided insight on educators' views on being allowed to arm themselves to provide additional safety for students, faculty, and administrators. This chapter contains a review of literature pertaining to school security measures. I discuss the history of school violence involving parents and community and present literature on the presence of human resource officers in U.S. school settings and the arming of educators in these settings.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

History of School Violence

Debates of whether arming educators is the answer to solving the violence that has taken place in U.S. schools are on-going. Some argue that allowing educators to carry concealed weapons makes the school environment safer (CSG Justice Center, 2014) while others argue that doing so may cause more problems and/or compound existing ones (CSG Justice Center, 2014). Currently, 18 states allow educators to carry concealed firearms in the classroom as long as they have completed the required training mandated by the school system (Flock, 2013). Other states that are considering whether to allow guns in schools include Alaska, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee. Opponents

assert that arming educators is not going to help reduce violence in schools or deter school shootings (Ferris, 2014).

Based on my review of over 120 articles, there is very little information on whether arming educators is effective. This research addresses the gap by exploring whether administrators should arm educators as an alternative means of providing safety for schools. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, most U.S. schools hired resource officers to provide security and safety (Hunter, 2012). Because educators are school employees, the option to provide each educator with the proper training and technique on how to deal with intruders during school hours and that training would be beneficial in saving students, faculty and administrators' lives. The idea of arming educators is a debatable issue since so many school shootings have been occurring in the U. S. and this research ensure to close the gap in understanding what issues schools face in providing safety and security.

Arming educators is an important debate at the State Capitol in Washington D.C. since the Sandy Hook shooting that took place at a Connecticut elementary school, taking a total of 25 lives. Planning is the best defense in creating strategies that could be applied to schools. Politicians are looking for ways to enhance safety for schools amidst school shootings. Security measures taken in schools are a major concern. Some school officials agree that classrooms will be safer if educators are allowed to be armed (Ward, 2013).

Since schools have been in existence, security has always been a problem. After the Columbine shooting, learning how to implement plans to provide security for students and faculty became a major concern for the United States. Those major events have

reinforced the importance of constantly reviewing current plans and making sure that plans are in place (CITE). No one knows when such incidents will happen; therefore, something has to be in place to better protect students, faculty, and staff (CITE).

School districts have put in place many measures to improve school safety (CITE). However, many lawmakers, politicians, and school board members have asserted that arming educators will provide more safety for students, faculty, and administrators (Walker, 2014). A poll taken by Z. Schlanger in 2013 showed that the majority of residents in the state of Utah supported the arming of educators (). In Utah, educators are allowed to carry concealed weapons on campus without informing administrators (Schlanger, 2014).

School security prior to Columbine. Security issues have always been a concern for parents and citizens (Rosiak, 2009). School-based violence hinders students' growth and progress in public school systems (CNN Timeline: School Violence, 2012). In 2012, CNN created a timeline of school incidents which started in 1927 when the Bath Consolidated school house was blown up by a farmer, killing him and 44 others. The timeline was extended by K12 Academics (2013), which included safety concerns going back to the early 1700s with the Lenape Indian shooting in a school house in Pennsylvania that killed as many as 10 students.

These incidents illustrate how school violence has persisted from the beginning until this present time. Before the Columbine High School shootings, many schools did not prioritize security measures (Gary, 2009). It was after that massacre that security became a concern, whereas before, school violence was more localized in a particular

school zone (Trump, 2009a). Schools have to be proactive in protecting students. A Texas school district has allowed educators to carry concealed weapons in the classroom for 10 years without any incidents (Murphy, 2014). This implementation was designed to prevent massacres such as the Columbine shooting.

Prior to Columbine, Robinson and Fuller provided a pamphlet in 1996 titled “How can we make school safe for children?” This pamphlet provided information on how schools could address safety issues where educators could be taught alternative skills in dealing with violence, how to deal with gangs, and how to monitor visitors. The pamphlet also suggested training to be given to bus drivers on how to manage and control ranting students. The most important part of the pamphlet was providing educators with crisis management and violence training.

A “Crisis Response Box” guide was created by the California Department of Education in 1999 to assist with emergency responses on school property. In this guide, there are survival kit items and instructions that schools needed during the time of crisis such as school maps, aerial photo of schools, the layout of the school, blueprints, school roster, master keys, fire alarm procedures, instructions on how to shut off and sprinkler systems in the school. The kit also includes student identifications, first responders’ phone numbers, and evacuation locations, rosters of students with special needs, emergency first aid kits and lists of available resources. This kit should be readily available in times of crisis and must remain updated at all times since some of this information may change from school year to school year (Robinson & Fuller, 1996).

In order to prevent incidents from happening in the school, the school board and administration in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma added to their student code of conduct to prevent students from engaging in certain acts such as forbidding students from pointing a finger at another student or using the saying “I could just kill you,” due to a recent shooting incident that took place (Heck, 2001). The school system wanted to be proactive in preventing violence that may take place due to such suggestion of harming another student. Those students that did not follow the rules, would be suspended and referred to psychological evaluations to ensure that they do not have any mental issues. If schools are proactive in deterring or resolving any issues without violence, it will make the school house environment safer and more conducive to learning.

David Thweatt, superintendent of Harrold School District in Harrold, Texas, which allows educators to carry firearm, stated “If you can stop violence in its inception, you have an obligation to do that” (2008). Allowing educators to carry firearms helps deter violence from schools (Ward, 2013). Arming educators is a measure that can be controlled but Kenneth Trump, President of National School Safety and Security Services, insists that educators focus on teaching and not safety measures of carrying a firearm (Trump, 2014).

Most violence that has occurred in schools comes from students attending schools. Minogue, Kingery, and Murphy (1999) provided information before the shooting in Columbine on ways to evaluate violence with young students. They indicated that due to the complexity of the information received, understanding why violence exists was very hard to determine. Data that would need to be collected and analyzed must begin

with a purpose and address those students involved. Information collected must meet the needs of the schools, the school system, and the local community knowing that every school, school system, and community is different. Providing a standard security plan for every school to utilize will not work because all have different variables that affect security. Minogue, Kingery, and Murphy recommend that security measures should address the needs of the schools and focus on ensuring that everyone involved is aware of major incidents that could occur in order to plan better (1999). Training is a necessity in making sure everyone knows what to do in a time of crisis.

A Colorado state representative who survived the Columbine massacre is an advocate of arming educators because he believes that it might prevent another major tragedy from happening again (Gutowski, 2015). Training educators how to deal with intruders while being armed will provide that additional safety measure needed in the school system.

The state of Texas addressed student behavior in 1995 through the Texas legislature and revised the Texas Education Code. All schools in the state had to create a plan that would remove students who were misbehaving severely while in school. The goal of the school system was to provide safety for educators, students, and the community (Texas Comptroller (Keeton Rylander), 1999). Senate Bill 1724, passed by the Texas Legislature in 1999, mandated that school systems provide information to the public regarding violent incidents that occur on school property. In addition, a security measure plan had to be included in the annual school plans. When schools were able to control and provide proper safety for students, the programs within the school were

successful according to The Texas School Performance Review (TSPR). With the concern of protecting students on the rise, Texas is not the only state looking for avenues to provide safety. Florida is considering proposing a bill that will allow educators to carry concealed weapons on school campuses in order to provide better safety for students (McGrory, 2015).

The state of Texas required that the TSPR distributed documentation to other schools in the school system in order to provide better safety for students. Due to the efforts of the state of Texas education code, violent crime rates have declined 50 percent between 1992 and 2003 (Limbos, 2008). Efforts like these are needed to address the violence that is likely to occur in the schools. A plan is needed to address several situations that could possibly occur in the schools while students are attending, such as school shootings and other emergency situations. Texas has implemented the “Guardian Plan” which uses educators who are hand-picked and trained to confront intruders. The school districts are responsible for the training and payment of handguns and ammunition for educators to utilize if necessary (Ward, 2013).

School safety after Columbine. The Columbine shooting brought forth many changes to school safety plans. Many were surprised that the shooting was organized and planned by several people (Gary, 2009). Based on the shooting and lessons learned from the Columbine shooting in 1999, schools created plans and security measures to prevent such incidents from happening in their schools. In the state Senate Education Committee, a bill was proposed that would allow educators to carry firearms on school property to better protect students, especially those schools in distant locations where it would take

law enforcement longer to respond to a crisis (Associated Press, 2014). Throughout the United States, many school administrators realized that they were not prepared for such crises and began to review and organize the procedures to provide safety for their students. Security measures were created and tested routinely to keep faculty, staff, and administrators prepared for emergency actions.

States such as Oklahoma, Indiana, and Colorado have legislative bills signed allowing educators to carry firearms on school campus for those who have completed the required training as mandated by their school district (Hawkins, 2015). The School District of Nobile County in Indiana believes that allowing educators to be armed is cost effective and that saving one life is worth arming educators to protect and provide safety for students (Runevitch, 2013). Colorado has followed suit in allowing educators to be armed since the Columbine massacre to prevent another tragedy and many school districts in Colorado are doing whatever it takes to provide safety for students (Ferner, 2013).

Neiman and Hill (2011) from the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) mention that 41 percent of school systems have plans in place in case the threat level of the United States increases to code red, which is occurs during terroristic threats. On average, over 50 percent of the schools that were surveyed rehearse their plans in regards to school shootings. Since the Columbine shooting, schools have more tolerance and understanding on how to address security measures (Trump, 2009a). The Columbine incident not only alerted public high schools, it also alerted colleges and universities in reviewing and preparing their emergency plans (June, 2007).

School shootings are a tragic situation that no one wants to happen and they affect everyone in the community. Shootings in Philadelphia, New Mexico, Colorado, and Connecticut have each state considering their approach to addressing violence in the schools and each state legislator considering arming educators as a means to provide that security needed to address violence and protect the employees of the school system (Chen, 2015). There are 18 states that allow educators to carry firearms on school property as long as they have permission from the school system and there are little restrictions in carrying the firearm (Huff Post Education, 2014).

Even though security measures were reviewed and planned, schools did not rehearse or continue to update protocol periodically (Trump, 2010) due to a change of focus on ensuring the students were to score high on certain tests administered by schools. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted to ensure the students, regardless of learning level, were pushed through school. While this became the focus, security measures were not effective and schools' faculty, staff, and administrators became less aware of protocols in emergency situations. Only after crises developed did schools review their plans to ensure measures were in place in case something horrible befell the school district location (Austin, 2010).

Most schools become relaxed due to a low crime rate in the area or the need to review plans, therefore, putting security measures aside. Though the federal law does not require schools to have and implement security measures (Trump, 2010), many states mandate schools to have emergency plans in place in case of any crisis that may take place. Trump's study indicates that only 25 percent of schools work with the local

responders when conducting training for emergency situations. Working with local responders would reduce concerns with arming educators. Some lawmakers argue that arming educators would endanger local responders, but if training was conducted on a regular basis, this would not be an issue (Mitchell, 2014).

Not only do schools need to have solid security measures in place, they must also have good working relationships with other entities to ensure that things go smoothly during the time of crisis. It is alarming that only 39 percent of school employees have worked with other entities during emergency crisis. Training is essential to ensure everyone knows his or her role. The U. S. Department of Homeland Security provides instruction on how schools can go about establishing an Incident Management Team (IMT) and suggests ways for schools to utilize all available resources while implementing plans to combat emergency crisis.

On the 10th anniversary of Columbine school shootings, the National School Safety and Security Services (2009) reported school alertness was included in the survey. The survey results revealed that schools officials were more proactive and more involved in adjusting security measures because they noticed that the plans created still had gaps and needed to be adjusted to provide better safety for students. Between 1974 and 2000, students who displayed certain behaviors such as depression were the ones committing violent acts at school and informed someone else prior to committing the violent act (Khardaroo, 2009). It is important that schools make sure all security measures are taken to address issues as such.

In the wake of the Columbine shooting in 1999, most school districts in the United States developed a crisis plan to prepare for similar events; however, the bombings of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and other violent events in the country deterred that focus, thus the level of planning and preparedness in school decreased (Neiman & Devoe, 2009). The National School Safety Center (2004) stated that no United States school had been a target of an international terrorist attack, but they could be considered viable targets for several reasons. Those reasons included the fear and panic that would ensue if a school was attacked and that an attack could promote the terrorist group's reputation. In addition, about one quarter of the nation's population attends school daily. Schools are considered a symbol of America's freedom. Schools are relatively easy targets because of their accessibility and an attack on a school would result in a large media coverage that would be seen by everyone in the country. The U.S. Department of Education (2003) informed educators that they needed to add the possibility of terrorist attacks to the safety plans of schools knowing that this would stretch the ability of schools to meet the needs of the students and community.

The office of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the National School Safety Center (2004), indicated that educators needed to take precautions against terror attacks and school violence. As a result of the September 11th terrorist attacks, school educators in the United States became more aware that terrorism may take many forms and may strike anywhere in the United States at any time. School educators need to augment their safety plans to include terroristic attacks and to include the resources and contacts with local first responders to be able to deal with those situations. The National School Safety

Center (2004) stated that once safety plans have been developed, they need to be practiced to make sure they are viable and effective within the school setting and with first responders. They also conveyed that training should occur on a regular basis with new personnel being involved as soon as possible.

The U.S. Department of Education (2003) released the document *Practice Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. This document was a direct result of September 11th and indicated that school educators needed to address key safety issues in four phases: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Information was given concerning a needs assessment of the current situation including the buildings and its access and moved to being better prepared for possible incidents. It focused on how to respond if they occurred and finally how to recover from the situation and attempt to resume normally.

Gainey (2009) reported that schools are not too different from corporate America because a retreat from actively updating crisis plans is mirrored in the corporate world. After September 11th, it was also reported that significant decreases occurred in crisis training for key personnel. As a result, corporate and school personnel did not receive the ongoing training they needed to identify potential threats. Gainey (2009) also emphasized that corporate and school administrators do not consistently monitor their organizations to determine if areas of vulnerability exist that need to be addressed in the crisis plan. The proliferation of computers has given most people access to the internet and increased their desire for immediate information. Gainey recommended that schools have a web site that is prepared in advance with the information the public needs to know for several

different crisis scenarios. The website could be activated in minimal time to provide information to the community along with predetermined emails that may be distributed to all of the student's parents.

The concept of adding police officers or school resource officers who carry a weapon on the school campus has become an important issue in education especially after the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary according to Pack (2012). Ujifusa (2013) reported that 10 years after the shootings at Columbine, 47 percent of schools across the United States began training officers or improving the training of existing officers; the same could be true to arming educators. In addition, 27 percent of the schools armed officers with more lethal weapons such as tactical rifles and 22 percent equipped their officers with soft body armor or tactical armor. Trump (2010) reported that there has also been an increase in the number of safety audits involving undercover officers testing the security of school campuses. The outcome of those audits revealed that the schools were not as secure as people perceived when observed by trained personnel. Two Nevada lawmakers suggest that arming educators was something worth considering to provide safety for students while attending school on any school campus (Schwartz, 2012).

The shooting in Newtown, Connecticut was one of the deadliest cases of school violence in recent United States history and focused everyone on how effective schools are at keeping students safe according to Hunter (2012). Melia (2013) reported that the school had followed the normal safety protocols of locking the doors during school hours and checking visitors into the school with a buzzer at the main entrance. The school had just conducted a lockdown drill a week before the shootings. Melia stated that some

parents admitted that prior to the shootings they had seen problems with the security at the school and thought it could be better. Those parents also never thought a shooter with a semi-automatic rifle would break into their school and shoot students, faculty, and staff members.

Per the National Conference of State Legislatures (2015), over 30 states in 2013 considered training and arming educators in their schools. In March 2013, South Dakota became the first state to pass a bill allowing educators to carry concealed weapons in schools. Six other states followed also allowing educators to carry concealed weapons if approved by the school district. Each of these states follows their gun laws and governs the requirement and policies of training and arming educators.

In the spring of 2013, Connecticut passed several additional safety measures that focused on making schools more secure according to (Melia, 2013). Vail (2013) reported that school boards needed to have schools look at their safety plans and review them at least every two years. He stated that the safety plans had to be viable and not just on a shelf to meet a requirement. Kauffman (2012) reported that the fervor over Sandy Hook sparked the National Rifle Association (NRA) to develop a study that would encompass training and arming school personnel or putting more police on school campuses to increase safety. The NRA also suggested that at least one armed educator should be trained and on campus at all times to assist with better response time in dealing with attacks if schools are not budgeting to add human resource officers (Fram, 2013).

Current safety endeavors. Dubois (2013) reported that Grant Acord, a teenager in Oregon, was inspired by the Columbine shootings which prompted a plan to bomb his

high school. The District Attorney said police found six bombs in a secret compartment in his bedroom. Acord had written plans and a timeline for the attack which were to involve detonating pipe bombs, Molotov cocktails, a Drano bomb, and a napalm bomb. No bombs were found at the school and Acord would not divulge a specific date for the planned attack. Khandaroo (2012), reported that one of the students in a Utah bomb plot took his inspiration from the Columbine shootings and contacted the principal of Columbine High School requesting an interview reportedly for his school newspaper. A classmate reported to a school administrator that he received a text message asking if whether he would stay home from school on a particular day if he was told to do so. Investigations by the police reported that months of planning had gone into the plot to set off a bomb during an assembly and then escaped by stealing an airplane. William Pollack (2001), a Harvard psychiatry professor, told Khandaroo that Columbine is like a rite of passage that moves the student into the arena of violence from a state of just thinking about performing a violent act at his or her school. In Dr. Pollack's book *Real Boys Voices*, he identifies the inner thought process that young boys experience and how they overcome their fear and want acceptance from society.

School plans need to involve a representative from all groups in the school where they garner input for the development of a comprehensive plan that will meet the school's needs according to Kennedy (2011). The involvement of every group in the school system will enhance the plan's effectiveness and the result will be something that can actually be performed by all of the school's employees. The members of the faculty and staff may possess valuable expertise that can assist when a crisis occurs. Their expertise

may be based upon what they teach or the students they come in contact with during the day. Some specialists, like school counselors, fill a unique role that can assist students during and after the crisis as they face the psychological effects from the event.

The National School Safety and Security Services (2009) conveyed that in most instances, office personnel get the phone call with a threat and then pass the information to the school administration. They also indicated that office personnel should have a checklist of information they need to garner from any caller that they perceive is calling in a threat to the school or students. Also they indicated that because custodians are in the buildings early, during the school day while students are in class, and in the evenings, they should be trained to look for things that are out of place from the normal operation of the school as well as to notice people that do not belong in the buildings or on the school grounds and report those intrusions to the school administration.

Aspiranti, Pelchar, McCleary, and Bain (2011) reported that support services should also be involved in the production of a school crisis plan. Food services, for example, will be the ones called upon to provide food to everyone when a shelter-in place crisis develops. Also a representative from the transportation department's bus drivers should be involved because bus drivers have the initial contact with students early in the morning and are the last members of the school personnel many students see at the end of their day. Merriman (2008) reported that parents can be very helpful in a crisis situation if they are aware of what is occurring. They want to know the risks to their children and understand that the school is as prepared as possible to provide a safe environment. They

want to be involved in the communication scheme prior to any crisis and receive a full and timely explanation when the crisis has concluded.

According to Birch (2013), intruderology is a recent endeavor that school districts are utilizing to prepare employees for active shooter situations. He also reported that 27 Houston area school districts and first responders attended a training session at the Harris County Department of Education on August 6-7, 2013. The training was an expansion of Homeland Security's Run, Hide, and Fight system and includes Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) four phases of emergency management, prevention-mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Participants were taught to use extension cords or belts to secure doors, to cover door windows, and to utilize desks and bookcases to barricade doorways. They were also taught as soon as possible to escape the situation, but if they were confronted by an armed gunman, they should grab any available projectile and throw it at the gunman and escape. Though this might be as dangerous, if educators were armed during the confrontation, there would be a possibility the gunman would flee.

Trump (2010) emphasized that crisis plans involve training and they must be practiced. A timeframe for practicing the crisis plan should be designated as a part of the plan. In some cases, it is impractical to hold a full safety exercise so tabletop drills are substituted. These tabletop drills can identify areas of concern and solutions to problems that may be resolved before the drill is actually practiced. The National School Safety and Security Services (2009) suggested tabletop drills can also be used after a real drill has been conducted to evaluate the results and determine what went well, what did not,

and what needs remediation. These drills can help the school administration evaluate the drill in slow motion for a better understanding of what really occurred. The observations and analysis can be used to make sure that next time the drill is conducted things run smoother and no one overacts when obstacles are placed in their path which are similar to what occurs if a doorway is blocked during a fire drill and an alternative route must be utilized.

According to Trump (2010), one problem that has been observed by districts that practiced their crisis plans is the incompatibility of communication. For example, the schools that had radios could communicate with other school officials, but they could not connect with the radios of the local police. Other problems are expected to surface as districts and schools practice their plans. The realization that problems can arise during the implementation of their plan should be a driving force for all districts to put their plans into action prior to an incident. Schools that did not practice or had not developed a plan will be at a strong disadvantage when a crisis occurs. Arming educators would require that communication is effective to avoid breakdown in command and control during a crisis.

Austin (2010) noted that a problem that all school districts and schools face concerning crisis plans is that people have become complacent as the September 11th terrorist attacks have faded from their memory. As a result of this attitude, people are not being prepared when a crisis occurs and they end up wasting valuable time trying to gather the materials they need while getting everyone to safety. The National School Safety and Security Services (2009) reported that schools need to budget funds and time

to make sure a crisis plan has been developed, kept current, and practiced on a regular basis with the outside community's safety entities with whom the school's personnel will work.

According to Neiman and Devoe (2009), school boards members have been involved in the development of crisis plans since the Columbine incident in 1999. Unfortunately, most of them have not asked their school superintendent to have the district and school plans updated to meet the changing needs of the schools and district. As a result, their plans do not mesh with the current day to day practices within the schools of the district. School board members must focus on the business of schools, which is to educate students, but they are also charged with the safety of students and need to be more proactive. The National School Safety and Security Services (2009) indicated that all schools and districts should develop plans to provide proper training through their staff development programs and to establish the time school stakeholders need to practice the implementation of the plan.

The National School Safety and Security Services (2009) reported that when practicing an evacuation drill, school personnel need to train for varied scenarios. One reason that this is necessary is because not all of the students are as mobile as others, especially those with disabilities. According to Dillon (2006), a tabletop drill prior to the evacuation practice should show the need for plans that meet the individual needs of all students. Even with planning, it may not be until the actual practice occurs that weaknesses in the plan are observed. Consequently, it is more difficult to solve problems as the crisis unfolds thus delaying and possibly putting students at risk.

Dillon (2006) reported that on September 27, 2006, a gunman entered a school in Colorado and took several female students hostage. The school had recently practiced a lockdown drill and the police officers that responded were able to move quickly to the classroom where the girls were located and deal with the gunman because of their familiarity with the school and the campus personnel. The regular practice of crisis plans can be very effective in assisting a school when a crisis occurs. Trump (2010) estimated that about 93 percent of schools reviewed their campus grounds, buildings, access portals and looked for potential areas where violence could occur. Every school needs to perform these audits of safety so they can prevent an incident.

NBC News (2013) reported that a gunman with an AK47 assault rifle entered McNair Elementary school on August 21, 2013. Michael Brandon Hill had approximately 500 rounds of ammunition and followed quickly behind an employee to enter the security doors at the school. He fired on officers who responded to a 911 call from the school's bookkeeper, Antoinette Tuff, who tried to calm him down as she conversed with the 911 operator. Hill told Tuff that he did not have anything to live for and was mentally unstable. After shooting at police, Hill eventually surrendered after encouragement from Tuff. Court records indicate that Hill had previously been sentenced to three years of probation and anger counseling for making terroristic threats. The 45th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools reported that those polled preferred to have schools expand mental health services instead of adding more armed police or security guards (Arroyo, 2013). The poll also indicated that screening

procedures, similar to what is utilized in government buildings, should be used in schools rather than hiring armed security guards.

Bickel (2010) reported that being prepared to respond also has other variables that need to be considered by the school administration. For example, the disabilities of some special education students may be difficult to address when practicing the safety scenarios. Timing with those individuals must be gauged and prepared for within the plan of response. Another factor is the campus design and the impact it has on security. Kennedy (2006) presented Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) as an approach to making the campus safer through design choices before the campus is built. The process involved showing how easily the building could be viewed from the outside, the access ports that were inherent in the building, the upkeep of the building, and the usage of plants or fencing to restrict access. School systems need to evaluate the design of their schools to ensure that it is designed in a way to be more secure (McLester, 2011).

Trump (2010) argued that schools need to update their plans and enhance their partnership with outside safety entities. School officials need to make sure first responders have updated floor plans and that all of the building is coded with each door having a designation on the plan and a door sign adjacent to the actual door. Practice by school personnel should be augmented by allowing the local police or their SWAT teams to set up practice scenarios that are carried out on school grounds in the evening, weekends, or summer.

Involving Parents and Community in School Safety

Merriman (2008) reported that parents can be very helpful in a crisis situation if they are aware of what is occurring. They want to know the risks to their children and understand that the school is as prepared as possible to provide a safe environment. They also want to be involved in the communication scheme prior to any crisis and receive a full and timely explanation when the crisis has concluded. The U.S. Department of Education (2003) produced the document *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. This document states that the first thing each school needs to do is to conduct safety assessments of every school building. Potential hazards should be determined and archived information concerning safety should be included. Brickman, Jones, and Groom (2004) reported that crisis plans, which are developed, should coordinate with local businesses and emergency personnel. They also conveyed that schools needed a policy for visitors and parents entering campus as well as people making deliveries. It should be reviewed to ensure that these visitors adequately keep the school safe.

Michelle Baumstark from Columbia Public Schools (CPS) said that Columbine caused the country to focus on safety in the schools. Experiencing September 11th, hastened the process and made security measures imperative. Columbia Public Schools had to change how they communicated with parents and the community after September 11th. They determined that how schools communicated with the community and parents needed to change so communication could be more thorough by letting each know how the schools were doing to keep the students safe. A CPS alert system was developed through text messages to inform families about emergencies and severe weather. E-alerts

were conducted using email to inform the community of cancellations and emergencies. A computer automated dialing program was used to deliver more detailed information to parents' telephones (Cooper, 2011).

According to Graham, Irons, Carlson, and Nix (2010), parents are aware that the leadership at their local school is working to provide their students a quality education. They understand that the leadership has to utilize the funding available in order to manage the many facets of the school. While parents may forgive low test scores, they will not stand for a school tragedy that could have been prevented by the leaders at the school.

Kenneth Trump (2013b) from the National School Safety and Security Services has developed an article that addresses 10 practical things parents can do to assess school security and crisis preparedness. Parents are told to talk with their child about the safety they perceive at their school. It is recommended that parents ask their children if they feel comfortable talking with an adult about safety concerns. The conversation with children should include addressing the possibility of arming educators, since it is becoming commonplace in some school districts. Preparing students for what could become a standard security measure could ease the concerns of the students and parents. Parents should look at how people can access the school and determine if people can easily slip into the school unnoticed. They should also find out if the school has a safety plan that is being practiced and if local first responders have been involved in the process. Additionally, they should determine if the employees at the school are receiving sufficient training to complete the safety plan. Finally, parents need to make sure they

follow the safety protocols at the school and support the faculty and administration with any safety initiatives that are established. If safety measures are discussed openly to include arming educators, it may reduce the concerns for all involved in the education field.

Human Resource Officers Presence in School Settings

Trump (2009b) suggested the presence of police in schools has been growing over the past decade. Initially, only large districts had their own officers, but many districts are now hiring off duty officers to work in their school buildings. Trump noted that some districts have brought in Human Resource Officers (HRO) to provide a security presence on school grounds. Finn, Shively, McDevitt, and Lassiter (2005) reported that HROs have to be trained to meet the needs of the schools, but they are not licensed police officers and cannot fulfill some of the school's possible needs. However, the involvement of the HROs in the classroom has been very effective and has improved the students' perception of security and police officers. In an effort to provide a safer environment for students, Finn et al., (2005) emphasized that having officers on the campus has been a source of controversy for some schools because students have the perception that the police are there to catch them doing something illegal and arrest them instead of providing security.

Police and HROs on campus. Kennedy (2003) noted that after Columbine there was an increase in budgets for school safety and within a couple of years, most school districts had funded changes to make schools safer for students, teachers, staff, and administrators. However when September 11th occurred, the emphasis on school safety waned as everyone focused on protecting the United States from a terroristic attack.

Individuals with the National School Safety and Security Service (2009) reported that since that time, the funding of school safety has changed many times and is currently looked upon as a luxury by some districts. Rivard (2004) reported that many districts have tried to reduce the budget impact by making one time purchases such as installing surveillance cameras instead of paying for security or police officers.

Ujifusa (2013) argued that police officers are trained and drilled on how to deal with encounters involving weapons. They are able to react to a situation with precision that results from continuous training. When HROs are hired, they need to be aware of the educational mission within which they will be working and understand that their role is to improve school safety (Kim & Geronimo, 2009). Ujifusa (2013) estimated that putting full time officers in every school would require 128,000 officers at a cost of \$12.2 billion dollars a year. That would be a costly enterprise, but in some communities, school boards may feel it is the correct choice. An alternative proposed by Ujifusa was to extensively train school personnel to recognize student behaviors that reflect the potential for violence and provide intense intervention to lessen the chance of violence.

Security cameras can monitor parts of the school that cannot be constantly observed by members of the police force or school administration (Kennedy, 2006). Eisele-Dyri (2010) reported that some districts that had police officers have been forced to reduce their number to meet budget cuts. For example, Indianapolis Public Schools reduced their police force by 23 percent as a part of \$27 million in budget cuts that were implemented across the district. Indianapolis Public Schools and others reported that even with the reduction in the police force, they felt conditions at school would remain safe.

According to Wheeler and Pickrell (2005), police officers who work in schools have increased the perception of safety for the many stakeholders. Their presence in the school, the ability to work with other police departments in the community, and the relationships they create with students are all facets that those stakeholders observed. Even though they are perceived as a positive force in schools, not everyone agrees that their presence has a positive influence on the students at the school. Wheeler and Pickrell reported that people felt the goal of schools was to educate students and prepare them for their future, but police officers have a different goal of law enforcement, which may place the administrators of schools in the middle. It may not be clear for whom the police officers should report to either the chief of police or the school administration, and to whom they should report suspected activities (Rosiak, 2009).

In fact, the American Civil Liberties Union recommends that guidelines be established for these police officers who may view their role as punishers rather than enhancers of the safety on the campus (Parker-Burgard, 2009). Thus, it is necessary for police officers to be trained to distinguish between disorderly misconduct in the schools and criminal offenses and this training must come from the parties that govern their duties, the school administration of the school's police department (Kim & Geronimo, 2009). Law enforcement officers do not always communicate effectively with school administrators to share information about school safety (Rosiak, 2009).

According to Cauchon (2005), the local police stated, "We learned from Columbine that time is not on our side. We can't sit back and wait for a SWAT team to respond while children are being killed" (p. 6). Jeff Weise killed his grandfather and

grandfather's companion, put on his grandfather's police-issue gun belt and bulletproof vest then went to Red Lake High School. When he arrived at the school, he went into a classroom and killed the teacher along with five students. He then left the room and walked around the school, shot into other classrooms, and shot other students and an unarmed school security guard. When the tribal police arrived, they quickly entered the school, confronted the gunman and shot him three times.

Wounded, Weise returned to the original classroom and shot himself. In this instance, the police had video surveillance which aided them concerning his location. In contrast, at Columbine, the police waited many hours before they made the decision to enter the building. Because of the surveillance cameras, access was inside the building and many people felt that delay may have cost the lives of additional children (Trump, 2009a). This is another reason to consider arming and training educators to provide assistance in combating any threats posed to the safety of students.

Pittman (2010) reported that schools all over the country have installed surveillance cameras that allow those inside and outside the school to monitor activities and aid the police. In their patrol cars, police officers can now log in to school surveillance cameras using a laptop computer that connects to the school district's servers. As a result, this access allows police officers to scan the cameras in a school building to determine the source of a crisis and, with aid of electronic floor plans; they can determine the safest way to enter a building.

Stone and Spencer (2010) reported that school police have become more involved in the tactical component of reacting to a school shooting. They know about the buildings

and can assist with a quick deployment of officers to handle the situation. They also reported that one tactical plan, Quick Action Deployment (QUAD), involved having four officers enter the building to try and stop an active shooter as quickly as possible. Fratt (2005) acknowledged that another less lethal component of police work has been the arming of many officers with Taser guns. Tasers could be used to stop a student from hurting themselves or others by delivering a high voltage shock; however, many communities have become concerned about the use of Tasers because they have not been fully informed concerning the planned use on school children. Too often, school districts have not provided enough information about the possible use of the tasers and how officers have been trained to use them appropriately. Consequently, many people could see there are reasons to tase a student about to commit suicide or shoot someone, but there are always gray areas within the context of any confrontation.

In Texas, 215 secondary principals were given a survey by Cheruprakobkit and Bartsch in 2005; they indicated three ways of dealing with school crime: (a) what the school did to counteract crime; (b) how they worked with outside entities; and (c) the positive and negative efforts to stop crimes on the campus. Another way reported by Cheruprakobkit and Bartsch to counteract crime concerned the use of metal detectors, but some people wonder if they are worth the money. Kennedy (2006) reported that some schools use detectors in the morning and when the students enter the building; they are turn off once school begins. This practice allows the school's personnel to detect weapons that a student may be bringing into the school. Kennedy also noted that shutting off the detectors after school has begun is usually done because the personnel manning

the machines are now needed in other parts of the school. As a result, the technology safety value is only as good as the coverage it provides and the manpower needed to make it effective. This part time usage, made many people felt the large cost for the metal detectors did not yield a good return for the taxpayers.

Gross (2013) noted that educators in Lubbock-Cooper Independent School District (ISD) decided to be proactive concerning school safety in the fall of 2013. They added officers to their district police department. Slaton ISD also added a police officer to the district for the first time. The small district with only four schools felt that the lone officer could move to any school when a crisis arose much quicker than relying on local law enforcement. Lubbock ISD also hired an additional police officer bringing their department to 11. In addition, they added security equipment to all campuses to augment the security kiosk which requires everyone to swipe an ID before they can enter the building. Lubbock-Copper ISD has also added buzzer systems to activate their external doors to limit the entry into the building. Dave Gilles, president of LCISD's board of trustees noted that they needed to do what was reasonable and more to ensure the safety of their students.

Relationships between students and on campus police. According to Booth, Van Hasselt, and Vecchi (2011), having police on the campus allows them to be involved in programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) and other new programs such as the Police Explorers. The officers who were involved in these programs established relationships with students who might want to share information concerning problems at the school. Those officers could take the initiative based upon information

they received and conduct their own evaluations of potential problems on the campus and then share them with the school administration. This ability to conduct investigations without the knowledge of the school administration and the reporting hierarchy, which requires police officers report to the police chief and not the school administration, strained the relationship of some campus officers with school principals (Arinde, 2006).

Some school administrators feel police officers need to work for them and provide reports concerning the students instead of sending their paperwork to the police department (Rosiak, 2009). These administrators feel that not allowing the school administration to have full access to what the police officers garnered from their investigation could be a problem (Arinde, 2006). Thus, school administrators need to have input concerning the hiring of police officers or HROs to create a better association between the two groups. During the interview process, the policies and goals for officers need to be fully discussed to avoid a misunderstanding later on the campus (Rosiak, 2009).

According to Stone and Spencer (2010), school officials have become more aware that violent acts do not occur in a vacuum at their schools. Too often, someone other than the attacker knew about the threat but did not report that information to school officials until it was too late. As a result, some school administrators, augmented by their security force, have established character programs explaining to students the need for a safe school and that everyone must be involved in making it a reality. Knowing the students and learning the school's culture could assist the police officers with identifying problems before they manifest themselves at the school (Kennedy, 2006).

Booth, Van Hasselt, and Vecchi (2011) suggested that programs like (D.A.R.E.) and Police Explorers show the students that police care about what the students do at school and in the community. Because the police officers are in the schools, some students feel they can talk with them because a relationship has been established in class. When students feel positive about HROs, they are more likely to give information concerning school safety to them (Rosiak, 2009).

Parker-Burgard (2009) reported that a small group of students and parents see those officers as a potential threat and that they are there to arrest them if they perform an illegal act. Even with those distracters, most students and school staff feel that the police presence is a positive factor that makes their schools a safer place to learn.

Arming of Educators

In 2002, Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modzelski stated that the Secret Service and Department of Education reported most school shooters were the subject of bullying or were persecuted by others. The report noted that evidence left by the attackers demonstrated the shooters' frustration and potential for violence. To counteract school violence, the concepts of adding police officers or human resource officers who carry a weapon on the school campus have become an important issue in education according to Stephens (2013). During the 10 years after the shootings at Columbine, 47 percent of schools across the United States began training officers or improving their existing officers according to Ujifusa (2013). At the same time, 27 percent of the schools armed officers with more lethal weapons such as tactical rifles and 22 percent equipped their officers with soft body armor or tactical armor. Trump (2010) reported that there was also

an increase in the number of safety audits involving undercover officers testing the security of school campuses. The outcome of those audits, conducted by trained personnel, revealed that the schools were not as secure as people perceived.

Bissell (2012) reported that firearms place children at greater risk based upon the larger number of firearms owned by people living in the U. S. compared to the other industrialized countries. This fact has encouraged the debate about gun control and it has recently been revisited because of the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary. According to Mihm (2013), there needs to be a discussion of what arming school personnel will mean to schools. Is doing so asking a teacher to add security guard to his or her duties?

Adam Lanza killed 20 students and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012. This incident sparked a major debate regarding gun control and safety for students (Keller, 2014). Allowing educators to be armed may have prevented or deterred some of the casualties. Implementing protection acts such as the Protection of Texas Children Act of 2013 allows the school board to elect educators to be designated as school marshals, allowing them to be armed with firearms as long as they have completed 80 hours of training and undergone psychological evaluation (Keller, 2014). These measures are taken to provide safety for students at all costs.

Providing training for educators is the key. Trump (2010) suggests that trained officers who have the experience dealing with active shooters may be the best alternative, but their cost may be prohibitive especially when dealing with a large campus where more than one officer is needed to adequately cover the facility. According to Trump (2013a), the incident in Newtown, Connecticut, has refocused Americans on the issue of

gun control and has made many people wonder if their school should have armed personnel. Educators are concerned about guns in schools and have pushed for drug and gun free zones, but now Americans are discussing putting guns back in the schools by arming personnel according to Russell (2013).

To determine if arming teachers will actually reduce school violence or cause additional problems, Board of Trustees need to consider many factors and determine the role of law enforcement in the school setting. Several states are following the suit of Texas in allowing educators to arm themselves to provide whatever means of protection for students and faculty (Maskaly, 2008). The state of Texas has been allowing educators to carry firearms as long as they are fully trained and qualified. States like Arkansas are considering doing the same if it means providing more safety for the students and faculty (DeMillo, 2013).

Why is law enforcement proximity important? Educators learned from the shootings at Sandy Hook that response time is critical in an active shooter situation. Waiting for outside assistance to arrive may take too long according to Baker (2013). Baker reported that Tuscarawas County Sherriff Walt Wilson felt that having someone on campus to confront the shooter could be very advantageous, because so much can happen in a short amount of time. New Philadelphia city schools in the Sherriff's jurisdiction were seeking funds to put four armed HROs in local schools. According to Foster (2012), an HRO was present at Columbine when the shootings occurred and traded fire with the students but then left the building to aid those who were shot. The trainings provided

today provide HROs with more skills and allow them to continue to confront the shooters.

The U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education in 2002 reported that most school shooting incidents lasted 15 minutes or less (Department of Justice, 2002). The study determined that it was often not law enforcement officers who stopped the shooting but someone else on the school campus. Many school districts are not located in a close proximity to law enforcement officials and this is part of the reason some schools have already armed teachers. In Harrold, Texas, according to Shah (2013b), teachers began carrying guns in the 2008-2009 school year. The ammunition they utilize is frangible, which means it will come apart when it strikes an object and will not ricochet. The policy change in Harrold was the result of campus shootings in other parts of the country and the fact that the nearest sheriff's office was a half hour away and the school was located very close to a major roadway. The district's personnel had to serve as the first responders to any crisis that they may encounter.

Superintendent David Thweatt felt the plan to arm teachers implemented in Harrold ISD would help to serve as a deterrent to a potential shooter according to Kauffman (2012). The Harrold Superintendent also believed that the utilization of surveillance cameras and restricted entry points were not sufficient and the school district wanted to do more and have the ability to confront an armed intruder.

The Associated Press (2013a) reported that supporters of the bill feel school boards, especially those in rural areas, need to have the option of arming personnel to

protect students and employees against violent attacks. A clear question to consider is the proximity of law enforcement to the school.

Clarksville High School developed plans to arm teachers and administrators in the fall of 2013 to assist if an active shooter entered the building according to DeMillo (2013). Preparing for active shooter scenarios, like what occurred at Sandy Hook, 20 teachers, administrators, and staff were trained to carry concealed weapons at school. After receiving 53 hours of training and \$1100 to purchase a weapon, Superintendent David Hopkins said their new plan was not just to lock doors, turn off lights and hope for the best, but to be prepared to confront an active shooter. The Arkansas attorney general halted the plan by stating that the code being used by the district to arm personnel did not apply (Associated Press, 2013b).

Other Arkansas districts, including Lake Hamilton, had been using that code for several years to train and arm a handful of personnel who kept guns locked away at school. The Arkansas panel that oversees registrations for security firms to have armed employees, who had previously given Lake Hamilton and other districts approval, voted to suspend those registrations in light of the Arkansas attorney general's ruling according to Lyon (2013).

Training of armed personnel. According to Rostron (2014), The National Rifle Association study released April 2, 2013 determined all U.S. schools needed to train at least one person to carry a weapon on campus. It was determined that 40-60 hours of training would be needed for each person at a cost of \$800 to \$1,000 per person. David McGrath (2012) reported that the training of additional personnel to carry handguns

would serve as a warning to potential suspects. Hiring a fulltime police officer at each campus would cost an estimate of \$80,000, while arming school personnel that are already employed would be more affordable to districts that are already facing financial burdens (Henry, 2013).

Not Arming Educators

Shah (2013b) reported that following the Sandy Hook tragedy, President Obama suggesting spending \$150 million dollars to add resource officers to school campuses; however, the suggestion was met with some resistance. Shah also noted that civil rights and education groups felt that adding more weapons to the campus was not the answer. Instead, those groups proposed focused safety plans, regularly scheduled simulation drills, concrete school safety teams, additional personnel to focus on student mental health needs, and enhanced building security. In addition, they stressed that adding more people with weapons could increase the violence and enhance a distrusting environment between staff and students. The 2013 PDK/Gallop poll indicated that 59 percent of those polled preferred to have schools expand their mental health services compared to 33 percent indicating they wanted more security guards hired (Arroyo, 2013).

Texas Senate Bill 460 provides that Texas teachers be given training in intervention strategies concerning students who show signs of mental health issues. This bill moves Texas away from focusing on treating those with serious mental health issues and refocuses on discovering and treating mental disorders before they have time to develop (Ura & Lai, 2013). Teachers, administrators, and staff will be trained on mental health intervention so they can recognize students who exhibit behavioral signs that are

consistent with mental disorders. In addition to training on mental health recognition, information will be provided that can assist school personnel when they notice a student displaying mental health concerns.

Russo (2013) argued that while the loss of one student in a school shooting is tragic, placing weapons in the hands of more people may increase tension and confusion within the school and community. Russo asked the following questions:

1. What if a police officer arrives at a school to find two persons pointing guns at each other and both claim to be school employees?
2. Can you truly teach someone all the tactical, emotional, and physical elements of shooting in a 20- or 40-hour course?
3. What message is being sent to students?
4. What if a student is accidentally shot or a student attempts to take away a weapon from a teacher and the gun discharges?

Poland (2012) emphasizes that in most school shootings, there were prior signs of psychological needs or bullying that were overlooked. The probability that an armed person would be in the right place at the right time to confront the shooter is limited. In lieu of focusing on arming personnel, Poland suggests that schools focus on regularly practicing comprehensive school plans and strengthening counseling services.

Fears about arming school personnel. Having armed personnel on campus would aid in response time; however, there is also the potential for increased liability and other harm according to Mihm (2013). Sewell (2013) reported on April 29, 2013, that when a crisis occurs that involves a student in a school, it is easy to have a negative

reaction and respond from an emotional standpoint. Looking at a crisis plan is the first response, and after the Sandy Hook tragedy, many people are looking to add more guns at a campus which could lead to an accidental shooting and place weapons in the hands of personnel who are not tactically trained to shoot in emergency situations (Stefkovich & Miller, 1999). It is critical to remember that guns are powerful.

Arkansas State Senator Jeremy Hutchinson, an advocate of arming school personnel, was invited to attend an active shooter training session at an Arkansas school district according to Stebner (2013). Hutchinson was given a gun with rubber bullets and allowed to participate in the exercise. During the scenario, he fired at a teacher who was confronting a shooter who had entered the building. In his role as a first responder Hutchinson thought he was doing the right thing, but now believes that it is tough when the police arrive and have to distinguish between who the shooter is and who the school personnel are if everyone has a gun.

Senator Hutchinson spoke to the National Press Club on April 2, 2013, and said it is also important to realize that while the presence of someone with a firearm will likely reduce the response time to a crisis, it is also not a complete fix of the problem (Examiner, 2013). Educators still need to develop sound crisis plans for appropriate responses. Thus, Flaherty (2013) urged that throughout the planning phases and implementation of drills and/or real situations, it is critical to spend time reflecting. Understanding what is needed to continue, what is needed to stop, and what is needed to explore are strong components in the development of crisis plans.

Eligon (2013) reported that employees who were going to be armed in Missouri schools received training from SWAT officers, passed a background test and drug test, and underwent a mental evaluation. These procedures would be done each school year. Providing training in the use of weapons does not prepare them for the physiological and psychological reaction to a life threatening altercation, but the yearly mental evaluation is the district's attempt to keep a check on everyone carrying a gun. It is one thing to train someone on a gun range, but it is completely different to place them directly into a combat situation.

The PDK/Gallop poll concerning public attitude toward public schools (Arroyo, 2013) determined that 47 percent of those polled disagreed with arming elementary school teachers and administrators. The poll also reported that 43 percent of those polled strongly disagreed with arming middle and high school personnel. If those who chose to disagree were added to those numbers, they indicate an overwhelming vote to not arm school personnel.

Summary

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I provide the introduction of the research. Chapter II provides a literature review that covers the topics. Chapter III consists of the methodology for this research. Chapter IV provides the results of the research and finally, Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to compare two school systems; one which allows educators to be armed and one that does not, to determine whether administrators and lawmakers should be considered arming educators as an alternative safety measure and to identify its possible impact on school systems.

This chapter contains the following sections: research design and rationale, methodology, population and participants, data collection, instrument and procedures, data analysis, ethical procedures, participants and their roles, role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and summary.

Research Design and Rationale

My overarching research question was if educators were allowed to arm themselves, would it assist with providing safety for schools. The research questions below were used to conduct this research.

RQ1: What safety measures are in place in your school to deter school shootings?

RQ2: How might allowing educators to arm themselves on school property assist in addressing safety concerns within the school?

RQ3: What impact, positive or negative, will arming educators have on a school system?

RQ4: What is the difference in having a human resource officer on a school campus versus arming educators?

An exploratory design was used to conduct this research since based on my review of the literature, there is little literature concerning whether arming educators is

beneficial to school systems. I compared two school systems: educators from Harrold ISD, which allows educators to carry firearms in school, and educators from Chickasaw City School System, which does not allow educators to be armed. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), exploratory research design is to find out new information, review and evaluate information from a different viewpoint, and viewpoints for future research (Robson, 2002). This research involved exploring actual occurrences in the real world that are shared by a group of people to determine the culture that they experience on a daily basis. This study allowed me to determine alternative measures for school systems to use in providing safety for schools.

Data were obtained from an online survey with questions about educators' views on school security and safety and reasons for having these views. I used survey data to determine common themes. A qualitative inductive approach allowed me to be open-minded and reduce my number of preconceptions concerning the topic and allow theory to emerge from the findings (O'Reilly, 2012). In addition, I reviewed security measures to assess the impacts of arming teachers on the school system.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is currently employed as a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructor in a school system. The researcher provides a safe environment for the students and assist others employed in the school system as needed. Another role of the researcher was to gather data from the research and provide results gathered in regards to the perception of participants in whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative means of safety and security for school systems. The

researcher was not in any supervisory role and did not influence the viewpoint of educators conducting this research.

Methodology

This exploratory qualitative case study compared the difference in two independent school systems; one which allows educators to be armed and one that does not to determine whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative safety measure and to identify its impact on the school system. The researcher utilized Harrold ISD in Harrold, Texas that currently allows educators to be armed and Chickasaw City School System located in Mobile, Alabama to determine if allowing educators to be armed is beneficial in providing alternative safety and security measure for the school system.

Data was collected via online survey. The survey addressed and examined the difference and similarities of the perceptions of educators and administrators arming themselves while in a school environment. The purpose of this research was to gather perception of educators in whether school systems should consider arming educators within the school system to provide additional means of safety or utilize arming educators as an alternative means of providing security to better protect schools from crisis situation that may occur during the school hours.

Population and Participants Selection

Harrold ISD population included 16 educators, two staff members and one administrator with a population of 110 students grades K-12. The sample population was

taken from Harrold ISD educators, staff members and administrator. Survey was administered to educators, staff member, and administrators via email for a total of 19 participants. All personnel were given consent forms, information concerning the confidentiality of the study, and an explanation of the study prior to the initiation of the research.

Chickasaw City School System was selected due to similar demographics and was aligned with Harrold ISD. The researcher considered a number of schools within the Mobile, Alabama area, but selected Chickasaw because of similar make-up in comparison to Harrold ISD. The population of the school selected includes 40 educators, two staff member, and four administrators with a population of 425 students. The sample population of selected school was educators, staff members and administrators. Survey was administered to educators, staff members, and administrators via email for a total of 46 participants. All personnel were given consent forms, information concerning the confidentiality of the study, and an explanation of the study prior to the initiation of the research. Although there is a cultural difference in demographics, the school systems are similar in the make-up of student body and number of faculty members. Neither schools have a dedicated human resource officer on campus and rely on safety protocols that are in place in case of danger.

Data Collection

The data collection consisted of the researcher administering a survey. The survey used in the study was procured from Survey Monkey. Throughout the process, the researcher kept track of survey responses and trends or common themes.

After the researcher received approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the survey was given to participants. The researcher described the study and how it will be used to determine the perception of educators being armed within a school system or district and then asked for participants to complete survey to gather information concerning their perceptions of arming educators. The survey contained 30 questions mixed with multi responses as well as explanation questions. Questions were focused on educators' perceptions to school safety and utilizing alternative measures such as arming educators. The researcher instructed the participants to choose the best response from the options listed for the multiple choice questions and to provide complete response to the explanation questions.

The incorporation of all the information gathered by the researcher into the study provided a comprehensive description of the perception of arming of educators from Harrold ISD viewpoint as well as Chickasaw City School System. The analysis and cross-reference of data sources allowed the researcher to better understand the perception of whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative safety measure.

Instruments and Procedures

In order for this research to be valid, it was important to have a solid method to collect data. Participants of this research were provided with survey questions that aligned with the research questions. Each participant received the survey and had 45 minutes to have time to provide an in depth response to questions.

During the research, information was gathered regarding the participants' demographic data such as gender, age, sex, teaching credits, and years of experience in

the education environment. Each participant was given a pseudonym prior to conducting the survey, a link to review data, if desired and was ensured confidentiality of research data. The survey was placed on Survey Monkey to assist with distribution of data collected from participants. Survey Monkey website assisted with securing and storing collected data from participants who completed the survey. All additional documentation that was not electronic, such as hand written data, was stored securely in a safe.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the study. The research questions served as a guide for the analysis to determine common theme. The stages of this qualitative study involved constant monitoring of completion of survey and looking at the normative and subjective realms according to O'Reilly (2012). Preliminary reconstructive analysis occurred as the researcher began to analyze the primary record and then began coding the data.

Theoretical coding was utilized to determine, if any, what educators' concerns are in dealing with arming educators in public high schools. Theoretical coding allowed the researcher to compare such themes as culture of fear, conflicting values, and current literature in regards to arming educators and what other solutions exist to provide the proper security measures to ensure students are safe while attending school. Exploratory analysis methods was utilized to review participants' viewpoints from descriptive data to abstract information, which may be used to provide a better understanding of the fear associated with allowing educators to be armed (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

Participants and Their Roles

Participants in this research were educators, faculty, and administrators. This research gathered data from participants who are currently in a school district that allow educators to be armed to view their perceptions on arming educators in the classroom as well as participants from a school system that did not allow educators to be armed in the classroom. Any participant that did not want to partake in the research was not forced to participate.

Issues of Trustworthiness

It is difficult to validate qualitative research, but the research was verified. The information from the survey was constantly compared to determine if common themes exist throughout the research. The data source was check for errors and the output of information was revisited. Data was check against the surveys. In addition, the researcher will write and bracket his own biases through the writing of an epoche.

Epoche

In this study, the epoche or bracketing of the researcher was as objective as possible concerning the perception of school security issues through setting aside any personal perception of school security measures. The focus was absorbing the perspective of the participants and working diligently to avoid the natural tendency to allow personal views to enter into the process and create unforeseen bias.

Ethical Procedures

Due to ethical concerns, the research structure considered the viewpoint of educators, faculty, and administrators. Purposive sampling addresses studying a particular

group; in this case the group would be studying the viewpoint of educators. Participants consisted of educators who have worked in different schools to provide a variation of views in regards to considering arming educators as an alternative measure to provide safety for students, faculty, and administration.

All participants in this research were adults over the age of 18 and had the choice to participate in the research. There were no known risks while conducting this research and it was explained to each participant that there will not be any repercussions for their participation in this research.

Each participant received a consent form indicating that all information gathered from the research will be kept confidential. Any files were kept in a secure location. Identifying information was removed prior to any data validation.

Summary

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I provides the introduction of the research. Chapter II provides a literature review that covers the topics. Chapter III consists of the methodology for this research. Chapter IV provides the results of the research and finally, Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to compare the difference in two school systems: one which allows educators to be armed and one that does not, to determine whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative safety measure and to identify its impact on the school system. This research provided insight on the views of educators regarding being allowed to arm themselves to provide additional safety for students, faculty, and administrators. I sought to gauge the thoughts, beliefs, and values of study participants toward school safety measures, particularly arming of educators.

I used an exploratory research design. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), exploratory research design is to find out new information, review and evaluate information from a different viewpoint, and viewpoints for future research (Robson, 2002). This research involved exploring actual occurrences in the real world that are shared by a group of people to determine the culture that they experience on a daily basis. This study allowed me to determine alternative measures for school systems to use in providing safety for schools. This study allowed me to determine alternative measures for school systems to use in providing safety for students.

This exploratory case study research focused on the viewpoint of educators in two school systems regarding arming educators. I also reviewed security measures to assess the impact of arming educators. Data were obtained from online survey. Questions concerned participants' views on school security and safety and reasons for holding these

views. Perceptions of Chickasaw City School System which does not allow educators to be armed compared to Harrold ISD which allows educators to be armed.

I used survey data to determine common themes. A qualitative inductive approach was used to allow me to be open-minded and reduce the number of preconceptions concerning the topic and allow theory to emerge from the findings (O'Reilly, 2012).

I sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What safety measures are in place in your school to deter school shootings?

RQ2: How might allowing educators to arm themselves on school property assist in addressing safety concerns within the school?

RQ3: What impact, positive or negative, will arming educators have on a school system?

RQ4: What is the difference in having a human resource officer on a school campus versus arming educators?

This chapter contains the following sections: research setting, demographics, data collection; and data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, study results, and summary.

Setting

To address the research questions, a survey was emailed out to 65 school employees at my two study schools. An opening coding method compared participants' responses to determine common themes. A total of 51 (or, 78 %) of participants submitted responses to the survey questions. The survey consisted of 30 questions. Participants had 45 minutes to complete the survey. Participants had no personal or organizational conditions that prevented them from partaking in the research nor were the participants influenced by me in a manner that would interfere with the results of the

research. Participants were able to complete the survey at their leisure and in a setting that was conducive to them such as their classrooms or homes.

Demographics

The Harrold ISD study population included 16 educators, two staff members, and one administrator at the time of the study. Its student population included 110 students in Grades K-12. The survey was administered to a total of 19 teachers, staff members, and administrators via email.

Chickasaw City School System was chosen due to its similar demographics of teachers, staff, and administrators make-up and was aligned with Harrold ISD. Its population included 40 educators, two staff member, and four administrators and 425 students, grade level K-12. The survey was administered to educators, staff members, and administrators via email for a total of 46 participants. Although there is a cultural difference in demographics such as Harrold ISD being dominant in Hispanic teachers and Chickasaw dominant with African-American teachers, the school systems are similar in their make-up of student population and employees. Neither school has a dedicated HRO on campus. Instead, they rely on safety protocols that are in place in case of danger.

Questions 1-5 consisted of demographic questions that could only be answered with one response. Demographic data are displayed in Figures 1-5. Participants from Chickasaw were 68 % male and 31 % female while participants Harrold ISD were 33 % male and 67 % female (see Figure 1).

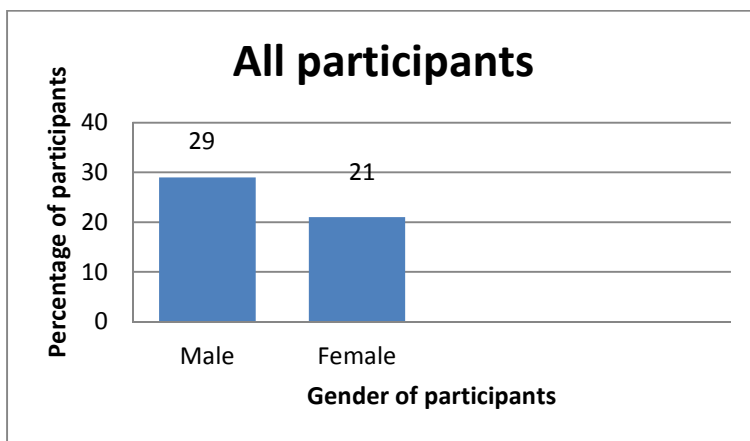
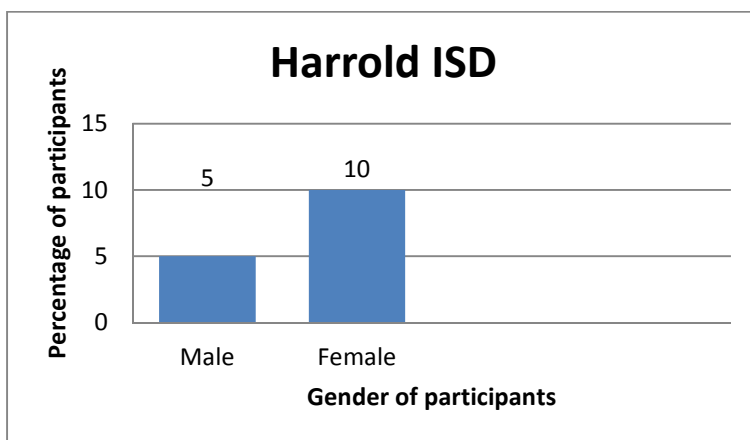
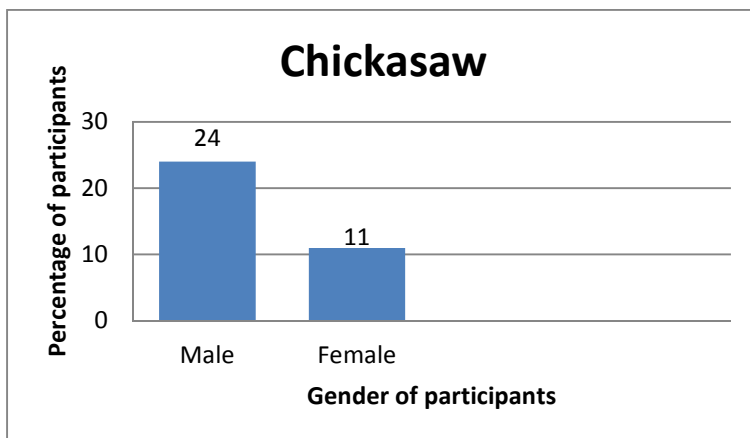


Figure 1. Gender of participants.

Between both schools, 58 % of participants were males, and 42 % were females.

Figure 2 represents the education level of each participant.

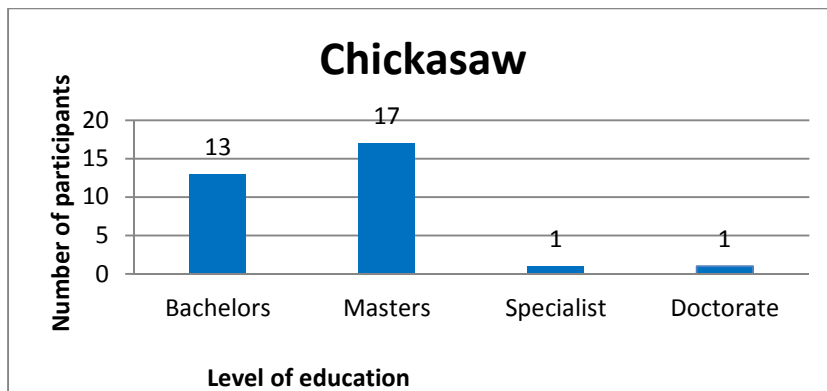
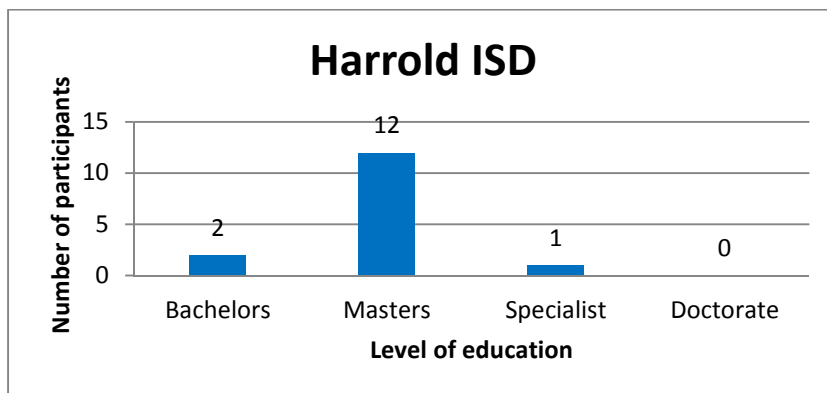
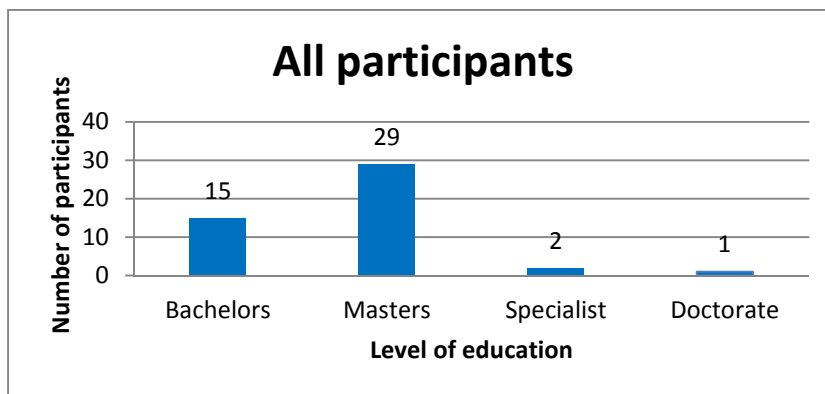


Figure 2. Level of education of participants.

Forty-one percent of employees have a Bachelor's degree; 53 % have a Master's degree with only one person having with a Specialist and Doctorate degree.



13 percent of employees have a Bachelor's degree; 80 percent have a Master's degree and only one Specialist



Overall, 32 percent of participants have a Bachelor's degree, 62 percent have a Master's Degree, .04 percent with a Specialist and .02 percent with a Doctorate degree.

Figure 3 displays the salary range of the participants involved in the research.

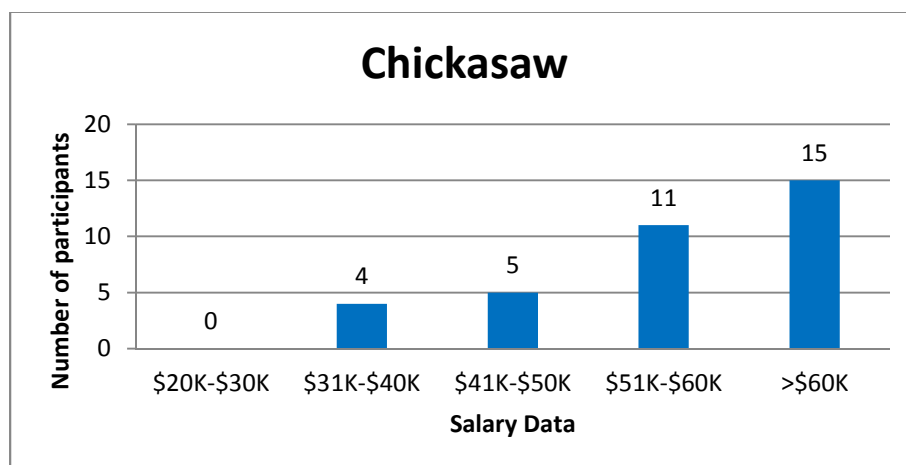
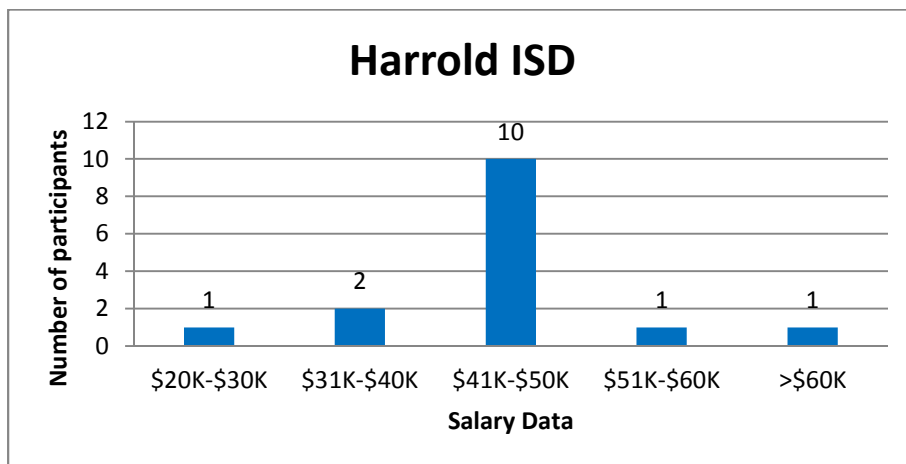
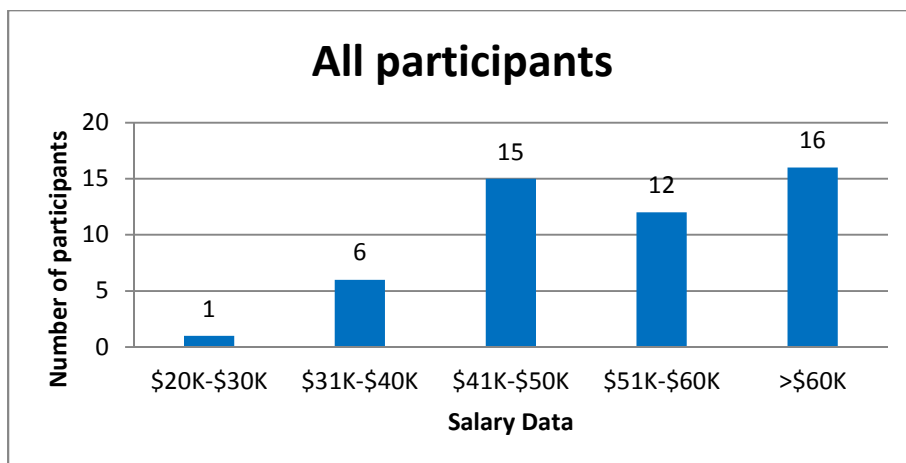


Figure 3. Salary of participants

No one employed made below \$30K. 43 percent of employees made over \$60K, with 31 percent making between 51-\$60K, 14 percent making \$41-\$50K and only 11 percent making \$31-\$40K



Unlike Chickasaw City School System, 67 percent of employees make between \$41-\$50K. Vast different in how money is distributed among the school system



Overall, 32 percent make over \$60K, 24 percent making between \$51-\$60K, 30 percent making between \$41-\$50K, 12 percent making between \$31-\$40K. Only one person making below \$30K.

Figure 4 shows the age of participants. There was only one educator or faculty member that fell within the 20-30 year categories. The vast majority of educators and faculty members were in the age range of 31-40 years.

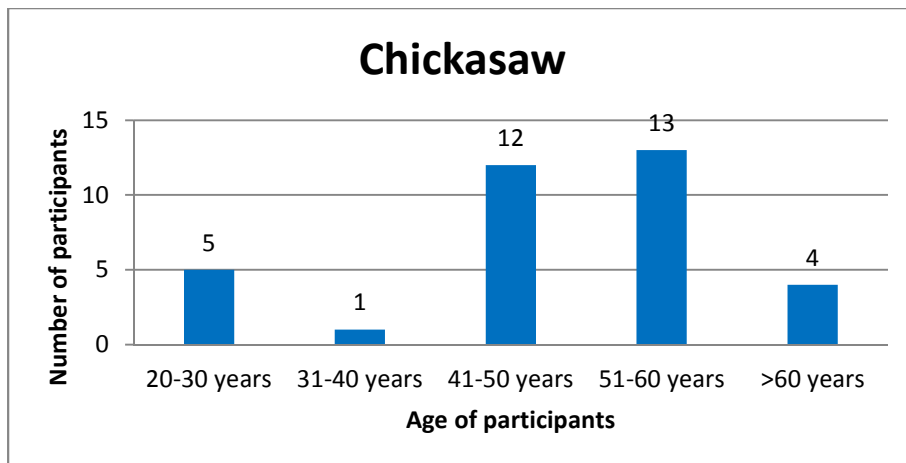
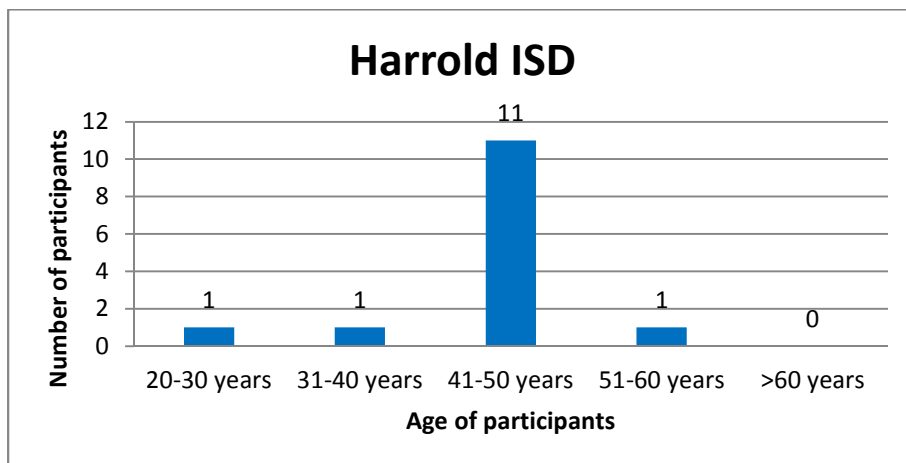
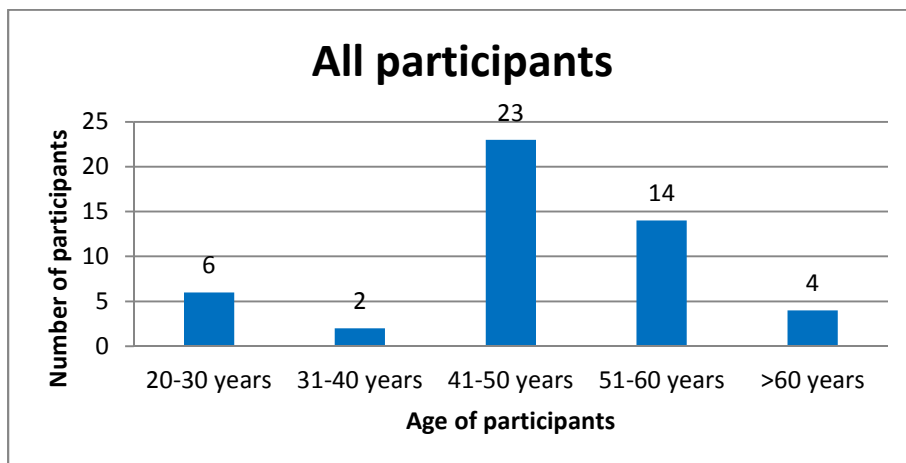


Figure 4. Age of participants

71 percent of employees were between the ages of 41-60 years.



73 percent of employees between the ages of 41-50 years.



74 percent of employees between both schools were within the ages of 41-60 years.

Only 12 percent of employees under age 30. This could play significantly in the maturity level in allowing employees to carry firearms on school campus.

Question 5 of the survey dealt with race of participant. Only one participant decided not to answer the question. Figure 5 provides a breakdown of the participants based on race.

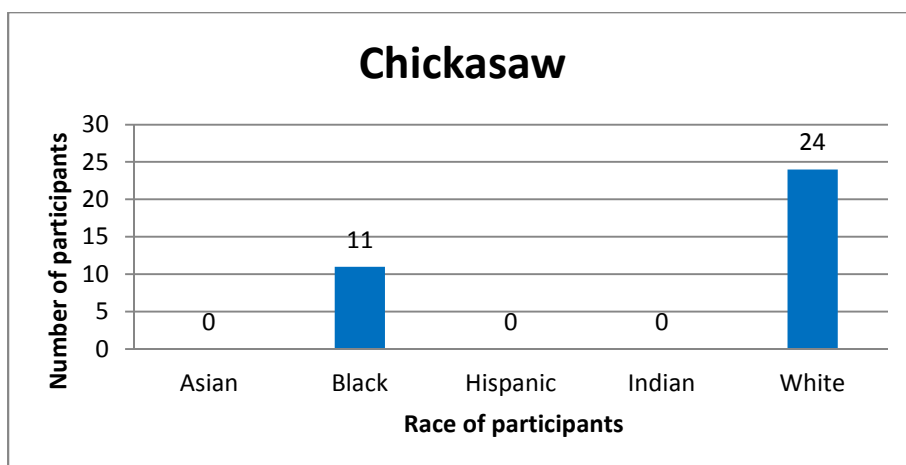
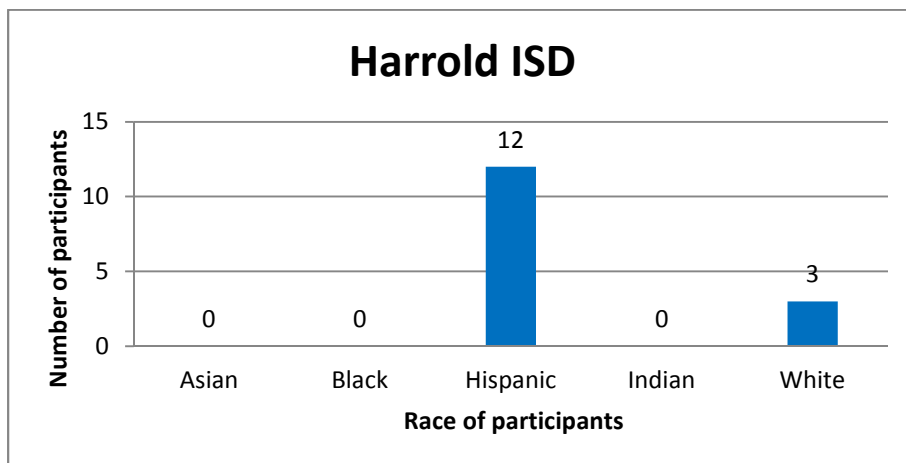
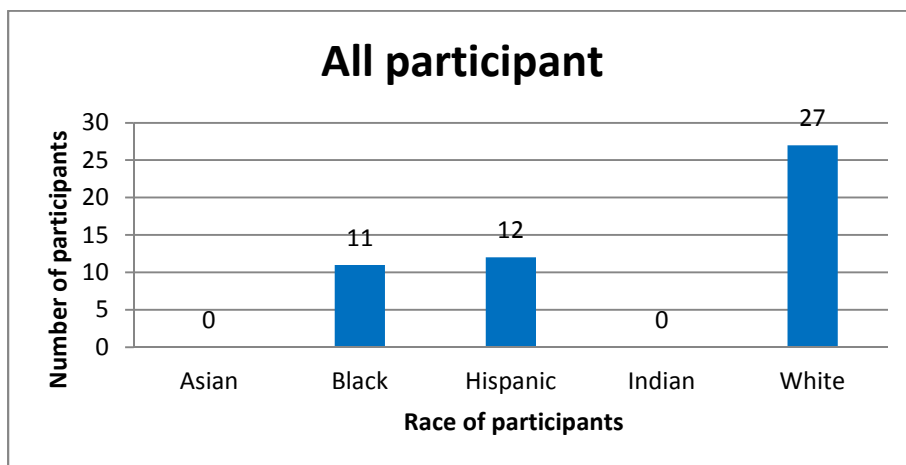


Figure 5. Race of participants

31 percent of employees are Black while 69 percent are White



80 percent of employees are Hispanic while 20 percent are White



Overall, 22 percent of employees for both school are Black, 24 percent Hispanic, and 54 percent are White

Data Collection

Data was collected from 51 participants. The survey was placed on Survey Monkey to assist with distribution of data collected from participants. Survey was emailed out by researcher from home to participants utilizing Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey website assisted with securing and storing collected data from participants who

completed the survey. The researcher received alerts from Survey Monkey when participants completed survey. Daily, survey monkey was checked to review the number of participants who took the survey to review common themes of results. The survey was open for seven days for participants to complete survey. After the seventh day, the researcher received 51 out of 65 surveys. Throughout the seven day period, the researcher recorded data to review and establish common themes that existed. All additional documentation that was not electronic, such as hand written data, was stored securely in a safe. There were no variations of data collections as presented in Chapter 3 as well as no unusual circumstances that were encountered while collecting data.

Data Analysis

The researcher read through the participants' responses to the survey to examine the data to move inductively from coded units to establishing themes and categories throughout the survey. The overwhelming majority of the 51 participants supported the notion of owning a firearm because it is a constitutional right. Participant # 6 stated: "I agree with the 2nd Amendment of the Constitution. Each individual of legal age, of sound mind, and without criminal past, has the right to own a firearm." When asked whether firearms should be carried to provide personal protection, participant # 8 stated: "This is a positive and negative. Citizens should be allowed to carry a weapon for personal protection; however, most people who do so are not trained and may inadvertently place themselves or the public in more danger than if they did not have a weapon". It was important to cross-walk those educators that own firearms to determine how they felt about allowing firearms into the classroom or in public high school.

Those participants that were supportive of allowing educators to carry firearms were placed in the supportive category. The supportive category was not all inclusive because not all participants agreed on firearms in public schools. A few participants agreed on owning firearms for personal protection but did not see the need to have firearm on school property.

Throughout the survey, the common theme was established that educators or faculty members need to be trained prior to carrying firearms on school campus. Participant #28 stated: "I believe that certain educators should have access to firearms at school. I don't think they should have firearms on them but have access to one if needed." Participant #24 stated: "I believe that school business would proceed as normal. The students may feel safer knowing that certain staff members are armed". There was a small percentage of participants (31%) that felt allowing educators and/or administrators to carry firearms would be more of a distraction and students would not focus.

About 34 percent of participants believe that it is a possibility that allowing firearms in public high schools would provide additional safety if training and background checks were conducted properly. Figure 6 displays coded categories to provide a visual of where participants stand in regards to firearms in public high school.

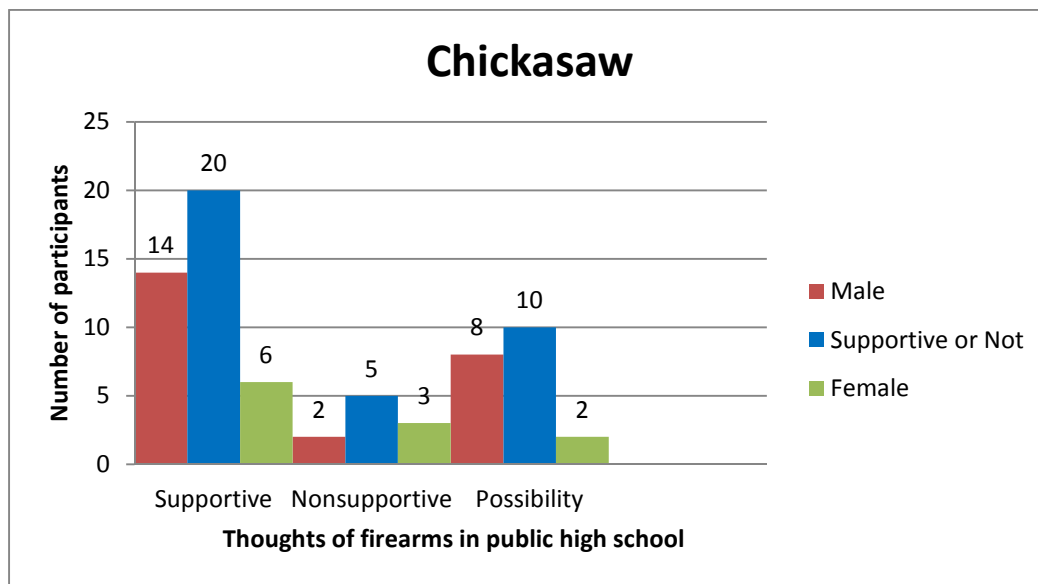
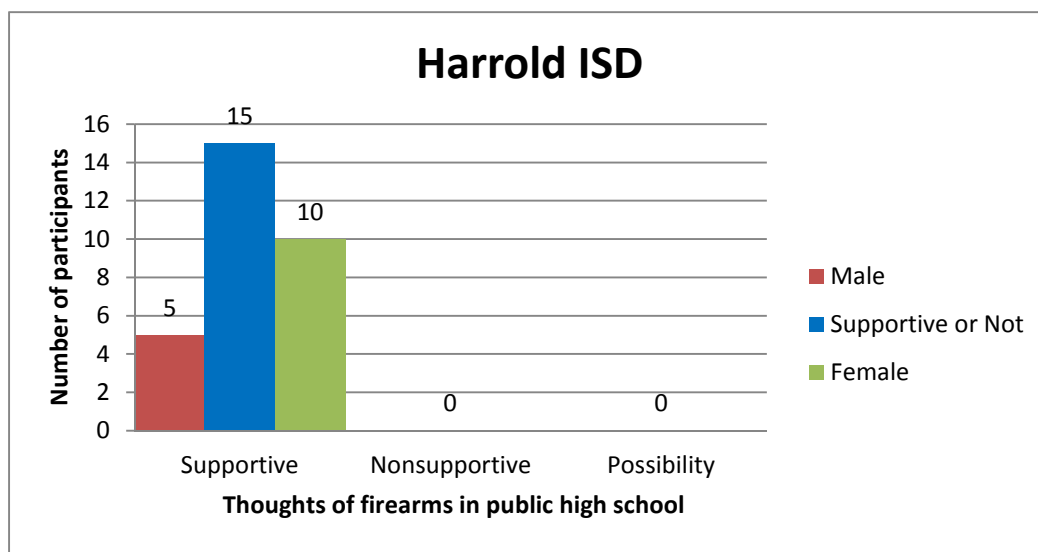
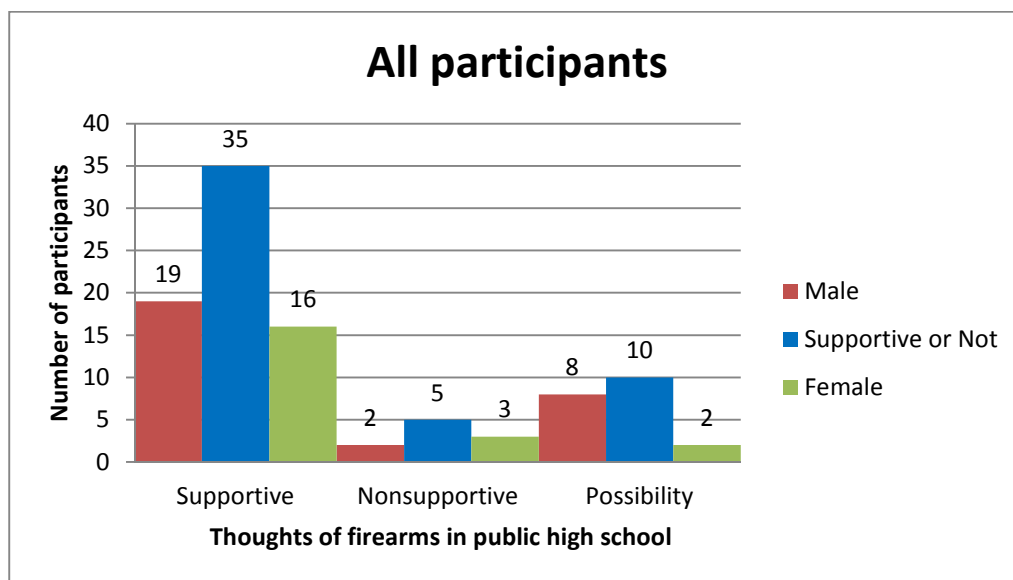


Figure 6. Thoughts on firearms in public high school

Of the 20 participants that supported the thought of firearms in high school; 70 percent were males while the remaining 30 percent were females. Non-supportive participant (14 percent) did not see a need for firearms while 29 percent of the participants were for it as long as proper training was implemented



100 percent of employees were in support of allowing firearms into public high school.



Overall, 70 percent of employees supported the thought of firearms in high school.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

It is difficult to validate qualitative research; however the research has been verified. The data source was checked for errors and the output of information was revisited. Data was checked and rechecked to establish common themes and understanding of participants' views. In addition, the researcher wrote and bracketed his own biases through the writing of an epoch. As discussed in Chapter 3, the approach used to ensure credibility of the data retrieved was the use of documents and survey provided

via Survey Monkey. The educator-participants' demographic information was gathered before each survey was emailed.

Transferability

Transferability focuses on whether the outcome of the study can be utilized within another setting or situation. The researcher used purposive sampling for this study, making this an incomplete sample of every educator within the United States, but sufficient to ensure rich data allowing for data saturation. However, characteristic of qualitative research, it is uncertain whether the findings of this study could be comprehensively applied to another educational setting. Furthermore, each school district considers what factors are most important when discussing whether allowing educators to carry firearms for that particular school district.

Dependability

Future researchers will be able to replicate this study to determine if allowing educators to carry firearms on school property provides additional safety for students and faculty. The research is reliable and consistent in how the study was conducted. The researcher attempted to take the information shared by the participants and to use the data that was deemed important and significant, allowing for credibility.

Confirmability

In this study, the epoch or bracketing of the researcher was as objective as possible concerning the perception of school security issues through setting aside any personal perception of school security measures. The focus was absorbing the perspective of the participants and working diligently to avoid the natural tendency to allow personal

views to enter into the process and create unforeseen bias. Additionally, to further ensure that researcher bias was not an issue, the participants were not known to the researcher.

Study Results

This exploratory qualitative case study compared the difference in two independent school systems: one which allows educators to be armed and one that does not, to determine whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative safety measure, and to identify its impact on the school system. This research provided insight on the perception of educators being allowed to arm themselves to provide additional safety for students, faculty, and administrators.

The findings for this study are reported by the four research questions below.

Research Question One

This question asked: What safety measures are in place to in your school to deter school shootings?

Both schools indicated similar safety precautions taken to ensure that the schools were safe for students and faculty. The only exception was that Harrold ISD allowed educators and faculty members to carry firearms which provided an additional safety measure. Participant #1 from Harrold ISD stated: “We are the first line of defense before law enforcement arrives; seconds count in an emergency.” Participants reported that safety measures taken in the schools include the following:

- Cameras are in place to monitor all perimeters of the school campus and certain parts of the school to include parking lots, hallways, and gyms

- Lock down protocol is reviewed annually. This normally occurs at the beginning of school year.
- Active shooter training is provided by local law enforcement officers. These are normally conducted mid-school year.
- Chickasaw City School System had a human resource officer on campus daily; however, he is sometimes removed from the campus to conduct other law enforcement duties when needed.

Overall, 82 percent of the participants that took the survey felt that they were safe on campus.

Research Question Two

This question asked: How might allowing educators to arm themselves on school property assist in addressing safety concerns within the school?

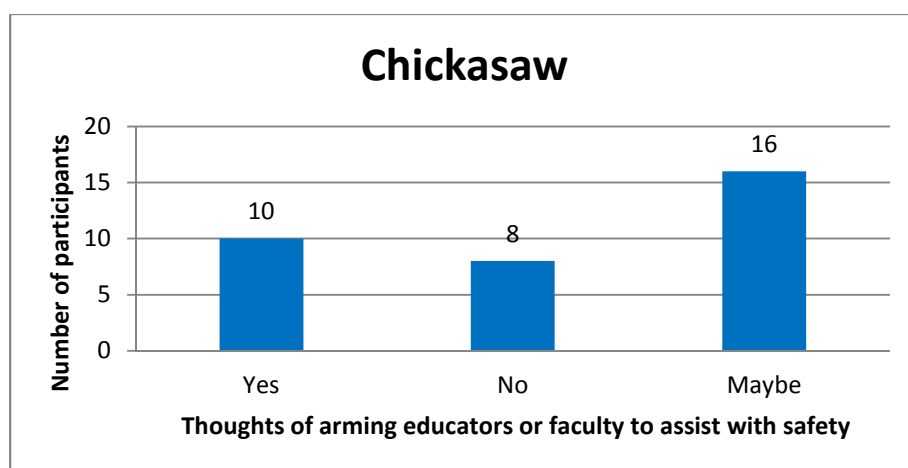
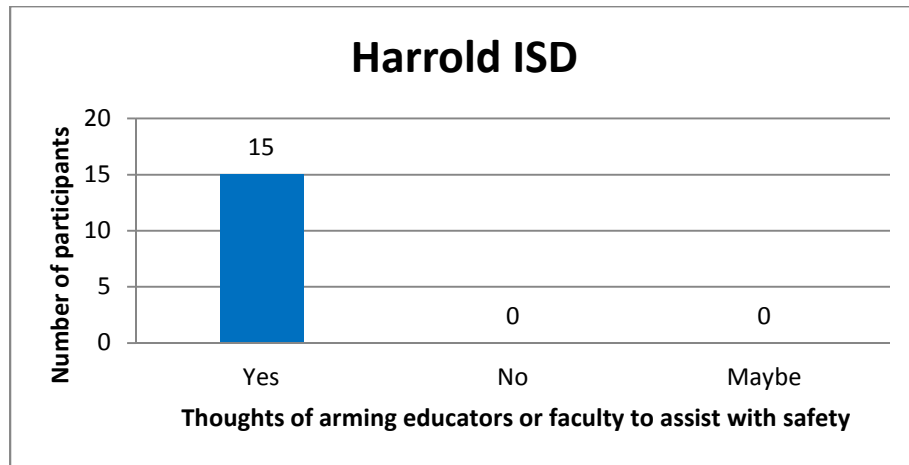
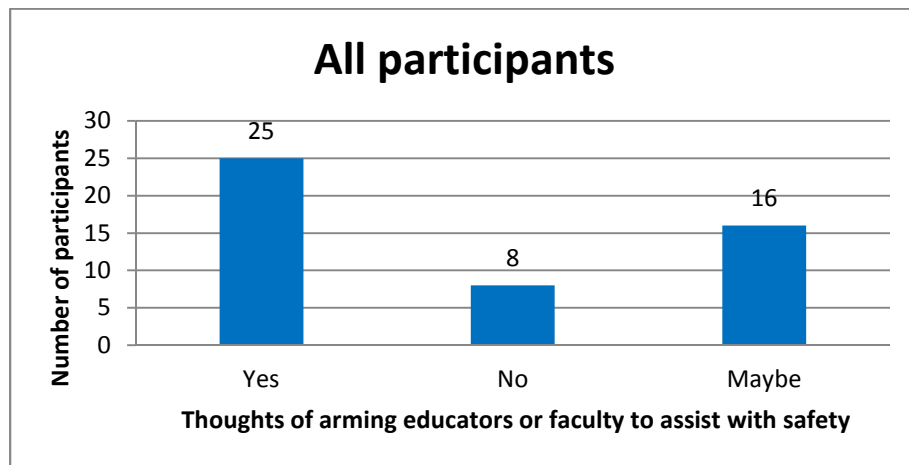


Figure 7. Thoughts of arming educators or faculty to assist with safety

28 percent of participants thought that arming educators or faculty would help with safety; 23 percent state “No” and the remaining 46 percent stated “Maybe” if a plan was implemented proper such as training and background checks



100 percent of the participants agreed that arming educators or faculty members would help with safety



Overall, 50 percent of participants believe arming educators or faculty would assist with safety in public high school

All participants of Harrold ISD agreed that arming educators would assist with providing additional safety for educators and faculty members. Participant #10 stated: “teachers that are known to carry are not a target.” Harrold ISD is in tune with the responsibility of providing as much safety to students while they are in their control. Chickasaw City School System were undecided in allowing educators or faculty to carry firearms with most participants indicating that as long as some sort of training is provided, they would be onboard.

Research Question Three

This question asked: What impact, positive or negative, will arming educators have on a school system?

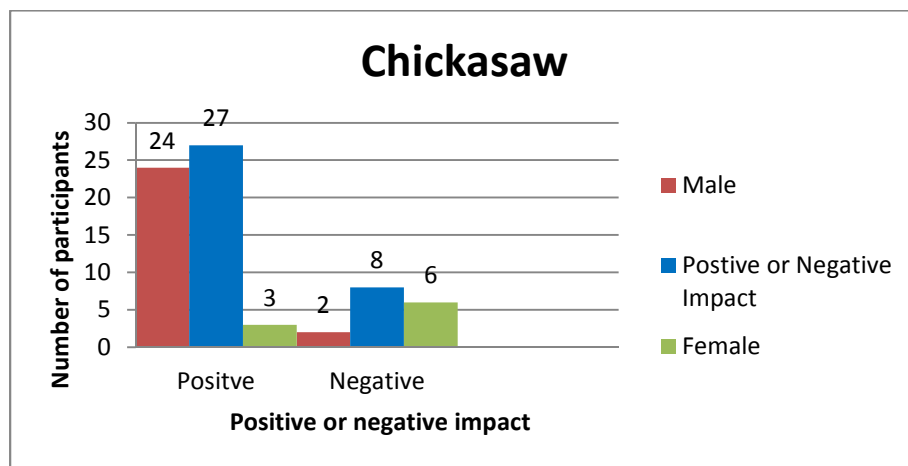
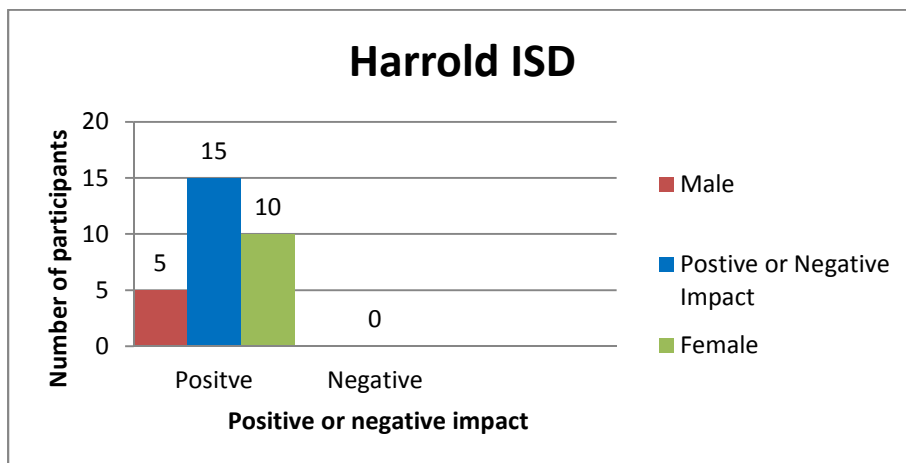
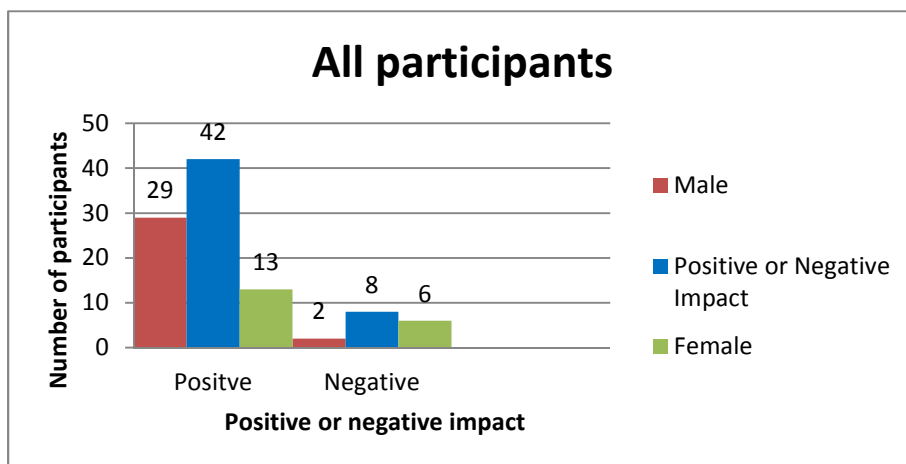


Figure 8. Positive or negative impact of school system

77 percent of participants believed that arming educators would impact the school system in a positive manner



67 percent of females believe that arming educators or faculty members would have a positive impact on the school system



Overall, 84 percent of participants believe that arming educators or faculty members would have a positive impact on the school system.

Overall, 86 percent of the participants that responded to this research question indicated that allowing educators or faculty members to arm themselves would provide a positive impact on the school system. Participant #36 from Chickasaw City School System stated: “Students and faculty would be safe in case of an active shooter.”

Participant #34 stated: “A school would be less vulnerable to a mass shooting incident if we could fight back.” All of Harrold ISD participants stated similar response in that they would be first line of defense for the school system.

Research Question Four

This question asked: What is the difference in having a human resource officers on a school campus versus arming educators?

Both schools indicated that while it would be nice to have a dedicated resource officer on school campus at all times, most school systems either cannot afford it or there is not enough manpower with the police agency to support. In the case of Harrold ISD, the school is located in a remote location, approximately 35 miles outside of the city limits. It is a small community, law enforcement is undermanned, and it would be difficult to have a dedicated human resource officer due to other responsibilities.

In the case of Chickasaw City School System, the school is located in a very large county and there are a lot of issues within the county that prevent them from having a dedicate human resource officer, such as, high crime rate, various shootings, and domestic issues that law enforcement have to react to. Currently, law enforcement responds to the school when needed. In responding to research question four, participant #3 stated: “It would increase the number of people able to respond in an emergency situation”; participant #27 stated: “It would be better to have an armed resource officer but sometimes they are not available”; and participant #36 stated: “I think they should supplement one another. One resource officer may not be enough.” Though having a

resource officer on campus would be nice, 37 percent of the participants felt that it would be ideal to allow educators/administrators to carry firearm while 45 percent were still undecided whether it was a good idea. Of the 45 percent that were undecided, it was mainly due to not understanding what training is needed to incorporate the policy.

Summary

Chapter 4 was an accumulation of educators and faculty members' perspective data from the survey used in this research. Each research question was answered by using the survey instrument and collecting data. Figures were used to provide a visual difference in the two schools utilized. Chapter 5 contains interpretation of findings, discussions, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative case study was to compare the difference in two school systems: one which allows educators to be armed and one that does not, to determine whether arming educators should be considered as an alternative safety measure and to identify its impact on the school system. As indicated in the survey results, the majority of participants favor allowing firearms in schools as long as proper training is conducted, personnel are screened, and psychiatric evaluations and background checks are conducted. This research provided me with insight regarding educators' perceptions of being armed as a means of providing additional safety for students, faculty, and administrators.

Interpretation of Findings

The primary research questions guiding this study were as follows:

RQ1: What safety measures are in place in your school to deter school shootings?

RQ2: How might allowing educators to arm themselves on school property assist in addressing safety concerns within the school?

RQ3: What impact, positive or negative, will arming educators have on a school system?

RQ4: What is the difference in having a Human Resource Officer on a school campus versus arming educators?

Many students, educators, and faculty members believe that their schools are not truly a safe environment for learning, according to Neiman and Hill (2011). There is constant fear that an armed intruder will come to the school and starting shooting students and anyone who is present on the school campus at that time. The loss of any life during a school shooting is especially critical because it has the common thread of children

being in harm's way (Johnson, 2009). The problem is that school safety plans are neither practiced nor integrated with local responders in many parts of the country, according to Trump (2010).

I included 30 questions on my survey instrument (see Appendix A). Using these questions, I sought to obtain data on the safety measures in place at each study school and participants' perceptions of safety in their schools. Survey data were analyzed using frequencies and coded for common themes.

Research Question 1 investigated what safety measures are taken at the schools currently. The participants provided similar responses concerning what procedures are taken by the school systems to provide safety on campus. These measures include

- Cameras are in place to monitor all perimeters of the school campus and certain parts of the school to include parking lots, hallways, and gyms.
- Lock down protocol is reviewed annually. This normally occurs at the beginning of school year.
- Active shooter training is provided by local law enforcement officers. These are normally conducted mid-school year.
- Chickasaw City School System had a HRO on campus daily; however, he is sometimes removed from the campus to conduct other law enforcement duties when needed.

Research question two asked the question of whether the safety concerns on the school campus would be addressed if educators were allowed to carry firearms. The

majority of the participants (47%) were undecided as to whether allowing educators to carry firearms would address safety concerns. Over 30 % of participants agreed that arming educators would help address the safety issues at their schools. Research question three considered whether arming educators would have a specific impact, positive or negative, on the school system. Overall, 86 % of the participants who responded to this question reported that allowing educators or faculty members to arm themselves would provide a positive impact on the school system.

Research question four addressed educators and faculty members' perceptions of the difference in having a HRO on school campus versus having an armed educator. Participants at both schools said that, while it would be nice to have a dedicated resource officer on school campus at all times, but feasible, in terms of economics or staffing, to do so. In the case of Harrold ISD, the school is located in a remote location that is approximately 35 miles outside of the city limits. It is a small community, law enforcement is understaffed, and it would be hard to have a dedicated human resource officer due to other responsibilities. In the case of Chickasaw City School System, the school is located in a very large county and there are a lot of issues within the county that prevent them from having a dedicated HRO.

Themes which emerged from the survey indicated that educators are not opposed to being armed as long as policies and trainings are put in place. There were some concern of which educators would carry firearms and whether students should be made aware that educators were armed. Based on the findings from this study, educators feel

safe but indicated that additional safety measures are welcome in order to prevent any serious incidents from occurring.

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations present in this research study. The size of the sample was a problem due to so many schools in Mobile, Alabama. The research is limited due to the following: (a) participants were taken from one school that allow educators to be armed and located 759 miles away from researcher as well as not all inclusive; (b) participants were taken from one school system that does not allow educators to be armed and not all inclusive; (c) the research is limited to a few educators, (d) not all participants responded to survey, (e) population for each school were totally different, and (f) demographic of school systems were culturally different.

Recommendations

This study concerned arming educators, faculty members, and administrators in public high schools as an additional safety measure to better protect the school system from unknown intruders. Since 2008, Harrold ISD has allowed educators and faculty to carry concealed firearms in their school. The option to carry is left to the individual and if they choose to carry a concealed firearm, they must hold a concealed-carry license and be approved by the school board to carry on campus. The idea is to prevent incidents like the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, to keep the schools a little safer, and to ease the minds of parents as well. Since allowing their educators to carry firearms, there have not been any incidents such as negligent discharges or accidental shootings. Harrold ISD has not had any incidents prior to implementing the option to carry but considering the

amount of time it would take for law enforcement officers to respond in the case of an incident, the superintendent of Harrold ISD did not want to take a chance of losing lives while waiting for police response. The school is located about 30 miles from nearest sheriff's department.

As with Chickasaw City School System, there are a lot of safety concerns with the school being an open campus. Though the school has cameras, the school is not fenced in nor does the school have a dedicated human resource officer on campus at all times. Allowing educators, faculty members or administrators to carry firearms could provide additional safety until law enforcement arrives to take over.

The data for this research was limited to two schools: one located in Texas and the other located in Alabama. To determine the perceptions faculty members of other schools, future research on this topic could occur in a higher populated area of each state. This would address a more diverse culture and could provide a significant change to how participants responded to the current survey.

As indicated in Harrold ISD, the practice of concealed weapons is already in existence. Further research in other schools systems that allow educators to carry on school premises and could provide insight on whether implementation of this policy has affected the school system in a positive or negative manner over the next few years.

Another area for future research would be to survey and interview parents and students concerning the notion of allowing educators, faculty members, and

administrators to carry firearms on school campus. They will provide unique perceptions of the school safety and what can be added to provide more safety for the school system. Students notice things that adults do not, and parents often assume that things are safe until a problem occurs. Adding both perceptions could provide useful information for school systems seeking to make their schools safer.

Implications

The findings of this study presented the perspectives and perceptions of the educators, faculty members and administrators within the study, regarding the possibility of allowing educators, faculty members, and administrators to carry firearms in a public high school for the benefit of saving lives of either a student or school employee. Significant impact of saving a life is a positive social change that would affect the community as a whole. If tragedy were to occur at any school, the main concern would be getting everyone in the building out of harm's way. Implementing the option to carry concealed firearms may provide the school system with the means of providing more protection for students and employees.

The reality is that no matter what policies are in place, there is not fool proof plan that can prevent an intruder from entering the building and taking innocent lives, but if the school has a means to fight back, it may prevent lives from being taken. Consequently, there are schools that do not want or believe that they need such security. Providing safety for students is something that has to be at the forefront and schools must be prepared to face many challenges that are presented in providing safety, as indicated by National School Safety and Security Services (2009). To better facilitate the process

of providing safety, those who interact with students on a daily basis should ensure that student are safe and that a plan is in place. The implications for practice based on the findings, include the following if a school chooses to allow firearms on school campus:

- Those that choose to carry firearms should get extensive training and concealed-carry licenses.
- Policies need to be in place on how to properly store weapons when needed
- Policies need to be in place on what to do in case of negligent discharge or accidental shooting.
- Employees need to know to react to law enforcement once they arrive on scene.

All employees need to be included in developmental training at the school. This training puts everyone at the same level and understanding of what needs to take place and when. Practice of different scenarios should occur so that faculty and staff can adapt their skills to vary scenarios by seeing a solution to the problem that has been presented. The school's administration must understand that collaboration with local law enforcement officers is important in developing and maintaining a comprehensive safety plan. The most important point is to stress that while students are in the school's care; their lives are their responsibility as well.

Conclusions

According to Everytown Research (2016), there have been 190 school shootings in America since 2013. The goal of this qualitative study was to gather the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of educators in regards to allowing firearms in public high

schools as an alternative safety measure and to provide more protection for students and employees in case of tragic situations such as an intruder. Though this may be an added responsibility of the school's employees, it could be an option that provides extra protection and saves not only the students' lives but those of employees' as well. The survey results concluded that there are several school employees that were supportive of allowing firearms on school property as long as proper training and background checks were conducted.

This study was not designed for a particular outcome but rather to allow the reader to decide what options are available for school systems in providing additional safety for students, faculty and administrators and to show that future research still needs to be undertaken to determine if it is beneficial to the school system in the hopes of deterring school violence in America's schools. Future studies should be conducted to evaluate whether allowing educators or faculty members to carry firearms in different demographics areas such as inner city schools compared to schools in rural areas. This research was conducted to view the perceptions of firearms in school.

Continued research will need to be conducted to determine if arming educators or faculty members is beneficial to the school system. Though educators are responsible for teaching, mentoring, and guidance; they are also responsible for the safety of students while in their care. It is important that school systems have other available options when it comes to saving lives.

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Appendix A: Research Study Questionnaire

The benchmark for the research project will use the following survey questions:

1. My gender is
 - A) Male
 - B) Female

2. My highest level of education is
 - A) Bachelors
 - B) Masters
 - C) Specialist
 - D) Doctorate

3. My salary range is
 - A) \$20,000-\$30,000
 - B) \$31,000-\$40,000
 - C) \$41,000-\$50,000
 - D) \$51,000-\$60,000
 - E) Above \$60,000

4. My age is
 - A) 20-30
 - B) 31-40
 - C) 41-50
 - D) 51-60
 - E) Above 60

5. My race is
- A) Asian
 - B) Black
 - C) Hispanic
 - D) Indian
 - E) White

6. Provide thoughts on the private ownership of guns.

7. Do you currently have guns in your household?

8. Did you have guns in your household while you attended primary and secondary school?

9. Provide your thoughts on the Conceal/Carry law.

10. Provide your thoughts about carrying guns for personal protection.

11. Are you currently certified to carry concealed gun?

12. Do you think it would be a good idea to allow educators/administrators to carry a firearm to school for the protection of the student and staff? (Yes or no)

13. If you believe that educators and/or administrators should carry weapons, please explain why you feel this is a good idea.

14. If you believe that educators and/or administrators should not carry weapons, please explain your feelings for why this would not be a good idea.

15. If educators or administrators carried weapons to school, do you think the learning environment of the school would be affected? (Yes or no)

16. If you answered yes to question 7, how do you feel the learning environment would be affected?

17. If educators or administrators carried weapons to school, do you believe the school would be safer than if they were not carrying weapons?

18. If educators or administrators carried weapons to school, do you believe the students and staff would be at a higher risk of danger from an intruder?

19. Do you feel that the school should not be concerned about protecting staff or students and let law enforcement take control of school safety?

20. Provide thoughts on the school environment if the educators or administrators were carrying concealed weapons to school.

21. Do you believe that weapons carried by certain teachers or administrators could prevent a school shooting?

22. Do you believe that weapon at school could create a hostile environment by the students? Explain.

23. Do you think it is important for the weapons to be concealed or carried openly? Explain.

24. Would any of the answers from previous questions be answered differently if the weapons were carried openly? Explain.

25. Do you believe that the parents' perceptions of the school environment would be different knowing that some educators or administrators were carrying weapons to school?

26. Did you attend school (primary/secondary) in a rural or suburban setting?
(Yes or no)

27. What safety measures are in place in your school to deter school shootings?

28. How might allowing educators to arm themselves on school property assist in addressing safety concerns within the school?

29. What impact, positive or negative, will arming educators have on a school system?

30. What is the difference in having a Human Resource Officer on a school campus versus arming educators?