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Exploring Attitudes of Middle School Stakeholders Towards Teachers Carrying Handguns in Schools

Roger Pacheco

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Exploring Attitudes of Middle School Stakeholders Towards Teachers Carrying
Handguns in Schools

by
Roger Pacheco

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Roger Pacheco under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this applied dissertation, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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Roger Pacheco

Name

March 12, 2022

Date

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Exploring Attitudes of Middle School Stakeholders Towards Teachers Carrying Handguns in Schools. Roger Pacheco, 2022: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: active shooter, firearms, mass shootings, rampage shooter, gun control

This applied dissertation focused on the attitudes of teachers, administrators, and parents towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. This qualitative study will illustrate the perceptions of specific middle school stakeholders and their views on the issue of middle school teachers carrying guns on school grounds. The lack of research about teachers carrying handguns in schools can be detrimental to informing policymakers and school officials when deciding to allow teachers to carry firearms on campus. Arming teachers has become a phenomenon of interest with many high stakeholders, but to understand the logic behind arming teachers, a historical timeline of school shootings, gun control, and armed school resource officers were included in the literature.

The researcher developed an interview protocol with questions for specific stakeholders about the phenomenon of armed teachers. The interview questions included questions that facilitated the researcher in exploring the personal opinions of teachers, administrators, and parents to understand their feelings towards this occurrence. The interview questions also assisted in the investigation of the views of the impacts teachers carrying handguns can have on the school climate.

An analysis of the data will be conducted to identify common themes between the participants' views. The discovered themes will assist the researcher in providing data to policymakers and other stakeholders about the opinions of people who are impacted closely by arming middle school teachers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Firearms have killed approximately 26,000 children ages 0 to 17 years in the United States, according to Rees et al. (2019). Galea et al. (2018) found that over the past 40 years, 30,000 to 40,000 Americans have lost their lives to gunfire. Also, 100,000 were injured by gunfire. Rees et al. (2019) indicated that the United States accounts for 90% of all childhood deaths from firearms. The year 2018 opened with 17 school shootings within 45 days of the new year (Galea et al., 2018).

Policymakers and educators responded to the Parkland mass shooting by implementing policy changes in 16 states (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). In the wake of the most recent mass shootings, new legislation to decrease mass shootings in schools is being reviewed (Sandersen et al., 2018). Millions of dollars have been spent on school safety initiatives that include more robust school security measures, behavioral intervention plans, professional development for educators, hiring more psychologists and counselors, and arming educators (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Fisher et al., 2017). DeMitchell and Rath (2019) noted that the topic of arming school personnel had dominated debates among policy leaders.

Katsiyannis et al. (2018) described school shootings as an epidemic. Stakeholders feel there is an epidemic in U.S. schools because gun violence is increasing exponentially (Lewis et al., 2016). Some researchers call the epidemic of mass shootings a hyperendemic instead (Galea et al., 2018). Researchers have indicated that gun-related deaths cost approximately 100 billion dollars yearly in the United States (Vecino-Ortiz & Guzman-Tordecilla, 2020). A report from the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) reported four targeted school shootings in the 1970s,

five in the 1980s, 28 in the 1990s, 25 in the early 2000s (Findley, 2014). Lewis et al. (2016) indicated that 136 school shootings have occurred since the Sandy Hook school shooting in December 2012, an average of around one shooting a week; this suggests that 77 % of violent fatalities in schools from 1992 to 2001 resulted from gun violence. McQuiller (2019) discovered that more than 350 gunfire incidents have occurred in the last five years. These findings have significant consequences for the broader domain of school safety measures and address the more extensive matter of arming educators and other school staff members.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the lack of research indicating teachers, parents, and administrators' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. The United States has the highest gunfire shootings among developed countries (Spitzer et al., 2017). Schools are regarded as safe places, but the topic of safety resurfaces among legislators, law enforcement, school administration, teachers, and parents to determine what best practices ensure the safety of students; however, there is little existing literature on the topic of arming teachers (Olive, 2019). Knowledge of parents, teachers, and administrators' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns in schools will allow state legislature and school staff to create better conditions for students and staff to feel safe.

The topic of this proposed dissertation is to understand the attitudes of teachers, parents, and administrators towards teachers carrying handguns in schools. Parental involvement at the site of study is very high; many people come in and out of the building daily. There are security measures in place, such as one security guard at the main entrance who searches people with a metal detector; he is not armed. One-armed

school resource officer (SRO) patrols the building daily, and there are random student searches. There are also cameras throughout the school and at all exits and entrances of the building. Even though these security measures are in place, students have been found with knives, drugs, and drug paraphernalia; bullets have been found in a bathroom and the media center at two different times. Security measures in place help students, parents, and teachers feel safe for the most part, but there are still conversations about arming teachers. It is valuable to understand the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators towards weapons on school grounds because it is imperative to comprehend the viewpoints that are leading district leaders to allow teachers to carry handguns in schools. Ultimately, what is at stake here is the safety of students, teachers, administrators, and other school staff members.

Phenomenon of Interest

The phenomenon of interest in this study is whether teachers should be armed in schools. The number of school shootings in the United States is rising (Findley, 2014), and people feel there is an epidemic in U.S. schools because gun violence is increasing at an alarming rate (Lewis et al., 2016). JeeHae-Helen Lee (2013) discussed how U.S. school shootings are intensifying in educational and political discussions. Yet, there is not enough research on the topic of arming teachers, which is a topic of interest for many stakeholders. Millions of dollars have been spent on school safety initiatives that include more reliable school security measures, behavioral intervention plans, professional development for educators, and the hiring of more psychologists, counselors, and arming educators (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Fisher et al., 2017). The problem is that school shootings are becoming an epidemic in the United States. Because of the increase in

school shootings in the U.S., some district leaders have recommended arming teachers. However, there is little scholarly work on the attitudes of stakeholders towards this phenomenon.

The opinions of the public are crucial to policy-related decisions (Grier, 2018). Gun violence is a common issue that researchers have debated about in the United States and how leaders should handle gun control issues (Grier, 2018). With the phenomenon of rampage school shootings, such as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, some politicians and other stakeholders have proposed to arm schoolteachers with guns in schools to minimize the number of deaths in school-related shootings (Rogers et al., 2018). Unfortunately, schools seem to be attractive targets for rampage shooters, and in the wake of shootings such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, and Parkland, stakeholders have had difficulty reaching an accord regarding what to do to avert such massacres (Knox, 2018).

Former President Trump also supported the idea of arming teachers and training those teachers to use guns, and affording teachers who carry a firearm in school a bonus (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). Thompson et al. (2013) indicated that some states have already passed legislation that permits concealed weapons on a college or university campus. Some parents, teachers, and administrators would like to see more metal detectors at the entrances of schools (Findley, 2014). In contrast, others would like to see teachers carrying concealed handguns in their classrooms (Findley, 2014). The plans that school officials and other stakeholders present offer some usefulness for active shooter response, but they provide conflicting ideas on instructing employees at a potential target location (Knox, 2018). None of the plans have strong research of empirical data. The lack

of gun violence research gives pro-gun lobbyists and legislators an excuse to contest peoples' demands for stricter gun control (Rogers et al., 2018). Due to the increase in rampage school shootings, the idea of arming teachers is a continuing debate for policymakers and school districts, and a study of the attitudes of stakeholders towards teachers carrying guns in school is vital to offer ideas from the people most closely impacted by active shooters.

Background and Justification

Gereluk et al. (2015) maintained that at first glance, there are no apparent indicators of behaviors that lead up to school shootings. Additionally, because of the many school shootings, lack of information that characterizes a would-be shooter, and the countless deaths, legislators and school officials have responded with different tactics to decrease the number of gun violence incidents in schools; one of these tactics is to arm teachers. Furthermore, in the 1990s, the Gun-Free School Zones Act (GFSZA) and the Gun-Free School Act (GFSA) were enacted to prohibit any person from having a gun on or near school grounds. The amendment of the GFSA in 2002 required local school authorities to enforce a mandatory one-year school expulsion of any student caught bringing or possessing a gun on school grounds (Gereluk et al., 2015). Despite these laws in place to deter gun violence, there are individuals (current students, former students, individuals with mental health problems) who refuse to follow the law and disregard the punishments put in place by the GFSA (McQuiller, 2019). Oltman and Surface (2017) stated that these laws have failed to keep students safe in schools because gun-free laws invite criminals to target-rich environments and create vulnerability in our population; officials are taking radical measures like arming teachers. Because gun-free laws and

preventative measures are in question by many, and some districts are arming teachers, a better understanding of the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators is necessary to identify efficient methods that will keep students and school staff safe.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

There is little research or a pause on investigations designed to understand and prevent childhood deaths from firearms in the U.S, according to Rees et al. (2019). Moreover, the lack of research for firearm-related issues is attributed to restrictions on federal funding for firearm violence research and pro firearm philosophy in the United States. Due to the *Dickey Amendment*, established in 1996, there was very little funding to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to research gun violence (Leshner & Dzau, 2018). Furthermore, in 2011, Congress enacted similar restrictions that prohibited the Department of Health and Human Services from performing scientific activity on any aspect of the possession of firearms and the violence produced by the people who carry them. Most of the research has also remained heavily qualitative because of the vast speculations and paucity of hard data due to wafer-thin research on multiple homicides, mainly because the rampage shooter usually commits suicide or is killed during their killing spree (Knox, 2018).

There are numerous news articles about school shootings (JeeHae-Helen Lee, 2013), but there is a lack of scholarly work with data that examines the attitudes of teachers, administrators, and parents about teachers carrying handguns in schools. Also, experts in the field of education have not researched or shown the correlation between arming teachers and their impact on minimizing school shootings. More literature is

necessary to fill the gaps concerning the attitudes of those most closely affected by school shootings and their perceptions of teachers and staff carrying handguns on campus.

Audience

The audience of such a study would be parents, teachers, and administrators who have a significant interest in keeping children safe in schools. Other audiences would include politicians who make the laws that would impact our schools if handguns were allowed on school grounds. School districts would benefit from this study because the district's board members can understand how parents, teachers, and administrators feel about armed teachers.

Definition of Terms

Active Shooter

This term refers to one or more people who participate in a random or systematic shooting spree to injure or kill others (Findley, 2014).

Firearm

This term refers to guns and devices such as bombs, rockets, and grenades (Freeman, 2015).

Handgun

This term refers to a firearm (such as a pistol) designed to be held and fired with one hand (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

High Profile

This term refers to an occurrence attracting high attention from media outlets (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

Mass Shootings

This term refers to four or more homicides in a single incident (Rees et al., 2019).

Rampage Shooter

This term refers to a person generally motivated by a yearning to proclaim revenge against a specific person or group of people; these actions are well-planned scenarios (Knox, 2018).

School Resource Officer (SRO)

This term refers to a law enforcement officer with authority issued by the police department to collaborate with schools. SROs are also known as “school safety liaisons” or “campus police” trained and assigned to protect and serve education environments (Counts et al., 2018; Findley, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. An interest in arming teachers in U.S. schools has grown since the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 (Bennett et al., 2012), but opponents of arming teachers feel that schools will become more dangerous (Teepie et al., 2012). These stakeholders have a vested interest in this type of study because they are the first people who encounter school shootings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

School shootings are rare, but despite the focus and applications of safety measures in schools, rampage shootings continue to plague schools and remain a catastrophic possibility (Freeman, 2015; Knox, 2018). Furthermore, school shootings show the most significant challenges for police and school staff because of the small amount of time to react, develop a plan of action, and deploy safety resources once the attack has taken place (Freeman, 2015). The last few decades have led to debates on arming teachers due to the increasing concern for the safety of students in educational settings (Sandersen et al., 2018). Stakeholders are searching for answers to create a safe environment for all students (Findley, 2014). Although school shootings are rare in occurrence, it is, in fact, crucial in terms of today's concern for policymakers and other stakeholders to explore new and different security measures; this includes the option to arm educators and other school staff. The purpose of this instrumental qualitative case study was to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. Researchers pointed out that because school shootings hinder the educational environment and the safety of students and faculty, many Americans believe that arming teachers will deter would-be shooters (Malcolm & Swearer, 2018).

The review of the literature will include the history of school shootings before the 1990s, when shootings mainly targeted a specific individual, to the surge in school rampage shootings that occurred in the 1990s. School shootings in the 1990s increased during this decade, so it is vital to include a history of the school shootings that happened during this time. Also, the gun policies in the United States are in question due to the

increase in mass shootings, so they are essential to explore to discover proper school safety measures and applications. Some of the proposed legislation discussed by stakeholders is to arm teachers as a preventative measure; it is vital to explore the views of teachers, administrators, and parents to collect data that can be used to make well-informed decisions on whether teachers should be armed or not. Also, arming teachers will not be free of charge to the public school systems, so if arming teachers is the route politicians and other stakeholders take, the cost to arm teachers needs consideration.

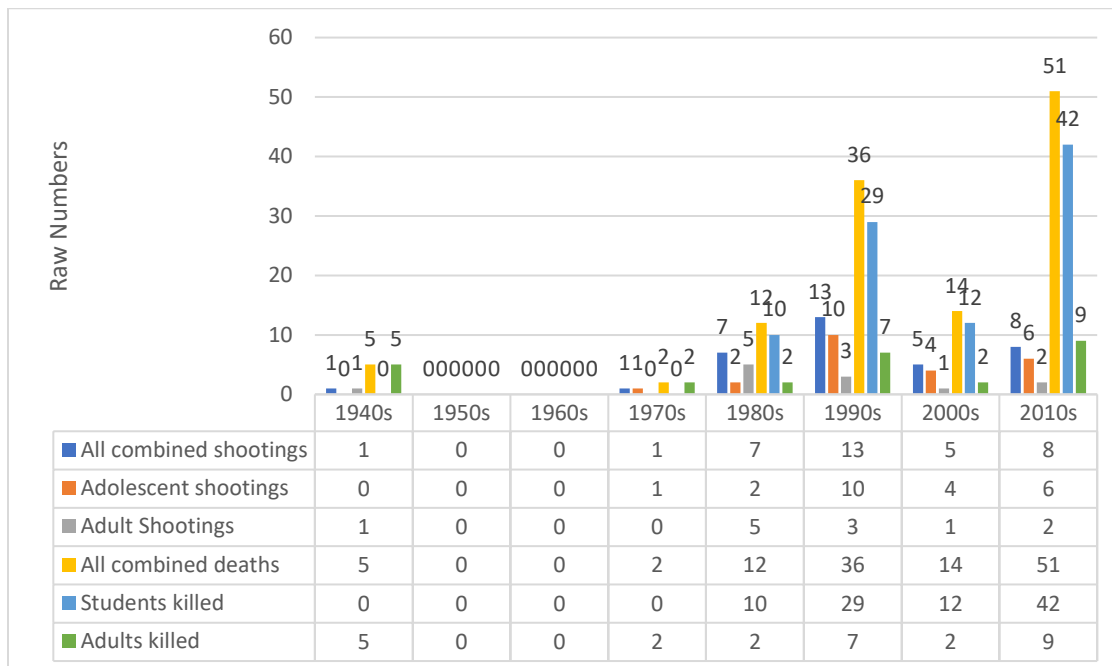
Understanding past school shootings are critical in terms of today's debates on whether to arm schoolteachers or not. School fatalities have increased from individual disagreements with single targets to mass school shootings; in the 1990s, the media began to report mass school shootings (Rocque, 2012). In the 1990s, there was a surge of reported rampage shootings on campuses (Knox, 2018). Students and former students carried out school shootings throughout the United States, injuring or killing multiple victims per incident (Modzeleski & Randazzo, 2018). Researchers noted that school rampage shootings had occurred mainly in suburban and rural schools (Knox, 2018). Table 1 shows the rise in shootings from the 1940s to the 2010s, including all combined shootings and combined deaths (See Table 1).

Generating policies that will keep students and faculty members safe in American schools is essential. Not only do the researchers indicate the security measures placed in schools to keep its population safe, but some of the research suggests that arming teachers is a security method that needs further evaluation (Freeman, 2015). These findings from scholars indicate the importance of obtaining the attitudes of stakeholders towards teachers carrying concealed handguns in schools. Furthermore, due to the

difference in results, it is essential to understand prior school shootings and the outcomes of previous studies to review and analyze data of the most recent school shootings.

Table 1

A Surge in Shootings, 1940-Early 2018



Note. Adapted from 2018 *Historical Examination of United States Intentional Mass School Shootings in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Implications for Students, Schools, and Society*, by Katsiyannis et al., 2018 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1096-2>). In the public domain.

School Shootings Before the 1990s

School violence has occurred throughout the history of education. There have been earlier school shootings that date back to the 18th century. Some previous examples of school shootings showed shooters to have an agenda with the intention to kill one person (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). For instance, in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1853, a school administrator was gunned down by the sibling of a student who was administered corporal punishment. A separate tragedy occurred in 1890, in Brazil, Indiana, when a girl was shot and killed by her peer as retaliation for notifying school authorities of the

shooter's behavior at school (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). In 1956, while hunting down the Maryland Park High School principal for reprimanding him, a 15-year old student shot and killed one teacher and wounded two others with a .22 caliber rifle (Rocque, 2012).

Other examples of earlier shootings involved multiple victims, such as the *Enoch Brown School Massacre*. In 1764, four Lenape American Indians entered a school in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and killed the schoolmaster and nine children (Freeman, 2015). The schoolmaster, Enoch Brown, begged the American Indians to spare the lives of the children; despite his pleas for the children's lives, Brown was shot and scalped, and nine children were killed. Moreover, in the 20th century, there was an increase in acts of violent behavior. In 1927, in Bath, Michigan, a farmer created a string of detonations in the Bath Consolidated School, killing 45 people, mostly schoolchildren (Kleck, 2009). The bombing was an act of extreme violence. Still, in 1966, a man ascended the University of Texas tower, and in 96 minutes, shot 150 bullets that rained down on unsuspecting students and faculty killing 50 people that day (Lavergne, 2007). The Texas Tower shooting was an earlier form of a rampage shooting because of the randomness of victims, and the incident ended in the death of the shooter (Rocque, 2012). In the American public's mind, according to Lavergne (2007), it introduced a type of mass public murder where the individual, unbeknownst to the victims, killed them and did not care if he died.

Intermittent school shootings have occurred in the history of the United States, but the issue of rampage shooters or mass killings is comparatively new (Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Rocque, 2012). School shootings in the 1990s were amplified worldwide by the media. Rocque (2012) stated that schools had been characterized as a place of violence

by some Americans. In addition, social scientists have increased their studies on school shootings in rural and suburban areas of America due to the media creating a moral panic. Furthermore, it was suggested that although there was a surge in school shootings from the 1990s to the 2000s, they were relatively rare. However rare school shootings are, the combined loss of 71 innocent lives lost between Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook riveted the country and changed the educational environment in the U.S. (Jonson, 2017).

School Shootings in the 1990s

A surge of school shootings in the 1990s represents most school shooting deaths in America (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). According to Rocque (2012), since 1996, approximately 60 shootings have taken place in schools. As shown in Table 2, select school rampage shootings from 1996 to 1999 display the names of perpetrators, the number of victims, and the date and location of shootings (See Table 2).

Additionally, rampage shootings in the 1990s did not target a particular person with whom the aggressor had a grievance. The shootings had a symbolic meaning by making a statement with violence. Rampage shootings seemed to attract the most attention in the 1990s, according to Muschert (2007). School shootings in America in the 1990s were carried out by students and former students, which garnered significant media attention as high-profile shootings (Modzeleski & Randazzo, 2018). High-profile shootings are homicides that have received substantial media attention and occur mainly in secondary schools, according to Heilbrun et al. (2009) who stated the following reasons: (a) Violence is most prevalent for students during this age range; (b) the exposure of academic stressors and social stressors; (c) campuses are more open for

students to come and go at will. Rocque (2012) reported that stakeholders' responses evolved through each of the following high-profile shootings in the 1990s. School shootings changed from being gang-related or from individual disputes, and the media began to report high numbers of school shootings in rural and suburban areas (Rocque, 2012). Rampage shootings in the 1990s received significant media attention, such as those in Moses Lake, WA; Bethel, AK; Pearl, MS; Paducah, KY; Jonesboro, AR; and Springfield, OR, in which 20 teachers and students lost their lives. One of the deadliest high-profile shootings during this time was the Columbine High School massacre.

Table 2

Rampage Shootings in America, 1990s

Location	Date	Perpetrator (age)	Number of Victims
Moses, Lake, WA	February 2, 1996	Barry Loukaits (14)	3 dead, 1 wounded
Bethel, AK	February 19, 1997	Evan Ramsey (16)	2 dead, 2 wounded
Pearl, MS	October 1, 1997	Luke Woodham (16)	2 dead, 7 wounded
West Paducah, KY	December 1, 1997	Michael Carneal (14)	3 dead, 5 wounded
Stamps, AR	December 15, 1997	Colt Todd (14)	2 wounded
Jonesboro, AR	March 24, 1998	Mitchell Johnson(13); Andrew Golden (14)	5 dead, 10 wounded
Edinboro, PA	April 24, 1998	Andrew Wurst (14)	1 dead, 2 wounded
Springfield, OR	May 21, 1998	Kip Kinkel (15)	2 dead, 22 wounded
Littleton, CO	April 20, 1999	Eric Harris (18); Dylan Klebold (17)	15 dead, 23 wounded
Conyers, GA	May 20, 1999	Thomas Soloman(15)	6 wounded
Fort Gibson, OK	December 6, 1999	Seth Trickey (13)	4 wounded

Note: Adapted from 2012 *Exploring School Rampage Shootings: Research, Theory, and Policy*, by Rocque, 2012 (https://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Rocque_2012_SSJ.pdf). In the public domain.

The national outcry surrounding school shootings inspired stakeholders to do more to protect children in schools (Jonson, 2017). In the 1990s, Congress passed the Gun-Free School Zones Act (GFSZA), which stated that the possession or discharge of a firearm in a school zone was a criminal offense (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Additionally, the GFSZA required states receiving federal funds to mandate school districts to expel, up to one year, any student carrying a gun to school. Moreover, this law considerably lessened gun violence, and fewer students were reported to have guns in school. Past laws most likely have prevented some shootings, but they are not foolproof deterrents of school shootings (Oltman & Surface, 2017). Unfortunately, in 1999 another rampage school shooting took place in Littleton, Colorado when two high school seniors armed with explosives and weapons set off a rampage shooting that would forever change the dynamics of school safety procedures.

Columbine High School Shooting

On April 20, 1999, two high school seniors (Eric Harris & Dylan Klebold) wearing black trench coats and armed with multiple weapons (handguns, a rifle, shotguns, knives, and pipe bombs) entered Columbine High School (CHS) and killed 12 students and one teacher (Jonson, 2017; Miller, 1999). Additionally, the assaulters wounded 23 students and then killed themselves. The two seniors set decoy explosives in a field to explode at 11:14 am (Arnold, 2015). Furthermore, the assailants drove to school in separate vehicles and set additional propane bombs in the cafeteria. Fortunately, they did not explode, but during this time, the two shooters begin their rampage shooting spree at 11:19 am; the carnage ended at 12:08 pm with their suicide.

Over 141 students have lost their lives in mass murders since the Columbine

shooting in 1999 (Oltman & Surface, 2017). The Columbine murders catapulted shooting sprees in schools and shooters who referred to Columbine as their inspiration, according to Larkin (2009). School safety became paramount post-Columbine (Hong & Espelage, 2020). As A Result, the Columbine shooting persuaded school officials and policymakers to explore and implement programs and policies that would prevent violence in schools and procure school safety (Hong et al., 2011). The CHS shooting was a pivotal point in the history of school shootings; it was the catalyst for groundbreaking studies of active shooters and the development of behavioral threat assessments within K-12 schools (Modzeleski & Randazzo, 2018). Still, little research on school-level responses in the aftermath of rampage shootings exists (Curran et al., 2020; Gust, 2009). Since 1999, there have been 229 recorded school shootings as of December 2019, according to Hong and Espelage (2020). Recent studies shed new light on school shootings and the responses by stakeholders, which previous studies had not addressed before Columbine. Consequently, understanding past rampage shootings is beneficial for this research because it sheds insight into the complicated dilemma of arming teachers.

In a study, Hong and Espelage (2020) gathered responses from 810 elementary school principals. They found that the principals were more likely to ensure security guard presence, metal detectors, locked exterior doors, visitor sign-in/out, limits on going to the bathroom, and the use of hall passes post-Columbine. But some school shooters have disregarded these safety measures, and arguably, the most significant factor in school shootings has been law enforcement, response time, and unarmed personnel in schools. However, it is simply not true that just arming teachers would fix the problem of active shooters. Flexible response plans that can account for the broad categories of

incidents need to be established, and police, schools, and policymakers should not combine all the scenarios in a “one size fits all” mindset (Freeman, 2015).

In the wake of the Columbine shooting, school officials, policymakers, police, U.S. Secret Services, the Department of Education, and other stakeholders searched for answers as to why this shooting took place (Hong et al., 2011). Moreover, many theories have arisen since the Columbine rampage shooting that has produced policies, such as Eric and Dylan being the victims of bullying, which resulted in zero-tolerance and anti-bullying policies across the United States. Zero-tolerance policies are a response to violence in schools, which requires schools to be intolerant of school violence and harshly punish the students who display violent behaviors (Kodelja, 2019). Nevertheless, both followers and critics of these policies will probably argue equally that the systems in place have not stopped school shooters from entering schools and killing people. Kennedy (2019) mentioned that most parents do not have confidence that schools can prevent a shooter from entering the building; however, they do not blame the school systems for the shootings but blame the increased bullying, the internet, and the availability of guns. Therefore, researchers need to explore practices that will ensure the safety of students, which includes examining the idea of arming teachers and staff other than SROs and SSOs. Following the school shootings of the 1990s, the Secret Service, the Department of Education, and other government agencies created task forces with the purpose to research and prevent school violence (Baird et al., 2017). Also, although research and preventative measures started to take place in schools, they have not helped prevent future school shootings.

School Shootings of the 21st Century

Paolini (2015) found that gun violence in schools has increased by 19% in the 21st century. Moreover, the 20th century had 207 K-12 school shootings in the nation; so far, in the 2000s, there have been 152 K-12 school shootings. There is a consensus among social scientists that between 2007 and 2013, the rate of mass shootings increased from 6.4 shootings during the years 2000-2006 (Lewis et al., 2016). In the first part of the 21st century, 13 mass school shootings took place (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Katsiyannis et al. reported analyses of trends in school shootings, indicating that the perpetrators were adolescents and adults.

Furthermore, the adolescent shooters ranged from the ages of 14 to 18, and the adults from 19 to 32 years old. Also, the shootings happened in high schools located in the western and mid-western parts of the United States. Moreover, the 21st century has had 66 deaths so far, directly related to school shootings, as opposed to 55 deaths related to school shootings in the 1990s. The 21st century has also been an emotional rollercoaster for the education system, which has changed the school environment by adding safety drills and lockdown training against armed intruders (Wender & DeMille, 2019). Katsiyannis et al. (2018) examined the spike in shootings and changes in schools, and he found that there is a relationship that can be attributed to the ease of accessing high-power rifles. In a recent study, Malcolm and Swearer (2018) reported that one in five students in grades K-12 exhibit signs of mental health problems every year, and 80% of five million pupils do not receive any counseling, therapy, or medication. Three high-profile shootings have taken place in the 21st century that has pushed legislators to inspect new gun control policies and assist people with mental illnesses to keep students

safe in schools. These high-profile shootings include the Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook tragedies.

Eight years after the Columbine school tragedy, a senior at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) walked into the dormitories of the school and killed two students; afterward, he walked to the other side of the campus, to a classroom building, and killed 30 students and five professors (Jonson, 2017). Moreover, five years after the Virginia Tech shooting, another high-profile shooting occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School, where an armed (Rifle and two handguns) 20-year-old man killed 20 elementary children and six adults. Finally, in 2018, at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, a former student entered the high school and killed 17 people. These three shootings are high-profile shootings that have made stakeholders rethink strategies to keep schools safe.

Virginia Tech University Shooting

One of the deadliest single-man school shootings of the 21st century occurred on April 16, 2007, at Virginia Tech University, which had a death toll of 32 (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). Cho Seung-hui decided to exterminate his peers and professors by chaining the doors of Norris Hall and then began the shooting at 9:40 am (Arnold, 2015). In addition, he had killed two others at 7:15 am. Furthermore, the police arrived three minutes after the first shots were reported, but they were unable to enter the building due to the chained doors. At 9:50 am, the police entered the building, and Cho turned his weapon on himself and committed suicide at 9:51 am. Cho fired 174 rounds before killing himself. Bennett (2020) explained that the Virginia Tech shooting had the highest death toll on an American campus since the “Texas Tower Sniper” (Charles Whitman

killed 15 people at the University of Texas).

This rampage shooting at Virginia Tech University shook the foundations of the roles and responsibilities of campus officials and renewed a debate over gun violence and mental health (Ezarik, 2017). As a result, Post-Virginia Tech, Congress amended the Federal Clery Act to mandate colleges and universities to issue emergency notifications during active shooter scenarios and make the emergency plans public (Bendici, 2017). Furthermore, college campuses, in the wake of Virginia Tech, instituted campus-wide security approaches. Bendici's study showed that campus-wide security efforts in colleges and universities are in the form of representatives from law enforcement, student affairs, human resources, counseling services, and residence life to monitor students, faculty, and visitors who might be prone to violence.

College campuses, historically, have been categorized as "sensitive places" comparable to primary and secondary schools; consequently, with this categorization, firearms were not permitted to be carried on university campuses (Cramer, 2014; Hassett et al., 2020). The Virginia Tech massacre has led the discussion on the legal rights to carry a firearm on school grounds (Bennett, 2020). In 2020, 11 states allow people with carrying permits to conceal a gun on college grounds, 16 states oppose the policy to carry a firearm on campus, and 23 states allow institutions to make their individual policies (Hassett et al., 2020). In their recent work, Hassett et al. (2020) offered a better understanding of the attitudes of people most closely affected by college campus carry legislation. The researchers reviewed several empirical studies based on the positions of students and teachers towards campus carry from six different regions of the United States. The studies selected were from four electronic databases, based on their relevancy

to the following terms: college, school, campus, university and guns, firearm, weapon, shooting, possession, control, carry, concealed, safety, policy. The researchers found that in 2016 three articles concluded that the campus community was against the carrying of concealed guns on campus. The results of six of the studies reviewed by Hassett et al. (2020) of a mixed group of students, faculty, and staff revealed that 70-80 percent of participants were opposed to campus carry. The review of these empirical studies also showed the factors that played a role in the attitudes and responses towards campus carry. The researchers found that fear victimization on campus, a crime victim experience in the past, firearm ownership, being male, and what government party they belonged to played a considerable part in the participant responses. Traditionally, it has been argued by the Students for Campus Carry (SCCC), a group formed after the Virginia Tech shooting, and the National Rifle Association (NRA) that students should be able to carry concealed weapons on campus (Cramer, 2014). However, groups, to include the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Association of University Professors, Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus, American Council on Education, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Education Association, and Students for Gun-Free Schools, contended that guns should be kept off school grounds (Hassett et al., 2020). Despite the beliefs of many who would like for campus carry legislation to be made into law, the study by Hassett et al. showed that individuals in the campus community are against campus carry policies. The systematic review of the literature on campus carry after the Virginia Tech shooting shows that implications arise from campus carry and that policymakers need to consider the impact these policies can have on students, teachers, and staff.

Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting

In 2012, Sandy Hook Elementary (SHE), located in Connecticut, had a mass shooting where 20 elementary school children and six staff members were killed (Hoagwood et al., 2017). On December 14, Adam Lanza drove to SHE with a rifle, two handguns, and an ample supply of ammunition (Arnold, 2015). The elementary school doors had been locked as part of the safety protocols followed by the school. However, at 9:30 am, the shooter shot open the doors and began to fire at people randomly. The police arrived five minutes later, and at 9:39 am, Lanza killed himself.

High-profile shootings such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook are forever engrained in our memories and have shaped the way teachers approach their professional work in education (Edwards & Dancy, 2013). With the Virginia Tech shooting leading the way in the exploration of campus carry, the Sandy Hook rampage shooting in Connecticut pressed for legislation that would allow school districts to arm their teachers, as well as the introduction of 450 bills focused on school safety (Fisher et al., 2017; Yacek, 2018). The Sandy Hook Tragedy revived the debate of arming teachers, and 50 days after the shooting, South Dakota became the first state to pass legislation to arm teachers to deter or resist armed intruders (Freeman, 2015; Rostron, 2014). In 2013, 19 states had proposed legislation to allow concealed weapons on campuses (The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Moreover, in 2017, two states (Arkansas & Georgia) had passed laws allowing students and faculty to carry guns on campuses. By 2014, Utah, Wisconsin, Arkansas, Colorado, and Idaho adopted laws that allowed people to carry concealed firearms in schools (Wood, 2014). Today, ten states have provisions allowing the carrying of concealed firearms on public college campuses

(The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019).

Wood (2014) wrote, in contrast to arming more personnel, many, such as law enforcement professionals, legislators, and other public figures, feel that campuses are safer without the presence of guns. For some school districts, it is not feasible to hire more security guards; because of this, many find it practical to arm willing and qualified school teachers, administrators, and other staff members to decrease the response time of armed first responders (Malcolm & Swearer, 2018). Shortly after the Sandy Hook catastrophe in 2013, former President Barack Obama issued an executive order directing federal science agencies to support research on firearm-related violence (Leshner & Dzau, 2018). Unfortunately, in 2017, other priorities and Congress's continuous denial of relevant gun-related violence research discontinued the program that was pushed forward by the former president, according to Leshner and Dzau (2018).

Parkland High School Shooting

A more recent school shooting occurred at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) in Parkland, Florida, when a former student gunned down 17 people (Brown & Goodin, 2018). After the Parkland shooting, many people were baffled about how this could happen in their community (Tenam-Zemach, 2018). The tragic shooting sparked proposals from local, state, and federal policymakers to review gun control policies without undercutting the right to bear arms (Leshner & Dzau, 2018).

In March 2018, President Trump asked the Secretary of Education to form the Federal Commission on School Safety (Warnick & Kapa, 2019). The commission recommended a focus on target hardening, in other words, making schools less attractive targets by arming and training school staff and mental health services; the commission

ignored the topic of access to firearms (Warnick & Kapa, 2019). The MSD shooting ignited teenage students who were impacted by the massacre to take a stance on the matter of gun control, according to Tenam-Zemach (2018). The students of MSD have refused to become just another group of survivors of another mass shooting (Catlett, 2019). The students, equipped with paper and pencil and their understanding of the event and experience, used social media to display their outrage and uproar to U.S. senators about the issue of gun control (Kissel et al., 2019). The students created the “#Never Again” movement, which ignited the national push for gun control (Catlett, 2019). The campaign helped convince many people to boycott businesses with ties to the NRA and drive some American corporate companies to take a stance on the issue of gun control. For example, Dick’s Sporting Goods discontinued assault-style rifles, high capacity magazines and enforced age restrictions on gun buyers. In the 2018 mid-term elections, politicians were promising to support gun control, and 100,000 advertisements were airing to promote stricter gun regulations (Haner et al., 2019). Also, the “March For Our Lives” protest arose from this movement. The march allowed protesters to participate in discussions with three U.S. Senators and an NRA spokesperson on the issue of gun control in Washington, D.C. (Tenam-Zemach, 2018). Moreover, with the use of social media, the organization encouraged companies to ban a FOX TV host because of comments she made against a survivor of the MSD tragedy.

The Parkland shooting reignited the national conversation of arming school teachers and staff (Rajan & Branas, 2018). In the wake of the MSD rampage school shooting, politicians have shifted to the idea that arming schoolteachers are a means of reducing the mortality rate of school shootings (Rogers et al., 2018). However, Rajan and

Branas (2018) found existing research that stated that legislation and public education support is essential as preventative methods to prevent and mitigate incidents of violence. Moreover, keeping schools safe is a national educational and public health priority. The horrendous killings at MSD urged politicians to review the gun violence epidemic and repeal the Dickey Amendment entirely, so funding for the CDC can begin, and the research on gun violence can continue (Rogers et al., 2018).

The Dickey Amendment came to light in the early 1990s efforts to treat gun violence as a public health issue (Rostron, 2014). Rostron (2014) noted that a study in 1993 by Arthur Kellerman revealed an increase in firearm homicides when there was a presence of a firearm at home. According to the investigation by Rostron, the NRA accused the CDC of being biased towards guns, and the NRA began to lobby for the elimination of the CDC. The Dickey Amendment, named after Arkansas's Senator Jay Dickey, outlawed federal funds to advocate or promote gun control; however, a report that accompanies the spending bill clarifies that the amendment does not prohibit federal funding of gun violence research (Erber, 2020; Rostron, 2014). The Dickey Amendment is viewed by many as a gag rule to keep gun-related deaths a mystery to give power to the lobby for policies to institutions such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) (Rogers et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the underfunded research on gun violence due to the Dickey Amendment has not halted the strong support for studying violent behavior (Rajan & Branäs, 2018). With the approval of the U.S. funding bill passed in December 2020, Congress members decided that even with the Dickey Amendment, federal funds can be used for research as long as the funds are not spent on gun control lobbying (Erber, 2020).

It is yet to be seen whether the Parkland shooting and previous rampage shootings will be defining moments in history (Galea et al., 2018). The study by Galea et al. highlighted that there was an apparent increase in firearm-related articles in 2017. The evidence from this study suggested that articles on firearms increased from 50 in the year 2000 to over 200 in 2017. Also, protests by organizations like the #Never Again movement and the evident increase in gun control research have created opportunities for young scholars to examine the issue of firearm violence and gun policies.

Gun Policies in the United States

States have enacted regulations on the sales, purchase, possession, and storage of firearms to lessen or prevent gun-related violence (Siegel et al., 2017). Nevertheless, crime rates in the United States remain a concern for most Americans, and one of the reasons is the ease of access to handguns (Giller, 1994). The 2012 SHE rampage shooting prompted a national dialogue about firearm policies and the divide among Americans on gun legislation (Barry et al., 2018). Although the national conversation on gun policies has risen in the past 26 years, it has not been consistent across the U.S., and some states have decreased their gun control laws (Siegel et al., 2017). For example, the researchers found that the reduction in gun control laws in some states was driven by adopting laws that promote self-defense. For example, stand your ground laws, eliminate the requirement to possess a permit to carry a concealed handgun, and the authorization of concealed weapons on college campuses and in elementary schools promote the use of firearms for self-defense in some states. While various legislations have been placed as deterrents, they have not been failsafe methods of keeping people safe from weapons; therefore, politicians and other stakeholders continue to debate the best way to keep

schools and other public areas safe (Oltman & Surface, 2017). The knowledge of past gun control policies and their fruition is essential for understanding ways to keep the American people safe, especially our children.

Early 20th Century Gun Policies

Attempts by local and state authorities to regulate firearms date back to the late 19th century, as early as 1880 through 1915, there was an initiative on legislative activity on firearms (Buckman, 2010). Buckman added that in 1919, the first federal action take on gun control was to tax firearms and ammunition. In addition, after World War I, due to growth in urban crime and handgun use, Congress passed the Mailing of Firearms Act (MFA) in 1927, which outlawed the sales of firearms through the mail. In addition to Buckman's work and the indication that in the 1930s, during the Franklin Roosevelt administration, there was an increase in "gangsterism" in America. Vizzard (2014) added that there was a brief push for changes to gun policies which resulted in two moderate federal statutes. For example, the National Firearms Act (NFA) and the Federal Firearms Act (FFA) were passed in the 1930s and started incorporating handguns and assault rifles into licensing laws and tax requirements. The NFA regulated civilian ownership of devices that resembled "gangster weapons" or submachine guns like the famed gangster John Dillinger wielded during that time (Buckman, 2010). The NFA was to ban firearms, but Congress feared that the U.S. Supreme Court would attack such a ban unconstitutional, Congress decided just to mandate the registration of certain firearms (Buckman, 2010). In 1939, a case opposing the NFA mandates appeared before the Supreme Court. The *United States vs. Miller* case argued that the NFA impeded their rights to bear arms. The Supreme Court opposed that a twelve-gauge sawed-off shotgun

constituted as an instrument of self-defense (Brenner, 2008). The NFA stated that machine guns, sawed-off rifles and shotguns, silencers, and select unusual firearms were not weapons for self-defense (Vizzard, 2014). Unfortunately, the federal act was ineffective in keeping criminals from obtaining weapons because of the ease with which a citizen could acquire a license and the ability of citizens to purchase guns in other states that did not require permits (Buckman, 2010).

Furthermore, the minimal policing of dealer compliance with the NFA and the few resources enforcing the new legislation made less than 100 arrests per year in 35 years. In addition, the dealers did not have to furnish their customer's eligibility to purchase firearms. Further, between the 1930s and 1960s, Congress showed little interest in new gun legislation. The discussion of firearm legislation did not emerge again until the presidential assassination of John F. Kennedy (JFK) (Vizzard, 2014).

Mid-20th Century Gun Policies

The first signs of the federal government furthering firearms regulations came in the mid-1950s when inexpensive imported weapons began to enter the American market (Buckman, 2010). In the 1950s, the number of imported firearms rose from 15000 to 200000. Buckman reported that then-Senator JFK proposed legislation to ban the importation of weapons. Still, only World War II weapons were forbidden, imported guns continued to pour into the United States. The most influential advocate for gun control of the 1960s was Senator Thomas Dodd, who introduced his first gun control bill in 1963 based on a study of mail-order sales of firearms. During this time, the assassination of then-President JFK transpired; this event caused Senator Dodd to amend his bill on gun control to include traffic in rifles and shotguns. Between 1963 and 1968, a combination

of events (rising crime rates and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy) produced sufficient antigun political support to push the Gun Control Act (GCA) through Congress (Vizzard, 2014). In 1968, Vizzard (2014) pointed out that Congress voted the GCA into law. The GCA amended the NFA to widen the class of restricted items to cover destructive devices (Buckman, 2010). The GCAs design provided support to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime and violence (Brenner, 2008). The GCA has remained the primary federal law, with minor changes, for over twenty years (Vizzard, 2014).

Late 20th Century Gun Policies

In the 1980s, gun homicide rates of urban youths increased, and lawmakers made firearm violence a priority (Makarios & Pratt, 2012). Due to this societal concern, policy responses directed at gun violence began to rise in the 1990s. The rise in crime infected schools in the 1980s, and solutions were offered by the Department of Justice to curb corruption and violence in schools (Freeman, 2015). Gun buy-back programs became a popular method to decrease the number of guns in a home by buying back firearms from gun-owners with gift certificates or money during this time (Klarevas et al., 2019). Also, in 1994, Congress enacted the federal assault weapons ban, which restricted ownership of certain types of magazines or large-capacity magazines (LCMs). The federal government enforced a ten-year ban on military-style weapons that could hold magazines that held more than ten rounds (Koper, 2013). The federal prohibition on LCMs was in effect from 1994 to 2004 when it expired.

Gun-Free School Zone Act of 1990 and Gun-Free School Act of 1994

The GFSZA, which was enacted in the 1990s, made it an offense at the federal

level to possess a firearm in a school zone or 1000-foot perimeter around school grounds (Vessels, 2019). The GFSZA was later found to be unconstitutional in the 1995 decision in the *United States v. Lopez's* case, which stated that the GFSZA exceeded the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution (Dral & Phillips, 2001). Moreover, the Commerce Clause decreed that possessing a gun in a school zone was not economic; therefore, holding a gun in a school zone does not affect interstate commerce. Consequently, the majority of Justices agreed that Congress had overstepped when enacting the GFSZA. Still, since the implementation of the GFSZ, according to the findings by Vessels (2019), seven school mass shootings had occurred with the GFSZA in place.

The GFSA, or *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994*, adopted a zero-tolerance weapons policy to protect students from intimidation, assaults, and death (Freeman, 2015). Freeman further highlighted that the GFSA required a local education agency to expel students who brought a firearm(s) to school for a minimum of one year. However, Freeman also found that the superintendent or designee can modify the length and severity of the punishment on a case-to-case basis. Nevertheless, the GFSA was amended in 2001 by the federal education reform, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA).

21st Century Gun Control Policies

The NCLBA, enacted in 2001, under George W. Bush's presidency, stated that if a student brought a firearm to school, the district needed to convey the school's name, the number of students expelled, and the guns involved regarding any expulsion (Freeman, 2015). Furthermore, the NCLBA amendments to the GFSA authorized people to store firearms legally inside a locked vehicle on school property. Makarios and Pratt (2012)

found that during former President George W. Bush's presidency, the federal government spent \$1 billion in a gun violence prevention policy, Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN). The PSN aimed at encouraging partnerships between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to create gun violence intervention. However, even though these policies were in place, groups of gun rights advocates challenged the understanding of the second amendment (Merkel, 2009).

District of Columbia vs. Heller Case

Dick Heller was a private citizen who asserted his second amendment right to keep a loaded gun in his Washington D.C. home. This went against the District of Columbia's gun control ordinance (Amar, 2008). Under the Firearms Regulations Act of 1975, all handguns in the District of Columbia were banned unless they were registered before the ban took effect (Indiana Rigdon, 2009). Further, registered guns were restricted to being assembled and loaded in a home. Indiana Rigdon (2009) highlighted that the ban also forbade District citizens from carrying a registered weapon either openly or concealed unless they were in their private property (Later, it was forbidden to move arms in the owner's property too).

The Heller decision is essential in gun policy because the resolution to the case set the rules for gun-control laws across the country. It limited the efforts of the government to restrict the predominance of firearms among law-abiding citizens and the right to bear arms as an individual right (Neil, 2009). The Supreme Court ruled that firearms are a constitutionally protected right for protection (Neil, 2009). Moreover, the Heller case was the first since 1939 to address whether the second amendment protects an individual's right to own a gun. Since the Heller case, it is no longer constitutional to disarm

Americans in defense of their home (Arnold, 2015). “Firearms are present in one-third of American households” (Hong et al., 2011, p. 863). Further, gun-control policies have not been strict enough to prevent shootings, according to Hong et al. (2011). Since disarming Americans is now unconstitutional, stakeholders need to start thinking of ways to resolve the problem of mass shootings without disarming law-abiding citizens (Arnold, 2015).

In contrast to arming teachers, many believe that the answer is not just to “beef up” personnel security but also to create safer and more nurturing school environments to prevent school shootings (Freeman, 2015). Olive (2019) argued that by having a combination of safety measures such as physical safety measures, personnel-based safety measures, and program-based preventative safety measures, schools could be safer places. Along with the expansion of safety measures in schools, other public places have begun to allow the public to carry weapons on their premises. Gun rights advocates have challenged the dialect of the second amendment to allow anyone who is not mentally ill or a felon to carry firearms in public places (Blocher, 2013).

Firearms in Public Places

With the high-profile mass shootings in schools, nightclubs, movie theatres, and college campuses, a trend has started in some states where public members can carry weapons in public places (Wolfson et al., 2017). State laws have shifted in different directions when interpreting policies regarding carrying guns in public places (Wolfson et al., 2017). For example, some states require a person who meets minimum criteria to be issued a carry permit. Meanwhile, law enforcement exercises discretion on who is granted a license to carry a concealed weapon in other states. Furthermore, some states have passed laws that allow firearms to be carried without a permit or training; only three

states prohibit openly carrying guns in public places: California, Florida, Illinois, and the District of Columbia. In 2013, Arkansas's general assembly permitted people to take arms into places of worship (DiPippa, 2015).

Licensing requirements for public firearm permits or concealed carry are vital to regulations for carrying guns in public areas (Blocher, 2013). Most states legally allow people to carry a concealed weapon with a permit. Some states allow the carrying of firearms openly in public, according to Wolfson et al. (2017). Espohl (1997) indicated that there is no difference between a law prohibiting open carry or concealed carry. The researcher also described that the right to carry concealed weapons is for self-defense in case of a surprise attack. In contrast, Espohl indicated that carrying a gun in the open makes it easier for an attacker to grab it and use it against the person. Blocher (2013) specified that some states had expanded the right to carry a concealed gun for self-defense. In addition, liberalizing the concealed carry laws has loosened restrictions on gun possession in bars and restaurants. However, federal law does prohibit firearms in several federal properties such as post offices, courts, and correctional facilities (Wolfson et al., 2017). DiPippa (2015) highlighted that although carrying weapons in public can be helpful for self-defense, some public spaces are incompatible with firearms because most of those places are confined spaces with unarmed people. Schools, courthouses, churches, and government buildings house exposed populations of people that do not require the presence of weapons, which makes those properties functions incompatible with firearms. (DiPippa, 2015). However, DiPippa (2015) found that many churches, bars, and restaurants have opted out and permitted to allow permit holders to carry weapons in houses of worship.

Guns in Churches

DiPippa (2015) reported the Arkansas General Assembly permitted people to take guns into churches in 2013. Some legislators pushed for a total ban on weapons in churches. Still, other legislators thought that a complete ban on firearms in churches violated the members' rights to attend services while armed. Mass shootings have taken place in churches; for example, in 2017, 26 people lost their lives in a Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Mass shootings generate significant media coverage and research on gun control, but little attention has been given to the role religion plays in gun control (Merino, 2018).

Merino (2018) specified that religion contributes to individuals' understandings of gun violence and gun control point of view. Stagnaro (2003) analyzed the critical relationship between God and self-defense by stating that if a person does not protect their lives and the lives of others, they are betraying God. Further, anyone not taking a stance against predators and supports campaigns that hinder people from defending their livelihoods is vexing God. Stagnaro also proposed that individuals have a God-given right or duty to protect the life and welfare of themselves and their neighbors. Pope Pelagius I (556-561 A.D.) said, "Only he who force to do evil is a persecutor, instead, he who punishes a committed evil or prevent committing evil is not one who persecutes, but one who loves" (as cited in Stagnaro, 2003, pg. 148).

Merino (2018) stated that Evangelical Protestants oppose stricter gun control laws in contrast to Black Protestants, Catholics, and other non-religious groups who favor more stringent gun laws. Wolfson et al. (2017) discovered that two-thirds of American adults do not support guns to be carried in places of worship, schools, bars and

restaurants, sporting events, and government buildings. Additionally, increasing the locations where weapons are allowed increases the rate of firearm injuries. Also, Wolfson et al. (2017) found that many stakeholders agree with limiting gun carrying in most public areas. Nevertheless, many states have expanded laws allowing citizens to carry guns in public places (Wolfson et al., 2017). Federal law leaves the matter of carrying firearms in public, mainly to the states (Vernick, 2013).

Malcolm and Swearer (2018) discussed that other countries with stricter gun control laws have not been immune to mass casualty school shootings. For example, Germany has had one of the most stringent gun control systems in Europe. Yet in 2002, a recently expelled high school student killed 16 people and then killed himself. Also, France, a country where all firearm owners must possess a license to carry a gun, has had four school shootings that have claimed the lives of 22 people.

Unfortunately, these are examples of how it is impossible to predict that no mass shootings would have occurred because of policy (Kleck, 2009). Still, according to Kleck (2009), gun-control advocates continue to speculate that their solution to gun deaths have prevented significant amounts of possible gun-related disasters. Fortunately, crime in schools is a vital concern for all members of the school community, and efforts to reduce crime and violence have invited the partnering of schools with local police to implement SROs (Jennings et al., 2011). It is critical to explore how SROs engage with school discipline and school safety.

Guns in Schools

The arming of school personnel such as SROs and SSOs has dominated debates between policymakers and school districts on whether educators and other school staff

should be armed, according to DeMitchell and Rath (2019). Safety measures in schools have evolved in the last 20 years. Examples of this evolution include metal detectors, zero-tolerance, anti-gang regulations, photo identification tags, cameras, clear backpacks, random searches, entry control devices, and SROs (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019; Jennings et al., 2011). The implementation of SROs has expanded in schools. More than one-third of sheriff's offices and approximately half of all local police departments have sworn in officers assigned explicitly to schools. The SRO is a uniformed armed police officer assigned to a school (Counts et al., 2018). Also, the duties of the SRO are law enforcement combinations of teaching and mentoring. As for law enforcement SROs patrol the school and investigate criminal complaints in the school. As support teachers, the SRO runs preventative educational programs such as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). As mentors, the SRO gives students, teachers, and administrators guidance on matters involving law enforcement. Counts et al. (2018) identified that there are an estimated 14000 to 20000 SROs assigned to one-third of our nation's schools.

History of the SRO

The placement of SROs in schools began in Flint, Michigan, during the 1950s, to deal with school violence, particularly gun violence (Counts et al., 2018). Since the inception of SROs in U.S. schools, there has been a gradual expansion in law enforcement goals within schools (Ryan et al., 2018). The growth of SROs has become prevalent in schools to address issues such as racial tensions, drug use, and school violence, as indicated by Counts et al. (2018). The broader purpose of SROs can be traced back to the 1990s, when through legislative initiatives such as the Safe School Act, the Department of Justice provided significant funding to increase the number of SROs in

schools. Several changes in policy have occurred since 2018, including, but not limited to, arming school resource officers (SROs) and school security officers (SSOs) (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). In the 2000s, the Justice Department issued \$750 million into the “COPS in Schools” program, stated Chan et al. (2019). Additionally, former President Obama welcomed more SROs in schools due to the Sandy Hook tragedy to prevent violent acts in schools. The Department of Justice offered \$745 million in grants to train and hire SROs (Jonson, 2017). With the Supreme Court's decision on the Heller case, gun lobbyists who support the second amendment also suggested that schools place highly trained resource officers on school grounds (Minshew, 2018).

Impacts of SROs in Schools

In an investigation on SROs and their impacts in schools, Counts et al. (2018) found that the most massive increase in SROs has occurred in schools with populations of 1000 or more students. With the rise of SROs in schools, many stakeholders argue if the presence of SROs maintains school safety and intervenes with disciplinary issues in schools (Chan et al., 2019). The use of law enforcement in school districts concerns many of the impacts it has on school discipline (Curran et al., 2019). Chan et al. (2019) defined the role of SROs as “law enforcement, teaching, and mentoring” (p. 3297). SROs have been called upon to deal with disciplining students and an unfortunate increase in the likelihood of placing students in contact with the juvenile justice system (Counts et al., 2018). Also, the rise in SROs has shown a connection in the surge of referrals and arrests of students. Recently researchers have shown that already armed SROs in schools have not been deterrents of rampage school shootings (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). In 1999, the Columbine shooting had an SRO exchanged fire with one of the shooters, yet the

massacre continued. Also, during the Parkland shooting, there was an SRO present, and the shooter still entered the school. Instead, more than 291,000 students have been subjected to school arrests, and the increase of SROs has inadvertently increased the school-to-prison pipeline (Counts et al., 2018). However, some NRA supporters believe that resource officers can prevent would-be shooters from entering schools (Minshew, 2018). Others have the perception that teachers should be armed as the first line of defense against an active shooter to keep children safe (Minshew, 2018).

The situation with SROs in schools is discussed by Theriot (2016) in a study used to collect data on students' attitudes and feelings towards SROs. The researchers set out to find out if SROs impacted students positively or negatively in middle school and high school. The study showed that students who had interacted with SROs had positive interactions but lower levels of school connectedness. School connectedness is defined by Theriot (2016) as students caring about investments in schools and their sense of attachment to the school. Overall, Theriot (2016) showed that student interactions with SROs were more positive than negative and that students do not view SROs as a negative presence or distracting at schools. However, Bleakley and Bleakley (2018) pointed out that SRO programs are observed as a factor in the criminalization of misbehavior in the American school system. Also, the research showed that students are five times more likely to be charged with disorderly conduct in a school that houses SRO programs. The current state of SROs in schools is complicated because some view it as a program that needs to be in place to protect students, and others view it as a program that criminalizes student misbehavior and hinders the students learning environment. More exploration is needed in this subject matter.

Stakeholder Perceptions of Guns in Schools

The number of arguments to arm educators to be a quick reaction force against armed intruders continues to increase, according to DeMitchell and Rath (2019). Rampage shootings such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, and Parkland have triggered the conversation among stakeholders of whether to bring more weapons to school for safety or keep them out. Policymakers have proposed legislation that permits not just teachers and administrators from carrying a gun but also college students and visitors who are licensed to carry concealed weapons (Cramer, 2014). Morabia (2018) stated that teachers already face huge responsibilities as educators, such as dealing with bullying, crime, racism, medical emergencies, suicides, and natural disasters. Opponents of legislation that would arm teachers stated that allowing concealed carry handguns would increase gun violence (Teeple et al., 2012). Furthermore, Students for Gun-Free Schools (SFGS) said that permitting guns on campus would create additional risks to the student and school staff population. Also, SFGS indicated that people with concealed carry permits are not always “law-abiding” citizens and that training is not required to hold such a license. Additionally, SFGS stated that concealed handguns would detract from a healthy learning environment. However, many feel that armed teachers can be a preventative measure for school shootings.

Some lawmakers and school districts want to arm school personnel, but a study by Weiler and Armenta (2014) found that most administrators are not captivated by the idea. The researchers also found that principals thought that disadvantages such as accidental discharges and tort lawsuits would supersede any advantages of having armed personnel. The principals in the survey also answered that their schools were safe and that rampage

shootings were relatively rare, and the chances of having an incident like in Newton, Connecticut, were low. Finally, the researchers reported that principals had concerns about proper handling and storing of weapons in schools when on campus.

Armed Teachers as a Deterrent of School Shootings

JeeHae-Helen Lee (2013) stated that children in the U.S., compared to children in Finland, France, or New Zealand, are 13 times more likely to be killed in a gun homicide. Oltman and Surface (2017) stated: “While both gun-free schools legislative actions are preventative in nature, neither actively could prevent someone from walking onto a school campus and discharging a weapon” (p. 175). Additionally, the University of Colorado lost a legal battle against such a proposition, and now the university allows students, visitors, and teachers to carry a gun on campus if they hold a permit.

The Dickey Amendment stunted research on gun violence since its implementation in 1996. The amendment prohibited the CDC from using government funds to promote gun control (Morabia, 2018). Due to the Dickey Amendment, there is little evidence on whether training teachers to use firearms, arming them in schools, and consistently instructing them would be beneficial for school safety or harmful (Rajan & Branas, 2018). Moreover, as school stakeholders work on building safer environments for students, a better understanding of the implications of arming teachers on children’s development and learning must be considered and requires further research.

School shootings are not new, and citizens have taken matters into their own hands in some situations. For example, armed individuals on campus prevented more deaths from a mass school shooting in 1966 at the University of Texas (Nedzel, 2014). During this shooting, 17 people were killed and 31 injured, according to Nedzel, but

more could have died if the people on campus, would not have been armed and returned fire to Charles Whitman's location. According to Arnold (2015), Whitman entered the administrative office of the University of Texas and barricaded himself inside. Further, during this time, Whitman was able to "snipe" 14 people and injured 30 others from the tower. According to Arnold, the actions of these armed people caused the sniper to take cover, and it gave other people in the open field time to find shelter; this response saved lives. Additionally, the actions of the armed public allowed police to arrive and formulate a plan of action to stop Whitman.

An interest in legislation that allows teachers to carry concealed guns on campus has increased since the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 (Bennett et al., 2012). In Utah, citizens with concealed carry licenses are already authorized to carry weapons at any public school, including elementary schools (Arnold, 2015). Consequently, a teacher with a concealed permit can carry a gun to work, and students enrolled in college campuses can be armed as well. In addition, the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) specified that if weapons are allowed on campus, students can accidentally or deliberately discharge a gun on-campus or at off-campus locations where students are consuming alcohol, drugs, and engaging in risky behavior (Teeple et al., 2012).

In a rural district of Colorado, voters allowed the high school principal and the superintendent to act as extra security at the schools (Weiler & Armenta, 2014). This decision allowed them to conceal semiautomatic weapons on school grounds. Rajan and Branas (2018) indicated that existing research shows that school security is a critical component of the school's climate. Rajan and Branas explained that school climate is

defined as the quality of students learning environment, disciplinary practices, social-emotional security, respect, acceptance of diversity, nurturing positive peer relationships, students' social support, and equal opportunity teaching practices. Therefore, when school safety measures, such as arming teachers, are added to schools, are the school climate aspects considered? Weiler and Armenta (2014) also found that most principals are not fond of the idea of arming teachers or other school personnel. The researchers reported that the principals' reactions ranged from urging extensive training for armed teachers and staff to leaving the profession if teachers and staff became armed on campus.

The Issue of Allowing Teachers to Carry Guns in Schools

In 1978 Landry vs. Ascension Parish School Board provided evidence of a teacher who threatened a student with a gun after a heated altercation (Frederick, 1999). Landry was an educator approached by a student who threatened him with a thirty-inch two-by-four piece of wood. The student proceeded to chase Landry into the bathroom and assaulted him. After the attack, Landry ran to his car, where he kept a pistol and returned to threaten the student with it. Frederick (1999) maintained that conflicts could arise if legislators create laws that allow teachers to carry concealed weapons in school. For example, when should a teacher brandish a weapon? A teacher's role in the classroom is not to wield a gun but to educate students. A teacher can make the wrong decision, which can cost a student their life (Frederick, 1999). Moreover, there are different methods to decrease the number of weapons brought to schools: Metal detectors, trained armed and unarmed security, backpack searches. Arguments against allowing guns in schools have been brought up by the organization, Students for Gun-Free Schools (SGFS) (Wood, 2014). Furthermore, the SGFS offers five arguments against campus carry laws:

1. Concealed handguns would diminish the healthy learning environment.
2. More guns on campus would create more risks for students.
3. Carry-permit holders will not deter would-be shooters.
4. Carry-permit holders are not always law-abiding citizens.
5. Carry permit holders are not required to have any training.

The annual cost of arming one educator in each school of a 12-school district is approximately \$93,565 to \$116,960 the first year and \$61,095 to \$93,690 the following year (Weiler & Armenta, 2014) found in their research. Some districts struggle to get the materials needed for a proper education, so spending thousands of dollars for arming teachers is unforeseen for some regions. Rogers et al. (2018) further stated that for teachers to save lives during a school shooting, they would need to undergo equitable training to law enforcement officers; training teachers is another type of expense.

Summary

This review of the relevant literature focused on past and recent school shootings, gun control policies, weapons in schools and other public places, and SROs with guns in schools has shown some of the complexity of why stakeholders and teachers are torn on the issue of arming educators. Researchers in school safety have attempted to identify school shootings' causes to prevent them from happening (Rinaldi, 2016). In addition, experts in many fields have concluded that school shooters' rationale is complex and challenging to profile.

The few studies on teacher perceptions towards teachers carrying guns in schools have shown that most teachers are opposed and feel that bringing guns to schools would

make the schools less safe. In the literature review, it is revealed that there is no consistency within and among states on whether to arm teachers or not. However, several common themes did emerge from the literature review: most teachers are opposed to carrying guns in school, administrators at schools are reluctant to have guns in schools, and politicians are divided on gun control policies. Finally, there are no federal laws that could be found that mandate educators to receive training with weapons or any security training of maintaining a gun in school.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by one central research question and three support research questions:

- Central Research Question: What are the attitudes of the school community towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of parents of middle school students towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 2: What are the middle school administrators' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 3: What are the middle school teachers' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this instrumental qualitative case study was to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. An instrumental case study served to illuminate a particular issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Chapter 1 presented the problem, purpose, background, research deficiencies, participant information, research questions, audience, and the significance of the study. In chapter 2, the literature review displayed the history of school shootings from the 18th-century to the 21st-century. These high-profile school shootings shaped gun policies, gun-control policies, firearms allowed in public places, school resource officers, and armed teachers in schools. Chapter 3 consists of a synopsis aligned with the central research question. The central research question is: What are the attitudes of the school community towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds? Answering this research question provides information on stakeholders' perceptions of teachers carrying handguns in schools. Furthermore, chapter 3 provides information on the population and sampling in the study and geographical information, interview protocol data analysis, quality measures, ethical considerations, and measures to safeguard confidentiality.

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research is an alternative to the conventional form of quantitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Probing into research settings to obtain a deeper understanding of how things are, why they are, and how participants perceive them are the characteristics of a qualitative approach (Gay et al., 2009). Qualitative studies are

becoming familiar and well-established in research fields such as education, regional planning, health sciences, social work, and management, according to Marshall and Rossman (2016). In addition, there are various qualitative studies, and the research typically occurs in the natural world (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because the researcher collected data in the field where participants experienced the study's issue or problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, qualitative research emphasized the use of distinct approaches to inquiry. For this case study, the researcher had access to teachers, parents, and administrators exposed to the danger of mass school shootings. As a result, the participants gave their insight into the school's security and their thoughts on arming educators in a school building.

Appropriateness of Design

The qualitative research design used for this study was an instrumental case study. Instrumental case studies highlight a specific issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, case studies focus on programs, events, or activities involving individuals rather than groups. Yin (2018) explained that a case study helps the researcher investigate a contemporary issue in-depth within its real-world context. Case studies are qualitative methods of research that explore bounded systems. During the investigation, the researcher analyzed teachers, parents, and administrators' views on whether teachers should be armed in schools. A case study was appropriate for this research because it explored the opinions of stakeholders on armed teachers. The instrumental case focused on several individuals' views that can be affected by the phenomena under study. This research is instrumental in illuminating the issue of shooters entering schools and causing

rampage killings and how school districts, policymakers, and other stakeholders can use the data collected to reform school safety and school violence policies.

A narrative approach was not practicable for this research because the participants involved had not experienced a mass shooting at their schools, and a narrative design, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), begins with the lived and told stories of individuals. A phenomenological study was not feasible either because it also focuses on the lived experiences of individuals. For this study, the participants share their thoughts and beliefs about the phenomena, which comes directly from personal experiences. Grounded theory was not used because the research focused on stakeholders' perceptions, not on generating an explanation or theory that explains a process or action. Finally, an ethnographic design was not used for the investigation because the study focused on individual interviews and not on a culture-sharing group.

Participants

The type of sampling that was used for this study was purposive. The participants used for this study were identified purposefully (purposeful sampling) to develop a profound examination of the attitudes of middle school teachers, parents, and administrators towards teachers carrying concealed guns in schools. The purpose of selecting individuals purposefully and not random was to understand the stakeholders' perceptions of the study phenomena. The participants, especially teachers and administrators, were made aware that their views were not to be interconnected with the views of the school district. Creswell (2015) stated that purposeful sampling could give voice to people who may not usually sound off their opinions. This type of selection is popular in qualitative studies because it increases the probability that the findings will

reflect different participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, the researcher used *maximum variation sampling* to differentiate the participants, which demonstrated different views from the various candidates. Maximum variation sampling was defined by Creswell and Poth (2018) as purposeful sampling in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that range in characteristics or traits.

The researcher sought to identify 15 participants to understand the phenomenon of stakeholders' attitudes towards teachers carrying guns in schools. Originally the participants were going to be chosen using the school systems email server (Outlook), unfortunately, the recruitment methodology had to change because the school did not approve the study. The school district felt that the topic was a “fiery topic”, so they did not allow the researcher to move forward using Outlook to recruit teachers. Instead, the participants for the study were contacted by personal emails, LinkedIn, and Facebook primarily (see Appendix A) and informed of the general purpose of the study; The explanation letter included that personal perspectives will not be intertwined with the views of the school district. Furthermore, the researcher informed participants to abide by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on wearing masks and practicing social distancing to minimize the risks of contracting the Covid-19 virus. The study's individuals were made up of middle school parents, teachers, and administrators identified through Facebook and/or LinkedIn websites. Additionally, the researcher used snowballing sampling to identify other participants if not enough participants were found for the study to reach saturation. Snowball sampling is when a researcher asks participants to identify other people to become research members (Creswell & Poth 2018). In addition, a consent or denial form was emailed to potential participants

requesting consideration to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The selected participants work within offices and classrooms of middle schools and other jobs outside the school systems.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were required to meet specific criteria for this study. The requirements were collected using the consent or denial form, including questions that will assist in identifying the inclusion criteria for the study. Each participant for this study was required to meet the following inclusion criteria: Teachers and Administrators: (a) must work directly in a middle school; (b) have three years or more experience as a teacher and/or administrator in a middle school. Parents had similar criteria to meet, but some requirements will differ because they do not work for the school district. In addition, parents must have a child currently enrolled in a middle school. The inclusion criteria of all identified participants were collected and placed in a table (Appendix C).

Setting of the Study

The study setting was multiple stakeholders from suburban middle schools. The school district where these suburban middle schools were located had approximately 37,000 students: 58% are Black, 22% are White/non-Hispanic, 12% are Hispanic, 5% are Multi-Racial, and 2% are Asian or Pacific Islander. The district housed 24 Elementary schools, 8 K-8 schools, 8 Middle schools, and 11 High schools. To conduct the study, an initial application with the IRB was started, and final approval was dependent on an approved proposal and the Nova Southeastern University institutional review boards (IRBs). For this study, permission from the school district was not necessary because the recruitment of participants was accomplished through the Facebook and LinkedIn

websites. However, a written explanation of the study was sent to the potential participants identified on these websites. The next step was to acquire permission from the NOVA IRB. The IRB secured human subjects' rights in all research conducted (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Once the IRB approved the study, the following step was to field test the interviewing process.

Instruments

For the best research results, two instruments will be necessary. The primary instrument used for the study was the interview (see Appendix D). The secondary device was field notes for further examination of the phenomenon. Also, field notes were necessary if the participant did not want to be recorded during the interview.

Interview Protocol

The Interview Protocol was created by the researcher and consisted of five open-ended questions. Castillo-Montoya (2016) described the purpose of an interview as a tool to understand the lived experiences of people and not a means to get answers to questions. The selected questions used for the interview process allowed the participants to be thorough with their explanations for data collection. The interview protocol questions are aligned with the research questions and the related literature from chapter 2. The open-ended questions pertained to parents, teachers, and administrators' perceptions of teachers carrying concealed weapons in schools. All the questions from the interview protocol were answered by the participants. To align research questions with interview questions, the researcher used a matrix to map the interview questions to define the interview questions' relevancy to the research question. The interview process began with introductory questions to obtain background information on the study subject(s) (Yeong

et al., 2018). Additionally, the alignment of the interview questions with the research question was essential; therefore, it is crucial to use a matrix that ensured that all research questions were covered in the interview protocol. To obtain quality data from the interview questions, the researcher refined the interview protocol by using the following steps:

- Aligning the interview questions with the research questions
- Construct inquiry-based conversations
- Receive feedback on interview protocols
- Pilot the interview protocol (When IRB has approved the proposal)

Yeong et al. (2018) stated that these steps do not conform to the interview protocol refinement (IPR) because each step can be repeatedly reviewed and refined based on the pilot test data.

Field Testing the Interview Protocol

The field test allowed the researcher to change the instrument based on the feedback received from a small group of participants. Participants will record their input on the device, according to Creswell (2015). The researcher will secure feedback on the interview tool from two administrators who have earned their education doctorate and have profound knowledge of the education field and the impacts that schools will have to deal with if or when teachers are allowed to carry guns in schools. The investigator had the field test participants identify poorly worded questions, problems on the interview questions, and anything that did not make sense. The researcher modified the interview protocol based on the feedback from the field test to send to the samples.

Piloting the Interview Protocol

A pilot test of the Interview Protocol was completed after the IRB approved the study to test human participants. If changes need to be made to the Interview Protocol after the pilot test, the changes must be resubmitted to the IRB for approval. An amendment was submitted to the IRB to make changes to the methodology of the study. The researcher changed the process to recruit participants by adding snowballing sampling to the recruitment of participants to identify other participants in case there were not enough participants in the study to reach data saturation. Due to the pandemic the researcher amended to follow CDC guidelines when meeting face to face with participants. The participants in the pilot provided comments, and the researcher made modifications as needed (Creswell, 2015). The pilot study helped make initial decisions in designing research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Yeong et al. (2018) also stated that a pilot program allows for the interview questions to be used in a real-world environment; the items' clarity and flow are tested during a pilot. The pilot test helped determine that the individuals could understand and answer the questions (Creswell, 2015). Pilot studies that involve human participants require the same examination as the full-scale research study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Once the researcher ran the pilot test and amended the original submission, the researcher resubmitted the final interview protocol to the NOVA IRB.

Fieldnotes

Collecting data during the interview is called fieldnotes (Creswell, 2015). The participant profile information was identified during journaling. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that observation was one of the critical tools for collecting data; during

observations, a note-taking instrument such as journaling was used for scientific purposes by watching the physical setting, participants, activities, and your behaviors. The researcher took field notes about their age, sex, ethnic background, and education. During the interview, the researcher also took fieldnotes about the room they were interviewing in and any participant's body language and facial expressions. The responses provided by the participants in the interview were compared to the fieldnotes and used in the analysis of the data.

Data Collection

The researcher spent a month meeting in a place of convenience to the participants to collect data using the interview protocol. The data was collected from the participants through interviews, fieldnotes, and recordings (if allowed by the participants). The data collected was secured in a computer with password protection. Additional documents were stored in a small safe with a combination lock inside a locked office.

The interviews were completed at the participants' convenience to meet their scheduling needs. For example, the participants may be interviewed at coffee shops, restaurants, online Zoom meetings, or at their residence if that is favorable in time and accessibility. Before the interview began, the participants were reminded of the purpose of the study (see Appendix A), turned in a notification of selection form (if not turned in electronically already) (see Appendix B), and they were asked for their permission to be recorded (whether the meeting was online or in-person). The participants were also asked if they had any questions before the interview began. As a result, the participants clearly understood the study, and the researcher received responses to meet data saturation. Data

saturation occurred when major themes had been identified, and new information could not be added to the list of themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants were informed that the interview might last 45 minutes to an hour in time. The participants were also assigned a letter that represents their identity to protect their identity. The identification letters were issued in their letters of consent.

The interviewing process used an original set of questions that gained responses of the participants' perspectives towards teachers carrying handguns in schools. The interview followed the interview protocol (see Appendix D) prepared for the study. The interview protocol was the primary guide for asking main research questions and follow-up questions. During the interview, the researcher took field notes and recorded the meeting if the candidate had given their consent to do so. The participants were asked at the end of the interview if they had any questions or if they would like to add anything else. The participants were thanked for their time and contribution to the study and informed that they would be allowed to review the transcribed data in 10 working days from the interview; they were allowed to add information. "Member checks" entail the researcher sending transcribed interviews to participants for review; this was done on a case-to-case basis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The interviews went as long as needed to reach data saturation. Once the interviews were secured, member-checked, and transcribed, the researcher analyzed the conversations and built themes of the participant's experiences with the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

Data analysis allowed the researcher to review the interview transcriptions and highlighted aspects of the responses that assisted in building themes of the participant's

experiences and the phenomenon. Data analyses in this qualitative research were used to obtain a general sense of the data, organize the data, and consider whether more data was needed (Creswell, 2008). In addition, the other purpose of the data analysis was to reduce the list of codes to identify five to seven themes that the participants discussed the most.

Data Analysis Procedure

After the interviews, the Zoom recordings and field notes from the interviews provided audio, video, and written information to create transcriptions. Transcriptions are the conversions of recordings and fieldnotes into text data (Creswell, 2015). First, the field notes were converted from handwriting to typed data on a Microsoft word document, and open-coding was used to have descriptors of the data emerge during the analyzing process. Next, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions and highlighted words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Next, codes were written on the margins of the Microsoft Word transcriptions alongside the appropriate segments. Finally, the transcripts and recordings were uploaded to the NVIVO software, where data was stored and organized, and the researcher could then code the data for further accuracy. Next, the researcher created transcripts by collecting the data using the NVIVO computer program software to code data and identify themes. Then, the recordings and fieldnotes were converted to produce final transcriptions of the interviews. Finally, the researcher labeled each of the transcripts with the participants' assigned letters and saved it on an external hard drive to ensure their identity was safe.

Internal Validity

To minimize a threat to validity, the researcher continually returned to recordings and field notes to verify the information. Threats to validity are design issues that may

threaten the study and have the researcher reach false or inaccurate conclusions (Creswell, 2015). For internal validity, the recordings and fieldnotes were compared at least twice against the transcripts. The researcher also spent prolonged time in the research site or in Zoom meetings to gather more data and interact with the participants as much as possible to collect richer data. Triangulation was also used to strengthen the quality of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Triangulation was the process used to corroborate evidence from the different individuals (parents, teachers, and administrators) to support themes. Additionally, to ensure that the data was accurate, the researcher used the NVivo software to help develop codes and categorize the data collected from the open-ended questions to ensure data saturation had been reached. After that, significant themes will be identified, and no new information will be added (Creswell, 2008).

External Validity

At the end of the interviews, the researcher mentioned to each participant that they would have an opportunity to review their responses. Therefore, member checks were used during the interview process for the external validity of the data. In addition, member checks allowed for the researcher to have accuracy in the participants' views. The participants received an email with a Microsoft word attachment of the transcription for their review with a reminder that they had five days to make any additions or changes. Finally, modifications were made to the master copy of the transcript if needed.

Ethical Considerations

The IRB requires researchers to successfully pass the collaborative institutional training initiative (CITI) modules (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The “respect for persons” (p. 51) is of the utmost importance in the study to remove the researcher’s bias

and protect the individuals' privacy, anonymity, and right to participate. To maintain ethics in the research, the researcher gained consent from the IRB and preserved the individual's identity; participant names were not used in the study; they were masked by using letters. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee was reminded of their anonymity and rights as participants. Transcripts and recordings were secured in a locked safe in a home office. Only the researcher had access to the home office. This assisted in the avoidance of disclosing information that would harm the participants. Additionally, three years after completing the study, hard copies of journals and notes from interviews will be burned in a fire pit. Computer files will be deleted and also deleted from the computer's recycling bin, and any flash drives will be cleared of any data from the interviews and burned.

Potential Research Bias

Biases for the study were removed by asking open-ended questions and allowing participants to give their thoughts and beliefs on the phenomenon. Questions as the qualitative inquirer were asked or mentioned during the interview, such as: what do I know?; How do I know?; What do I know?; What shapes my perspectives? The researcher also shared his personal biases to create transparency with the readers and participants. For example, the researcher does not have personal experience with teachers carrying weapons in schools. In addition, the researcher did not have experience with school shootings. The researcher focused solely on the responses of the participants.

Trustworthiness

The reference to the participants' perceptions and the alignment with the researcher's portrayal is credibility, as defined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2019). To

clarify biases that the researcher had, the researcher discussed his own biases of the study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated that this would create open and honest relationships with the readers. To represent the participants' views accurately, the researcher met with the participants face-to-face or in Zoom online meetings to engage with the individuals. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most sessions were in Zoom. The researcher triangulated the data collected from the interviews to support themes that the researcher had identified. The researcher also reviewed recordings and fieldnotes multiple times to ensure validity. Member checks also allowed the participants to examine the transcriptions and enabled them to make changes.

Summary

The focus of chapter 3 was to describe the application of a case study methodological design to explore the attitudes of specific stakeholders to teachers being allowed to carry concealed guns in schools. The data collected came from a group of selected people to view the multiple perspectives of people with this phenomenon. Chapter 3 shows how the interviews occurred and how the data collected from the interviews were analyzed. The next chapter will discuss the participants' responses, data analysis, and the interview protocol.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. The participants selected for this research study were current middle school teachers, current/former middle school administrators, and parents of middle school children. The researcher believed that a better understanding of this phenomenon would allow policymakers and other stakeholders to proceed with decision-making on this topic with caution and information from those who would be more closely affected. This study was based on a central research question and three support research questions:

Central Research Question: What are the attitudes of the school community towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?

- Support Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of parents of middle school students towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 2: What are the middle school administrators' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 3: What are the middle school teachers' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?

The researcher used the research questions and supporting questions to code and identify themes.

Research Sample Approach

The researcher identified 15 potential participants but interviewed only ten participants. By the tenth participant, data saturation was reached. Numbers and letters

were given to the participants to protect their identities. The researcher also reminded the participants that all data would be stored in a location that only the researcher had access to. All the data would be destroyed three years after the study. The researcher provided information to participants via personal emails, Facebook, and LinkedIn to set times and locations of interviews. The researcher utilized purposeful sampling and snowball sampling for participant selection for the research. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the participants if they knew or recommended someone else interested in participating in this study. Each participant for this study was required to meet the following inclusion criteria: Teachers and Administrators: (a) must work directly in a middle school; (b) have three years or more experience as a teacher and/or administrator in a middle school. Parents had similar criteria to meet, but requirements differed because they did not work for the school district. In addition, parents must have a child currently enrolled in a middle school.

The Center for Disease Control guidelines for Covid-19 prevention were met by both participants and researcher when meeting in person. If the participants decided to meet in person, social distancing and wearing masks were practiced. The participant was given the freedom to choose a place to meet to be comfortable for the meeting. The researcher informed the participants that the interview could last from 45 minutes to an hour. On the day of the interview, participants brought signed copies of the consent form and the explanation of the study form, which had a section asking participants if they would allow the interview to be recorded. The researcher brought extra copies of the documents to the meeting if the participant forgot or did not email their forms in advance; all participants agreed to be recorded. Participants were reminded of their right to exit the

interview process at any time and about the transcription process. Table 3 provides the demographics of the teachers, administrators, and parents and the pseudonyms for the participants to protect their identities. Appendix C includes inclusion criteria information.

Table 3

Demographic of Participants

Participants	Gender	Completed Education	Age Range
MSA-1	Male	Ph.D	40-50
MSA-2	Female	Ed.S	45-55
MSA-3	Female	Ed.S	40-50
MSP-1	Female	BA	30-40
MSP-2	Female	BS	35-45
MSP-3	Female	M.D	40-50
MST-1	Female	BS.Ed	30-40
MST-2	Female	Ed.S	40-50
MST-3	Female	M.Ed	20-30
MST-4	Female	BS.Ed	40-50

Note. Participant Pseudonyms were labeled as Middle School Teacher (MST), Middle School Administrator (MSA), Middle School Parent (MSP). Completed education was labeled as Bachelor of Science in Education (BS.Ed.); Master of Education (M.Ed.) Education Specialist (Ed.S); Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.); Bachelor Of Arts (BA); Bachelor of Science (BS); Medical Doctorate (M.D.)

Data Collection

The method of choice to collect data for this qualitative research study was through interviews and field notes. In-depth interviewing was relied on between the researcher and the participants to discuss themes of mutual interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The participants found the topic exciting, and many called it a “hot

topic.” After the initial contacts were made and participant questions were answered, the researcher moved to schedule interview times and locations to meet. Once the researcher set times and locations for interviews, the researcher conducted the interviews at the set time and places.

Interview Process

Interviews were conducted between October 3, 2021, and October 31, 2021. Participants agreed to meet in person, coffeehouses, restaurants, Zoom, or at their homes. Additionally, interview times and place of interviews were coordinated via email. If the participant chose to meet on Zoom, the researcher provided a link and emailed the participant at least five days before the meeting date. The researcher started by asking the participants demographic questions to build rapport with each of the participants. Demographic responses provided by the participants also gave the researcher an idea of the experience each participant had with the middle school community. After the participants provided information about their education and experience with middle school communities, the researcher moved on to the interview protocol. The researcher used probing questions to obtain additional information to clarify points or for the participants to expand on an idea, as stated by Creswell (2008). The questions focused on the attitudes of teachers, administrators, and parents towards teachers carrying handguns in schools. The researcher utilized fieldnotes to record personal thoughts, ideas, or emergent themes. Additionally, in the fieldnotes, the researcher jotted down long pauses, expressions, and emotions displayed by the participants.

The researcher concluded each interview by reminding the participants that they may leave the study at any point and their identities would be protected by storing the

data in a location that only the researcher had access to, and final reports would not include or reveal their identity. The researcher also explained the timeline of transcriptions being returned to the participants for member checks to allow participants to make any changes before the final document was created. The participants were notified that they would receive transcriptions in ten days. Participants were given five days to make changes to the transcript; if there were no responses, the researcher would continue with the original answers. All the interview questions were answered by the participants.

Data Saturation

Data saturation was reached by the tenth participant even though initially 15 potential participants were identified.. Fortunately, the last five participants were not scheduled, so the researcher did not schedule those appointments. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), when the researcher sees or hears the same patterns and senses that little more can be gained from the data collection, the researcher has reached data saturation. By the tenth participant, the researcher heard similar patterns from the participants' whether they were a parent, teacher, or administrator.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of bringing organization and meaning to the data that has been collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Two interviews were recorded via Zoom to collect the data due to participants having concerns about meeting in person because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The other eight interviews were done face to face and recorded using the Otter app available on android phones. The Otter application's artificial intelligence (AI) transcribed all recordings, including the Zoom

recordings. Field notes were handwritten during interviews and kept in a logbook that was held in a locked office. The researcher made sure that all information was legible and had dates on them. The researcher saved all of the transcripts on an external drive at the home office and kept all documents and digital data locked up in the office. Digital data was password-protected to protect participants. The researcher initially chose to use NVIVO software to analyze data, but the software was expensive. Instead, the researcher decided to use QDA Miner Lite, similar to the NVIVO software but cost-effective.

The researcher made necessary edits through QDA Miner Lite to ensure internal validity while replaying audio recordings and Zoom meetings. The researcher listened to all of the recordings on the Otter app and corrected any words that the Otter app's AI might have missed or misspelled. Furthermore, the use of member checking was utilized by the researcher to ensure external validity. The researcher communicated before and after the interview the member checking procedures that would be followed. Within ten days of the interview, the researcher sent the participants a copy of the transcripts to make any adjustments. Three participants communicated by email that they were satisfied with the transcripts and that no changes were necessary. The rest of the participants did not respond within the five-day timeframe, so the transcripts were not updated or changed.

Transcript Analysis

The researcher used an inductive approach to reduce the amount of information collected by applying a coding scheme and identifying significant patterns, as Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) explained. First, the researcher finalized the transcripts in the QDA Miner Lite software. Next, the researcher stored all the transcripts in the QDA Miner

Lite. Then, the researcher used the software's coding mechanism to code and identified relevant themes that connect to the phenomenon. The researcher used different colors to identify different codes, and relevant themes were highlighted. Field notes were kept in a notebook and cross-referenced with the transcripts uploaded in the software. The field notes assisted the researcher with notes on the physical setting, activities, facial expressions, and body language during the interview. The field notes were not uploaded to the software, but they were used to provide authenticity to the data.

Theme Development

In qualitative research, themes are units of information that have several codes that assist the researcher in forming a common idea (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For example, from the interviews, the researcher collected data that specified stakeholders' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. Creswell (2015) wrote that themes are similar codes grouped to form a central idea in the data analysis. By examining the codes identified by using the QDA Miner Lite software, the researcher was able to identify critical points in the discussions. From those key points, five themes emerged. The purpose of developing the themes was to record patterns to answer the central research question and understand the phenomenon of stakeholders' attitudes towards teachers carrying concealed weapons in middle schools.

Development of Emergent Themes

The researcher examined themes that emerged during the data analysis. The researcher identified themes based upon the participants' descriptions regarding their feelings about teachers carrying guns in middle schools. To clarify the point of view of each participant, the researcher asked probing questions. Through multiple examinations

of the interview recordings and field notes, the researcher highlighted and coded critical perspectives of the participants. In the initial data analysis, the researcher found 40 to 50 codes. The codes were narrowed down to assist the researcher in identifying relevant themes. From the codes, five critical themes emerged. The researcher did not have any preconceived themes. Table 4 shows the emergent themes and the categories and the explanations of the emergent themes from the participants are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 4

Emergent Themes and Categories of Responses by Participants

Themes	Categories of Responses	Participants
1. Middle School Teachers are Already Overwhelmed With other Responsibilities	Teachers already have too many responsibilities	MSA-1; MSA-2; MST-1; MST-2; MST-3; MST-4
2. Training on Guns Would Be Required for Teachers	School lockdowns; lack of training; active shooter drills; training teachers to do SROs job; emergency response	MSA-1; MSA-2; MSA-3; MST-1; MST-2; MST-3; MST-4
3. Concern for Mental Stability of Some Teachers	Psychological evaluations; mental state of teachers	MSA-1; MSA-2; MSA-3; MSP-1; MSP-2; MSP-3; MST-1; MST-2; MST-3; MST-4
4. Students Could Have Easier Access to Guns in Schools	Carry license; a place to lock up weapons; concealed carry	MSA-1; MSA-3; MSP-1; MSP-2; MSP-3; MST-1; MST-4
5. Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want Middle School Teachers to Carry Guns	Teachers are uncomfortable; do not want guns in schools; accidental discharges	MSA-1; MSA-2; MSA-3; MSP-1; MSP-2; MST-1; MST-2; MST-3; MST-4

Table 5*Emergent Themes and Explanations*

Emergent themes	Explanation Based on Participant Responses
1. Middle School Teachers are Already Overwhelmed With Additional Responsibilities	Participants explained the number of responsibilities they already hold and how overwhelming it can be to have another responsibility
2. Training on Guns Would Be Required for Teachers	Participants discussed the importance of training on weapons if teachers were allowed to carry them in schools
3. Concern for Mental Stability of Some Teachers	Participants explained their concerns for the mental stability of teachers who would carry a weapon if allowed
4. Students Could Have Easier Access to Guns in Schools	Participants described their concerns about students' access to weapons if they were on school grounds
5. Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want Middle School Teachers to Carry Guns	Participants described how they do not want guns in schools

Theme 1: Middle School Teachers are Already Overwhelmed With Additional Responsibilities

Participants discussed the number of additional responsibilities added to their existing duties if guns were allowed in schools. For example, the role of the teacher already includes lesson planning, classroom management, conferences with students and parents, and the student's safety.

(MSA-1) *“You’re not just asking someone who is already fatigued from lesson planning, data meetings, teaching students, contacting parents, and documenting, but then on top of that, make sure that they train on a weapon.”*

(MSA-2) *“I am concerned about the responsibility of a teacher having to secure the weapon and make sure a student or students get their hands on it.”*

(MST-1) *“I really don’t want that responsibility. Because it’s more than just having it and being trained on it. It’s also you’re responsible if anything happens with that gun.”*

(MST-2) *“Teachers are already asked to do so much, and I am seeing it like I’m already asked to do so much and expected not just to be a teacher, but also be a counselor, and a social worker, and a parent sometimes to these kids and now I need to be a security guard too.”*

(MST-3) *“My personal belief, assuming I was the person deciding to allow teachers to carry a weapon, would be let's not put one more thing on teachers.”*

(MST-4) *“I was saying my main issue with teachers having guns is, this is one more thing on teachers' plates that they have to be thinking about and prepared for and trained for and worried about and liable for. Police officers and SROs, their job is to take on that liability. They signed up for that, and they've been trained for it properly. You could train teachers properly to do it, but it’s going to take away from time that they need to be planning or working with kids in tutorial or doing professional development for instructional strategies.”*

Theme 2: Training on Guns Would Be Required for Teachers

Participants expressed the importance of training for teachers if they were called on to carry weapons in schools. In addition, participants mentioned that teachers would need proper training in using the gun and securing the weapon. Furthermore, teachers expressed their fear for lack of training or improper training techniques in using a gun or its security in the classroom.

(MSA-1) *“I think I would feel intimidated by carrying a weapon because I do not*

have any experience with handguns and ammunitions training.”

(MSA-2) “If it was mandated to carry, if it was mandated training, I would absolutely think that there would be at least 40 hours of training for the teachers.”

(MSA-3) “I would also like to know how much training that individual has as far as handling a weapon and being able to decide when the weapon is necessary versus someone pulling a weapon just because they got scared.”

(MST-1) “So, are we training a teacher to be a soldier and goes in the direction of the fight scene? Are we being trained to be a teacher or a protector? If I am mandated to carry a gun in school, have I turned into the SRO?”

(MST-2) “It's been over two years since I last received training on active shooting due to Covid. So if you have teachers who have come to the district, or who are beginning teachers, in the past two years, they haven't had one at all, even if we were receiving these trainings, like we used to, I think that there should be training offered for the community for parents, and other stakeholders, not just for teachers.

(MST-3) “I myself have a concealed carry license; however, I don't carry because I'm not comfortable enough to be carrying a weapon on me. I'd like more training, personal training before I feel comfortable carrying a gun on me.”

(MST-4) “There's a slight possibility of an adult losing their cool, but that's where the training and certification and background checks, and maybe psychological evaluations should come into play before e a teacher is certified to carry a weapon at school.”

Theme 3: Concern for Mental Stability of Some Teachers

Participants showed great concern about the mental stability of a teacher who

would be allowed to carry a gun in school. Many of the participants expressed their views on how leaders would choose who could have a weapon in school. Other participants mentioned the issue of teachers who are already stressed and overwhelmed with their other duties and how they might react to a threat in school.

(MSA-1) *“You know there are some teachers who I question their mental stability. I mean, I have teachers who I would not call on to have a weapon in school because they do not know how to handle certain situations professionally as is. I think I would rather hire more security personnel than have some of these teachers carry a gun in school because of their mentality.”*

(MSA-2) *“I’m afraid that a teacher or an individual who had a weapon in school would just pull it because they had a bad day. Maybe the situation didn’t warrant it.”*

(MSA-3) *“You never know about the teacher and what type of mental state he could be in one day, so I am not very comfortable about it.”*

(MSP-1) *“I would hope that somebody who has mental health problems would not be carrying a gun, but I don’t really know how you would prove that somebody doesn’t have mental health issues.”*

(MSP-2) *“I am concerned because I know people who have committed suicide by the use of a gun, and we do not know where that person is mentally.”*

(MSP-3) *“There are some personalities who will probably be the first to volunteer to carry in school, but they are the ones you know should not be carrying a weapon in school because of their short fuse or the way they treat students.”*

(MST-1) *“Not knowing the mental state of a teacher would be a concern because I would be devastated knowing that a student got hurt by someone who possesses a*

weapon who's a teacher, and you did not know their mental stability."

(MST-2) *"If we have people bringing guns into schools, be they teachers or otherwise, like how are we going to ensure proper training and proper screening to make sure these people are mentally sound enough?"*

(MST-3) *"Like I said, they need to be somebody that's trained. They need to be somebody that's gone through some sort of psychological evaluation because teachers already, most that I know, are under a lot of stress. I myself have an anxiety disorder. So if you have teachers with any sort of mental disorder, it needs to be disclosed. And there needs to be some sort of an evaluation done before they can be allowed to carry a weapon because nobody's perfect."*

(MST-4) *"first wave of teachers to carry should be former soldiers and maybe former police officers, but we get into the discussion of mental health. You have soldiers and police officers that could, and I would say that maybe most of them would probably have some sort of post-traumatic stress disorder from situations that they've gone through."*

Theme 4: Students Could Have Easier Access to Guns in Schools

Participants mentioned concerns over students gaining access to the gun if the teacher was carrying it. The participants also discussed their views on students obtaining control of the weapon if they knew where it was stored in the classroom. Many participants felt this was detrimental to whether teachers should have guns in schools.

(MSA-1) *"The other case, which is probably more likely to be the case where the individuals who carry the weapon, but they don't secure the weapon, so students get. Or you know, the teacher may just throw it in a desk, and a child goes to the desk and takes*

the weapon, you know, or maybe overpower the teacher and they take it.”

(MSA-3) *“I think there are some students who can target teachers because they know they have a weapon, and they can get the weapon. Maybe the plan could be to take down this one teacher because they know this teacher has a weapon.”*

(MSP-1) *“Maybe a student has a conflict with another student, and then, you know, they know this teacher has a weapon, so they will get that weapon or take the teacher down so that they can use the weapon to get the other student.”*

(MSP-2) *“I think the problem with guns is the easy access to them, and the more availability that there is, the more that a child could have them. I think this makes the situation worse.”*

(MSP-3) *“I think the problem with guns is gun control. So I don't think having more guns is the answer. And I understand that, like, school shootings happen, and it's not because they stole a gun from a teacher. Most likely, it's happening because they're getting from home or somewhere else to bring them into school, but it's because there are so many guns because of the lack of gun control that I don't think by adding more to the situation's a smart idea.”*

(MST-1) *“What would the protocols be if a kid managed to get the concealed weapon? If a 14-year-old gets mad if they saw that I have a weapon and manages to gain access to the weapon, and want to kill another kid, then what?”*

(MST-4) *“I'm afraid of an accident happening. What sort of accident? I'm afraid of somebody not protecting their weapon the way they should and a child getting hold of it and going off and harming somebody.”*

Theme 5: Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want Middle School Teachers to Carry Guns

Participants described their views on whether or not teachers should be carrying weapons in schools, but the majority of the participants felt that having weapons in schools was more of a danger than an aid to teachers, students, and the school in general. In addition, the participants felt that students could be in more danger with more guns in schools due to the accessibility of weapons.

(MSA-1) *“Like I said, in theory, it sounds like a great plan, but then we start to get to know some of the teachers that would probably be carrying these weapons, and I will probably be more in favor of hiring more security, trained security people.”*

(MSA-2) *“Me personally, like I said, it's not on my radar. So I wouldn't personally want to have a handgun in school.”*

(MSA-3) *“I'm a type of person that doesn't believe in guns; I don't believe in guns. So I don't believe that we all need to be carrying guns.”*

(MSP-1) *“Now a civilian, on the other hand, and this is just my assumption, that I think a civilian would be more concerned about, okay, you know, carrying the weapon, and then maybe being a little shaky. And to teach, so maybe they wouldn't be able to teach the curriculum that they were supposed to teach because they would be more concerned about carrying that weapon.”*

(MSP-2) *“I just think that you know, there does need to be something else in place. I just don't believe that, you know, that extra guns would help.”*

(MST-1) *“You want your kids to be safe in that class, and you wish not to be afraid of coming into your room. I just don't believe in having guns in or outside the*

classroom.”

(MST-2) *“I would say if we really want people with weapons in schools to protect kids, we need to hire more police officers. That is their job. That is specifically what they're trained to do. We need more campus police and campus security to be in the schools, not armed teachers.”*

(MST-3) *“But I personally like if I'm in a room where the person who's leading whatever's happening has a weapon. Even if I don't feel threatened, I don't necessarily feel relaxed, you know, and I think that that would really change the middle school culture of wanting kids to just feel relaxed and comfortable and come in where they can kind of learn freely. So, I would not want weapons in schools for that reason.”*

(MST-4) *“I don't think everything can be solved with a gun, and I don't want somebody telling me I have to carry a gun if I'm not comfortable with it.”*

Outliers

The researcher identified outliers while analyzing the data. Outliers are data, people, or behaviors that do not fit (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). An outlier is data that differs significantly from the other data collected (Allen, 2017). In addition, an outlier is also known as an anomaly of recording and measurement errors that can reveal unknown data structures or suggest other phenomena. For example, two outliers were identified in the study, and they are the following: stakeholders are concerned about students' feelings about teachers carrying guns and stakeholders expressed a need to update protocols and drills for active shooters. The outliers developed by the researcher were based on themes that did not match the study's research questions but provided an interesting insight to the study.

Outlier 1: Stakeholders Are Concerned About Students' Feelings About Teachers

Carrying Guns

The participants discussed the impact of students' feelings about teachers carrying weapons. They expressed that students might feel uncomfortable or might not want to attend school if they knew their teachers were armed.

(MSA-1) *“Some students might feel as if they are in prison or some sort of jailhouse.”*

(MSA-2) *“Yeah, I think I think it might bother them and upset them.”*

(MSP-1) *“Once the students find out that the teachers are carrying weapons, they're going to feel like they're criminals, or maybe that, you know, we think that they're criminals, and then you're going to have the backlash from the parents thinking the same thing.”*

(MSP-3) *“I guess, states where kids grew up around guns, it wouldn't seem like a big deal to them. Like for me, I never grew up around guns. And I just, you know, I think this kind of sends a scary message, like the world, is a dangerous place, which I guess it is, but like, how would that affect kids psychologically, to see so many adults with guns walking around schools?”*

(MST-2) *“I think that it would really change the middle school culture of wanting kids to just feel relaxed and comfortable and come in where they can kind of learn freely. I think that is something that would affect it.”*

Outlier 2: Stakeholders Expressed a Need to Update Protocols and Drills for Active

Shooters

Participants expressed their views on protocols and drills that should be

happening in schools to minimize the chances of an active shooter entering the campus. Participants also discussed the need for more equipment, such as metal detectors, to add to daily protocols and drills monitored in the schools. Participants also expressed the importance of weapons safety protocols.

(MSA-1) *“I know, we've talked to the kids before with like in shooting drills that, you know, they should never try and take the gun away from the shooter. If the shooter falls, they should never try and run with the gun because then the police are going to see them with the gun.”*

(MSA-2) *“I think then the person, the teacher who is responsible for the gun, has to have it locked. He has a key, he or she has to have a key, and then also an administrator should have a key too, and it has to be somewhere where it has to be a person who can't have someone who's going to be lazy about it.”*

(MSA-3) *“You know, someone who's going to if they if they're responsible for that gun they have to make sure that that gun is locked up and unless they need it, but you know, you're hoping nothing ever happens. But that gun has to be locked up.”*

(MST-1) *“I'm on the ERT, emergency response team, we always talking about, you know, how-to, you know, fire drills, active shooter drills, and then we talk about areas that are dangerous for our kids. Okay, so if they're part of the ERT, they have to practice. Like, we would have to go through trials. And what would happen like if this person who would be part of the ERT is a carrier who carries guns, that person would have to practice like, we would have to have like, not, with the kids, but more with the adults have practice scenarios of what would happen.”*

(MST-2) *“We do shooter drills, and all of the layers that go into that, like if we*

had a gun, that would be another layer. And then now I'm kind of thinking out loud, but if you have teachers carrying guns and police officers are going in during a mass shooting event, they don't know necessarily who the active shooter was or not if you have teachers carrying guns to protect houses, how are the police officers going to distinguish a teacher who has a gun to protect versus a potential mass shooter that was there with a gun?"

(MST-3) *"One thing that seems really small is, you know, we say that we require all teachers to lock their doors during the day. But I know for a fact that the majority of teachers don't lock their doors during the day. If there's an active shooter in the hallway, you're not going to step out in the hallway to lock your door. Well, not only that, but even if you have a teacher who does lock their door every day when they're gone, they're out, and there's a sub, the sub doesn't get a key; the doors just unlocked."*

Summary

The research study findings were obtained from the conversations with ten participants whose in-depth interviews provided the attitudes and viewpoints significant to the study. The participants revealed their experiences and personal beliefs towards teachers being allowed to carry guns in schools. Through these interviews, five themes emerged and were examined by the researcher. Two outliers were also identified.

The themes are the following:

Theme 1: Middle School Teachers are Already Overwhelmed with Additional Responsibilities

Theme 2: Training on Guns Would Be Required for Teachers

Theme 3: Concern for Mental Stability of Some Teachers

Theme 4: Students Could Have Easier Access to Guns in Schools

Theme 5: Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want Middle School

Teachers to Carry Guns

Outlier 1: Stakeholders Are Concerned About Students' Feelings About Teachers

Carrying Guns

Outlier 2: Stakeholders Expressed a Need to Update Protocols and Drills for

Active Shooters

In Chapter 5, the researcher will expand on the identified themes from Chapter 4 and elaborate on the outliers. In addition, the researcher will interpret the findings and document limiting factors to the study. The relevance of the study will be discussed as well. Furthermore, a critique of the results and recommendations for future research will be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this instrumental qualitative case study was to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. The instrumental case study focused on the perspectives and experiences of the participants to illuminate the phenomena. The researcher focused on the in-depth exploration of the case (Creswell, 2008). The researcher hoped that a better understanding of the views of teachers, administrators, and parents would shed light on the topic of whether or not teachers should carry weapons in schools. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews and the collection of supportive data using the personal views of ten interviewees. The following chapter will provide a review of the study, a summary of the findings, interpretation of the findings, implications of the findings, recommendations for future studies and practice, and study limitations.

This study was guided by one central research question and three support research questions:

- Central Research Question: What are the attitudes of the school community towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of parents of middle school students towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 2: What are the middle school administrators' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?
- Support Research Question 3: What are the middle school teachers' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns on school grounds?

Summary of Findings

This study generated information on the views of specific stakeholders about the opinions of armed teachers in schools. Fortunately, school shootings are rare, and the focus and applications of safety measures in schools continue to be studied. Still, rampage shootings continue to plague schools and remain a catastrophic possibility (Freeman, 2015; Knox, 2018). Furthermore, school shootings show the most significant challenges for police and school staff because of the small amount of time to react, develop a plan of action, and deploy safety resources once the attack occurs (Freeman, 2015). Debates on arming teachers due to the increasing concern for the safety of students in educational settings continue to rise (Sandersen et al., 2018). Stakeholders are searching for answers to create a safe environment for all students (Findley, 2014). Although school shootings are rare in occurrence, it is, in fact, crucial in terms of today's concern for policymakers and other stakeholders to explore new and different security measures; this includes the option to arm educators and other school staff. This study looked to investigate the attitudes of teachers, administrators, and parents towards teachers carrying handguns in schools.

In Chapter 2, the researcher used an inductive approach to reduce the amount of information collected by applying a coding scheme and identifying significant patterns. The inductive method assisted in developing a conceptual framework (Volpe & Bloomberg, 2019). In addition, using a conceptual framework resulted in bringing together related concepts that helped provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, this framework guided the researcher in the research process by enabling the

researcher to make defensible choices, align research questions, align analytic tools with research questions, and thus assist with data collection, analysis, and interpretations.

The researcher identified 15 participants to interview and gain an understanding of the phenomenon of stakeholders' attitudes towards teachers carrying guns in schools, but by the tenth participant, data saturation was reached. As a result, only ten interviews were conducted. Nevertheless, the participants reflected on armed teachers and the impact on the school community and the people who serve the schools. During the interviews, the participants provided information on how armed teachers would impact the community and how it affected them at work and as parents of school-age children. The participants discussed the amount of responsibility this would add to their existing obligations. Many discussed how adding weapons to the school environment could make the schools unsafe, and the possibility of accidents happening would rise. Many expressed that children would have easier access to firearms. Many participants agreed that protocols should include adding trained personnel versus armed teachers because teachers were not soldiers running into battle but were there to educate. Overall, the participants agreed that they did not want weapons in schools. It was evident that the three stakeholder groups shared the same ideas and attitudes about the phenomenon. Data gathered from the interviews can assist policymakers and other high-level decision-makers in school districts to make better decisions on this phenomenon. In addition, this study will provide insight into the phenomena of armed teachers and their impacts on parents and school personnel. Analyzing the interview transcripts and field notes led to five themes being identified and two outliers. The themes are the following: (a) Middle School Teachers are Already Overwhelmed With Additional Responsibilities; (b)

Training on Guns Would Be Required for Teachers; (c) Concerns for Mental Stability of Some Teachers; (d) Students Could Have Easier Access to Guns in Schools; (e) Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want Middle School Teachers to Carry Guns. The outliers are “Stakeholder Concerns About Students' Feelings About Teachers Carrying Guns” and “Stakeholders Expressed a Need to Update Protocols and Drills for Active Shooters.”

Interpretation of Findings

The participants responded to the interview protocol by elaborating on their personal experiences and views, thus providing critical data to support their beliefs about armed teachers in schools. This section will give the perspective of the interpreted themes and findings associated with the study.

Theme 1: Middle School Teachers are Already Overwhelmed With Additional Responsibilities

Morabia (2018) stated that teachers already face huge responsibilities as educators, such as dealing with bullying, crime, racism, medical emergencies, suicides, and natural disasters. From this research study, participants described the number of responsibilities they have in place, such as training with academic coaches, meetings with administration, parent and teacher conferences. Beyond those duties mentioned by Morabia (2018) and the duties mentioned by the participants, they still have to lesson plan and prepare their classrooms for each day of instruction. In addition, participants noted that due to Covid-19, they have to clean their classrooms because of the lack of custodial staff. According to Bettini et al. (2018), collective responsibility is already a facet of school culture where teachers have to be concerned with student achievement, student learning, the collective efforts to improve instruction. Participants mentioned the

struggle to focus on student achievement and education, with many other responsibilities added to their existing obligations. Many of the participants stressed that adding the responsibility of carrying a weapon in school would make them feel overwhelmed and unable to focus on their primary duty, which is educating children. The participants felt that attending training for carrying a weapon would take away from vital training to teach struggling students. The participants discussed that money spent on training teachers to carry and use a gun could be used to hire more SROs and purchase more tools to keep weapons out of schools. The researcher interpreted these concerns as teachers being overwhelmed with responsibilities and could not handle another one as carrying a gun in school.

Theme 2: Training on Guns Would Be Required for Teachers

Former President Trump supported the idea of arming teachers and training those teachers to use guns and affording teachers who carry a firearm in school a bonus (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). Additionally, the school environment in the 21st-century has added safety drills and lockdown training against armed intruders (Wender & DeMille, 2019). However, due to the Dickey Amendment, there is little evidence on whether training teachers to use firearms, arming them in schools, and consistently instructing them would be beneficial for school safety or harmful (Rajan & Branas, 2018). From the responses from the participants, it was evident that training for teachers would be an issue. The participants expressed that lack of training or improper training could lead to school safety issues. In addition, many participants described their fear of the weapon or fear of when to draw a gun. Incidents of teachers drawing weapons on students have occurred. For example, in 1978, *Landry vs. Ascension Parish School Board* provided

evidence of a teacher who threatened a student with a gun after a heated altercation (Frederick, 1999). Participants expressed how students can be challenging at times, and an already stressed teacher with improper training can draw a gun on a student. Furthermore, teachers felt that training would have to be extensive if they were mandated to carry a weapon in school. Rogers et al. (2018) stated that teachers need equitable training to law enforcement officers to save lives during a school shooting. The researcher interpreted these findings as a need to train teachers properly if teachers were mandated or allowed to carry a gun in school.

Theme 3: Concerns for Mental Stability of Some Teachers

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly stressed teachers (Baker et al., 2021). For example, the pandemic has forced teachers to learn new technology overnight and engage students remotely. Additionally, teachers' have experienced considerable stress as a result of Covid-19, which has led to poorer mental stability. Due to this, some participants expressed their concerns for armed teachers and their mental stability. Some participants expressed concern about teachers drawing a weapon at an inappropriate time due to multiple stressors in their work and personal lives. Participants mentioned the issue of teachers who are already stressed and overwhelmed with their other duties and how they might react to a threat in school. Some of the participants spoke of some teachers who would volunteer to carry as not fit and questionable to carry a gun in school. During the Trump administration, the secretary of education created a commission to focus on target hardening to make schools less attractive targets by arming and training school staff and mental health services (Warnick & Kapa, 2019). Some participants mentioned in their interviews that psychological evaluations would be

needed to treat teachers who already experience some mental disorders and some who are prior military or police who experience post-traumatic stress disorders. The responses from participants led the researcher to believe that there were concerns about teachers' mental health and their ability to wield a weapon responsibly, which could create issues in school with already challenging students.

Theme 4: Students Could Have Easier Access to Guns in Schools

Thompson et al. (2013) indicated that some states have already passed legislation that permits concealed weapons on a college or university campus. Although some states have passed legislation that allows people to carry weapons on school grounds, the participants questioned the access to weapons in different ways. For example, some participants mentioned the easier access of a firearm on schools grounds to children, and others said some teachers could be irresponsible in the security of the weapon. In addition, crime rates in the United States remain a concern for most Americans, and one of the reasons is the ease of access to handguns (Giller, 1994). Therefore, many participants felt that having a gun in school would allow a child more effortless access to a weapon. In addition, some of the participants felt that older students could access the gun by attacking a teacher they knew carried a firearm.

On the other hand, some teachers expressed great concern for weapon storage and its accessibility. Therefore, if a student knew where the weapon was stored or the teacher did not store the gun according to protocol, the student could access it. Soboroff et al. (2019) stated that research shows that students and faculty are against expanding access to firearms in schools because of student violence and feelings of safety. The researcher

interpreted these findings as the participants being alarmed by the addition of more guns in schools because of the easier access a child could have to it.

Theme 5: Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want Middle School Teachers to Carry Guns

Gun control is a highly debated issue, and it is divisive in opinion (Hassett et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the participants in the study agreed that they did not want weapons in schools to security concerns, training issues, mental health evaluation issues, and access to guns in schools. The participants agreed that they would prefer other ways to protect their students. For example, some mentioned more metal detectors, random checks, better training of active shooter drills, and psychological evaluations for teachers. From the participants' descriptive responses, the teachers do not want guns in schools and feel there are other pathways to protect students and school staff without arming teachers.

Outlier 1: Stakeholder Concerns About Students' Feelings About Teachers Carrying Guns

A few participants brought up issues this phenomenon would have on students. For example, some participants mentioned how some students might no longer feel safe if they knew teachers were carrying guns in schools. The SFGS stated that concealed handguns would detract from a healthy learning environment. There are many groups like the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Association of University Professors, Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus, American Council on Education, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Education Association, and Students for Gun-Free Schools, that have contended that guns should be kept off school grounds (Hassett et al., 2020). The researcher interpreted this concern from the

participants as an issue that needs to be discussed further with the student population to find out their feelings about teachers carrying guns on campus.

Outlier 2: Stakeholders Expressed a Need to Update Protocols and Drills for Active Shooters

A few participants discussed their feelings about the need for protocols to minimize the possibilities of an active shooter and drills for active shooters who have entered the school. Some participants mentioned how some of the exercises do not make sense or protect the children, and some of the protocols followed might need to be enhanced to protect the children better. For example, one of the drills for an active shooter is to vacate the building if possible. Still, some teachers questioned the possibilities of multiple shooters and how exiting could be dangerous. Shootings from the late 20th-century and early 21st-century have impacted schools and how they perform safety protocols. The school environment has changed due to safety drills and lockdown training against armed intruders (Wender & DeMille, 2019). The researcher interpreted these findings as a concern for the safety of school populations due to the lack of proper training for active shooters.

Implication of Findings

This instrumental case study focused on the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. In addition, due to the interest in arming teachers in the U.S. since the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 (Bennett et al., 2012), the study explored the views of those closely impacted by shootings in schools. Finally, the problem statement recognized the lack of research indicating teachers, parents, and administrators' attitudes towards teachers

carrying handguns in middle schools. As a result of the study, the implications are the following:

- Need to provide adequate safety resources in school, so teachers are not overwhelmed with additional responsibilities
- Need to update and implement training for faculty in case of an active shooter entering the building
- Need to inform policymakers that middle school stakeholders do not want more guns in schools

Need to Provide Adequate Safety Resources in School, So Teachers Are Not Overwhelmed with Additional Responsibilities

Findings interpreted from the research study identified teachers would feel overwhelmed if they had to carry a gun in school. The teachers thought that they already had sufficient duties to handle and another responsibility such as carrying and maintaining a firearm would be too much for them. Some participants expressed that they would prefer having more SROs in the building or adding other resources such as metal detectors at all entrances, security personnel at main doors, and extra locks on their classroom doors. The participants stated that the number of duties such as planning, professional development, and assessment data collection, to name a few, already take up much of their time and add to the stress of being an educator.

Need to Update and Implement Training for Faculty in Case of an Active Shooter Entering the Building

The research findings interpreted from the study revealed that stakeholders feel that more training needs to be implemented in case an active shooter enters the building.

Participants described that some drills performed in the school did not cover all scenarios of an active shooter in the building. Participants mentioned that they would like more police officers to come into the building to provide more than one training in active shooter drills per year. Some teachers mentioned possibly being trained in talking down a would-be shooter by professionals in the field. In addition, other stakeholders said that funds that would be used to arm teachers could be used to finance psychological evaluations for students at schools and teachers.

Need to Inform Policymakers that Middle School Stakeholders Do Not Want More Guns in Schools

Participants expressed that they did not want more guns in schools from the interviews. Instead, the participants conveyed that SROs in the building should be the only ones with weapons in schools. Therefore, it is essential to let policymakers and other school officials know that significant stakeholders do not want more firearms in the schools. Participants showed emotion due to their concerns about whether weapons were allowed in schools. Some showed fear, and others mentioned possibly leaving the profession. Some participants expressed that teacher shortages are a concern, so politicians and other people making these decisions need to consider when deciding whether teachers should carry weapons in schools.

Relevance of the Study

The study's relevance is a matter of recognizing whether teachers should be armed in schools. In addition, the teachers, administrators, and parents involved in this study are invested in the school's well-being due to either working at the school or having children who attend the school. This study will provide a new perspective on how school districts

and policymakers are approaching making these critical decisions. The research is specifically relevant to the community because it spreads awareness of school districts possibly arming teachers due to the escalation of school shootings in the 21st-century. The study is also applicable to academic institutions and administrators because they may promote programs and ask for funds to keep schools safe. Administrators and teachers would advocate for safer schools and reach out to the community to assist.

Furthermore, this study enlightens the value of the mental health of teachers and students. Understanding that many of the school shooters had underlying mental conditions allows for the spread of awareness on dealing with various mental health issues inside and outside of the schools, which is why it is crucial to provide funds for mental health care in schools. This research may convince stakeholders to look at different options rather than arming teachers and evaluate other plausible options to keep schools safe without adding extra stressors to already stressed educators and administrators. Additionally, this research will create awareness to convince parents that their support is necessary to implement proper protocols to keep schools safe. Also, students will be impacted directly because teachers and administrators can have adequate training to keep would-be shooters out of schools and keep the student population safe.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher recommends that the following recommendations are taken into consideration for future studies:

1. Conduct research in other parts of the state and other states and compare findings.
2. Conduct research with the views of students on this phenomenon.

3. Conduct research with the opinions of SROs on whether teachers should be armed.
4. Conduct research that considers the effects that this phenomena would have on students and their feelings towards teachers carrying guns in schools.
5. Conduct research on the views of the different political affiliations and their reasoning behind whether or not teachers should be armed.
6. Conduct research to determine the differences in views among racial and ethnic groups on this phenomenon.
7. Conduct research to determine the differences in views among different genders on this phenomenon.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Plan training with local police to assist with best practices if a shooter enters the school.
2. Conduct monthly faculty meetings to train teachers consistently on drills and protocols for active shooters.
3. Need to update and implement training for faculty in case of an active shooter entering the building.

Limitations of the Study

Studies have limitations or potential weaknesses, or problems. In this section, the limitations will be listed and discussed. The first limitation is that most of the participants were females. The second limitation is that from the ten candidates interviewed, most were Caucasian. The third limitation is that none of the participants had experienced

working in a school where teachers were already carrying weapons. Finally, the fourth limitation is that none of the participants were students.

Conclusion

The summary of the findings in Chapter 5 provided a summary of the results, implications of the findings, the relevance of the study, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research. The study was an exploration to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools. The research questions served as the foundation for understanding the views of specific stakeholders. The research findings provided details about stakeholders' opinions towards the phenomenon of teachers carrying guns in schools. To conclude, the study contributes to understanding the views of those stakeholders most closely affected by school shootings and the types of decisions that must be made to keep schools and their populations safe.

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Appendix A

Explanation of Study Email/Letter to Participants

Date format: 09/25/2021

Dear potential participant,

My name is Roger Pacheco, and I am a doctoral student at Nova Southeastern University. My doctoral research focuses on middle school teachers, administrators, and parents' attitudes towards teachers carrying handguns in schools. The qualitative study is designed to gain insight from stakeholders so that policymakers can make well-informed decisions on this issue.

This letter explains the purpose of the study and seeks to recruit participants for the study. Middle school teachers and administrators are encouraged to participate in the study. The participants must represent individuals who may be impacted by the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, each participant must meet specific inclusion criteria.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please respond to this email confirming that you meet all the inclusion criteria and are willing to participate. Be aware that participation in this study will keep your identity anonymous, and your views will not be intertwined with the views of the school district. Participation in the study will require at least 45 minutes to one hour of your time. I will forward you an additional email as evidence that you have been selected for the study and schedule a time for our interview. Once the interview is completed and transcribed, you will receive an email with the transcription to review, add information, and/or make changes if necessary.

Please place your initials next to each of the inclusion criteria to show that you meet these requirements.

For Teachers and Administrators:

Initials _____ The participant must work directly in a middle school.

Initials _____ The participants must have three years or more experience as a teacher and/or administrator in a middle school.

For Parents:

Initials _____ Participants must have a child currently enrolled in a middle school.

If you have any questions, please email me or call me by phone. Thank you for your support and interest.

Respectfully,

Roger Pacheco

Appendix B
Notification of Selection

Date format: month/day/year

Dear Participant,

This letter/Email is to inform you that you have met the inclusion criteria for the study and are eligible to participate in the research study. As shared, the purpose of this research study is to understand the attitudes of middle school parents, teachers, and administrative staff towards teachers carrying handguns in middle schools.

You will be provided an identification letters and numbers to protect your identity for the study. Your identity will not be shared. Also, you will not be identified in any of the reporting of results of the research. All data will be kept in a secure location at all times; I will be the only individual with access to your data. All data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

To fully capture your thoughts and ideas, I am requesting permission from you to record the interview. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview recording and add to, delete, or modify the transcript.

Would you mind printing and signing this document to permit me to record the interview. If you choose not to be recorded, I will take detailed notes of the interview.

I give permission for this interview to be recorded:

Print Name: _____ *Sign Name:* _____

I do not give permission for this interview to be recorded:

Print Name: _____ *Sign Name:* _____

If possible, I would like to set up a phone or Zoom conversation to discuss any questions you may have about the study. Thank you for your support and interest.

Thank you,

Roger Pacheco

Appendix C
Inclusion Criteria Table

Inclusion Criteria

Participant	Teacher/Administrator works in a middle school	Parent has a child enrolled in school	Participants' years at the study site
MSA-1	YES	N/A	20
MSA-2	YES	N/A	18
MSA-3	YES	N/A	25
MST-1	YES	N/A	11
MST-2	YES	N/A	6
MST-3	YES	N/A	18
MST-4	YES	N/A	21
MSP-1	N/A	YES	N/A
MSP-2	N/A	YES	N/A
MSP-3	N/A	YES	N/A

Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Final Interview Protocol (Questionnaire)

Project: Exploring Attitudes of Middle School Stakeholders Towards Teachers Carrying Handguns in Schools.

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Good morning/afternoon/evening,

Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to allow me to interview you. This project aims to collect data on the thoughts and feelings of stakeholders towards teachers carrying concealed guns in middle schools. The individuals who will be involved in this study are middle school teachers, administrators, and parents. The data collected will be anonymous, and names will not be used in any way, shape, or form in the final report. Also, I would like to remind you that your perspectives will not be intertwined with the school district's point of views. For the final report, pseudonyms/participant letters will be used to separate participants into different groups. Be aware that the interview can take as little as 45 minutes to an hour. I would also like to ask for permission to record the interview.

Do I have your permission to record? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, thank you! If no, I will only take notes of our conversation.

Interview Question 1: Could you describe in as much detail as possible how you would feel if teachers were allowed to carry a concealed gun in a middle school?

Probing Questions:

- On what basis have you formed this opinion?
- Why do you think that is?
- What are you most afraid will happen?
- Was there a specific event/experience? What happened?
- Can you think of another example?
- What do you feel is right?

Interview Question 2: What sort of impact do you think this would have in the middle school community?

Probing Questions:

- Why do you think this is the case?
- What led you to believe this?
- Would the opposite be true?

- How did you decide/determine/conclude that this is the impact it would have on the middle school community?
- How might your assumptions about...influence your thinking?

Interview Question 3: Does being a teacher/administrator/parent affect your views/attitude on teachers carrying guns in middle schools?

Probing Questions:

- Tell me more about this?
- Why do you think this is the case?
- Can you elaborate on how this affects your views/attitudes?
- How did you decide/determine/conclude...?

Interview Question 4: Can you identify a circumstance(s) that may cause you to change your opinion?

Probing questions:

- Can you elaborate?
- What is another way you can view this?
- What do you think is the best possible outcome?
- Can you identify other examples? I would like to hear more.

Interview Question 5: Do you feel middle school administrators..., do you feel middle school teachers..., do you feel middle school parents) would support/share your opinion?

Probing questions:

- On what basis?
- Why do you think that is?
- Can you elaborate on this idea/thought a little more?
- What is the best thing that could happen?

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything you would like to add that we did not cover in this interview? Also, are there other staff members that I should talk to find out their views on this phenomenon?

I would also like to remind you that your identity will not be shared, and your responses will not be intertwined with the views of the school district.