

Preparation of Faculty for School Safety Situations: A Basic Qualitative Study

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Preparation of Faculty for School Safety Situations: A Basic Qualitative Study

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Abstract

School shootings occur far too often across the country. District and school staff implement training procedures to prevent shootings and respond effectively to dangerous events. Many studies have explored student, staff, and community perceptions of a possible active shooter situation. A gap remains in the research regarding the perceptions of the training for the staff and how effective the safety plan prepares a staff during a dangerous situation.. Based on a basic qualitative study method and a self-efficacy framework, the perceptions of 23 staff in one secondary school with a staff of 67 were explored. Participants filled out an online questionnaire with qualitative questions; a subset of 6 teachers then attended one focus-group discussion. The information was analyzed and coded for consistency to answer the research questions. Teachers expressed positive perceptions of safety following the training. The programs put in place support teacher's self-efficacy to focus more on educating students instead of the safety concerns of the building.

Keywords: school safety, teacher self-efficacy, safety training

Dedication

To my family for sacrificing while I spent countless hours working to complete this degree. Without the grace of God and His guidance, I would not have been able to successfully complete the journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to introduce the study and to provide information on staff perceptions of teacher preparation for an active shooter scenario. Following background on the topic, the chapter consists of the statement of the problem, the research questions answered by the study on teacher perceptions of the training provided, the purpose and rationale behind the topic, and how the study aligned to and filled a gap in current research. The research gap in this instance was whether and how one school's training influenced staff perceptions of safety and the benefits of the training.

The United States government continues to recommend schools implement safety programs and procedures (Jonson, 2017). One such program schools have implemented is threat assessment, a process started by the Federal Bureau of Investigation 3 months after the Columbine shooting in 1999 and the first state-mandated safety process in Virginia, beginning in 2013 (Cornell & Maeng, 2018). Threat assessments cover all students who make a verbal or behavioral threat toward themselves or others, which then requires a designated staff member to follow protocol and interview the student to assess the threat level (Goodrum et al., 2018). Assessments only indicate how the student feels in the moment, whereas Goodrum et al. (2018) discussed student behavior issues as gradual, steadily changing over a prolonged period, which causes assessments not to catch some concerning patterns in student behavior. School leaders train school staff to understand the environment of the building and assess the students' situation to take preventative measures, such as counseling or notifying the family, before a threat assessment produces a warning (Çalik et al., 2018). Training programs and procedures, such as threat assessment, continue to be developed in many districts throughout the country (Cornell et

al., 2018). Preparing teachers and faculty members with information and training on how to prevent an attack or minimize the damage during an attack is essential.

Chapter 1 includes the topic of the study, how the study was investigated, and why. The background includes the history of school safety situations like an active shooter, followed by the statement of the problem motivating the research. Then, the purpose of the study is explained, as well as the nature of the study. The significance of the study is detailed, indicating how the study advances knowledge and benefits society. Research questions defined the choice of data collection and analysis. The theoretical framework is described and terms specific to the study are defined. Assumptions of the study are listed, as well as the scope and delimitations, which specify how to generalize the results for possible future endeavors. Limitations include threats to the validity and dependability of the study, including potential bias.

Background

Schools should be safe spaces for all stakeholders. The perception of the physical safety of the individual affects the educational environment (Goodrum et al., 2018). Students and teachers should be safe as well as feel safe to achieve success socially, academically, and physically (Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016). The active-threat training processes for districts evolved as more violent actions occurred around the country. In 2018, mass school shootings at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, became additional statistics as the two incidents with the highest death toll for the year (Rajan & Branas, 2018). Teachers and school leaders need better training to detect victimization; irritable behavior and violent acts are some of the student signs for possible needed intervention (Yablon, 2017). As these shootings continue, schools should train staff members on proper procedures and effective solutions for preventing or minimizing possible attacks.

The focus of the study was to address the perceptions of faculty and staff based on staff confidence in the safety preparation training. Limited evidence is available for school-violence preventative programs; yet, based on Barnes et al. (2017), violent behavior toward other students and teachers can be diminished through mentoring, coaching, or intentional individual time. In a similar study, Williams et al. (2018) agreed students need to feel a sense of belonging to the school to defuse negative tension instead of acting out in aggression. A foundational training prepared faculty and staff to use the tools provided in an effort to keep students safe from harm, whether from other students or an outsider. In Texas, teachers receive mandatory training every year, and districts provide what is necessary for the teachers to be successful in the classroom and keep each campus safe (Weiler et al., 2018). School district leaders try many variations of the same concepts to prevent serious safety issues from arising. As school staff prepare, they often rely on the words of the students for threat assessment and prevention of problems before any issue escalates to violence (Yablon, 2017).

Some school districts have added school resource officers (SROs) to campuses based upon the encouragement of the government through the Safe Schools Act of 1994 and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Acts of 1968 amended in 1998 (as cited in Counts et al., 2018). The presence of SROs affected the outcome of certain events, such as Arapahoe High School in 2013, where a student shooter committed suicide upon being confronted by the SRO (McQuiller, 2019). Recently, some district leaders have indicated the need for more protection through arming teachers on campuses. Criminals predominantly search for the easiest and safest targets, such as locations where weapons are illegal. The idea is armed school staff will deter potential shooters from a perceived easy target, leading to an increased perception of safety on

campus (Weiler et al., 2018). Yet, the funding for this endeavor provides specific difficulties for a campus to pay for the weapons for teachers to carry (Weiler et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The problem was a lack of assessment to determine whether the training provided by schools adequately prepared the school staff to maintain safety in dangerous situations. Teachers' perceptions of safety within the school after training was unknown. In a basic qualitative study of a rural North Texas district experiencing multiple threats during the 2017–2018 school year, the implementation of numerous safety trainings and whether or not the trainings provided the faculty with the perception of being prepared were explored. The school district had implemented programs to be proactive for the future, including the Threat Assessment program by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and a concealed carry program with lockboxes in every classroom (Modzeleski & Randazzo, 2018). In the concealed carry program, specific teachers are trained through local law enforcement to carry, or have access to, a firearm on school grounds through lockboxes. Research has not shown whether the procedures, along with further training sessions, create a perception of safety among the teachers (Martaindale, 2019). Perception is important. Without a crisis, district leaders will not know whether the staff members are genuinely prepared to protect and diffuse the situation. In the meantime, the best measure is the school staff's perception of preparation.

Lenzi et al. (2017) and Lindstrom Johnson et al. (2018) looked at the perceptions of stakeholders within the school community for an active shooter situation. Some researched how safe stakeholders feel on campus after a shooting occurs in another part of the country (Fisher et al., 2017; Moore & McAurther, 2017). DeMitchell and Rath (2019) and McQuiller (2019) discussed the addition of security through arming teachers or added security officers. The

research is limited in regard to the preparation of the school from the training perspective. Only Weber et al. (2018) discussed the preparation of school staff, but the research focused more on natural disasters and the preparation process than on the perception of safety and self-efficacy the training provided. This study focused on the preparation supported by the district for the specific campus studied and how well prepared the staff feels for an active shooter situation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared to maintain safety in a dangerous situation. Through the study, faculty and staff were able to recognize perceived preparation for a safety situation and describe the necessity for better pieces of training in the future. Knowledge gained through the study could be beneficial to districts around the state and country to possibly minimize or prevent school violence in the future. The study presented here helped fill the gap in empirical evidence on preventative programs (Barnes et al., 2017).

The goal of the study was to understand whether teachers perceived the training methods on an active shooter scenario as adequate preparation. Through the questionnaire, the study was designed to reveal faculty perceptions of safety training and policy at the school. The basic qualitative study directly helped one district gain perspective. Results could provide a foundation for expanding and comparing other district information to grow the best plan for schools. Many previous studies gathered the perceptions of students, teachers, and communities, but none found in the existing literature focused on the perception of training. The study was conducted to explore how to create an effective training process.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to advance knowledge in protecting schools, as the number of active shooter instances continues to rise across the country. School leaders need to actively pursue training and programs to ensure the safety of the students and educators in every building. Winston (2016) discussed the lack of safety programs, like a concealed carry program for teachers. Others discussed the significance of student perceptions of a dangerous situation but lacked to engage the teachers in how they perceived the training protocols (López et al., 2017). Because active shooters are across the country, schools should work together to establish an effective training regimen to raise the self-efficacy of each person involved.

The study findings indicated to participating district stakeholders the perceptions of faculty. Data on perceived effective strategies and training could assist other school districts in the area and possibly across the state to develop programs to protect students. The perceptions may show the need for improvement in specific areas of training for the given district. School violence is a significant problem across the country and the outcomes of the study could lead to minimizing the risks of active shooters in the future (Moore & McArthur, 2017). Students and teachers should feel safe in the school building. This study was intended to help make safety more of a reality.

Research Questions

Teachers' self-efficacy toward active shooter scenarios may correspond to the level of training implemented. Analysis of data to answer the research questions assessed staff training, how the training made the teachers perceive active shooter situations, and possible gaps remaining in school training and programs. The following research questions were utilized to accomplish the purpose of the basic qualitative study:

Research Question 1: How are the faculty and staff trained to prepare for an active shooter situation?

Research Question 2: How are programs, if any, implemented to prevent an active shooter situation from occurring?

Research Question 3: How do faculty and staff perceive the safety of the school where they work?

Theoretical Framework

The theory of self-efficacy was the framework for this basic qualitative study research. Self-efficacy dictated the perception of the staff toward handling a real crisis situation (Bandura, 1997). The focus of the questionnaire was on the perceptions of the staff toward the safety of the building and the training set up to prevent an active shooter scenario and how to react if a dangerous situation occurs. Data indicated the perceptions of the staff, where the deficits lie in regard to better training for the staff, and areas of perceived confidence to succeed if a dangerous situation arises. The ultimate goal is for teachers to maintain safety in a dangerous situation and the study provides teachers the opportunity to share their perceived level of safety based on the training. The literature review, included in Chapter 2, includes studies relevant to the training involved and the perception of safety based on the given programs in place.

Harrison et al. (2017) shared conducting a basic qualitative study explored a given situation in a real-life context. The methodology portrays an exploratory analysis of a certain event or persons, most often investigating a specific phenomenon through empirical inquiry (Harrison et al., 2017). School staff used prior knowledge of school shootings around the country to create a perception of school safety (Moore & McArthur, 2017). Although a school district

implements safety protocols through training to prepare the staff adequately, school staff perceptions of safety are important (López et al., 2017).

Definition of Terms

Common terms were used consistently. Many are defined here to support future readers' understanding of the topic. The list is not exhaustive but provided the definition of key words which need to be understood before reading further.

Active Shooter. This person is participating in killing or attempting to kill others in a public area with a firearm. For this study, an active shooter would be on a K-12 school or college campus (Katsiyannis et al., 2018).

Perception: This term refers to what a person believes about a given situation, whether accurate or not (Arslan, 2018).

School Resource Officer (SRO). An SRO is a police officer whose role encompasses monitoring, protecting the school grounds, and assisting the administration when necessary (Counts et al., 2018).

Self-Efficacy. The confidence to execute expected behaviors is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Threat Assessment. A formalized plan of threat assessment determines the level of threat a person may pose to others (Cornell & Maeng, 2018).

Assumptions

Due to the basic qualitative study's characteristics, critical assumptions were explored. Assumptions occur from an idea of necessity and support (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal was to stimulate a comprehensive understanding of a scenario within a real-life setting (Yin, 2018). The first assumption was all contributors were honest and truthful in the completion of the

questionnaire for this study. Second, contributors were assumed to have participated in the district training for an active shooter scenario and practiced at least once on campus with students at the time of the questionnaire. An assumption was made that contributors did not feel pressure or any negative consequence from answering honestly to the questions on the questionnaire.

Scope and Delimitations

The study's participants were delimited to secondary school teachers (Grades 6–8). All teachers worked at one school in a rural district in Texas. The study was an exploration of teachers' perceptions of preparedness for an active shooter scenario based upon the training provided, not the actual ability to respond in an active shooter scenario. In conjunction, the questionnaire data were analyzed to determine teachers' perceptions of programs implemented through the training for perceived effectiveness in the event an actual situation arose.

The delimitations go further than the specifics of the study. Potential issues arose based upon training attendance, the effectiveness of administration to carry out the practice of active shooter scenarios, and personal bias (Weiler, Cornelius & Skousen, 2018). Each person perceives safety at a different level; whereas, one person may feel supremely confident, another may feel inadequate based upon personality or previous life situations. An administrator was responsible for following up with staff to make sure individuals perceived preparedness.

One delimitation was the timeline of the study. As of 2019, an active shooter situation on a school campus occurred every 77 days (CHDS, 2019). If a shooting had occurred before or during the period of gathering the questionnaires, the data may be different based on the recency bias to the situation and the attention given in the media (Weiler, Cornelius & Skousen, 2018).

Limitations

Multiple factors limited the design of the study. The research was a basic qualitative study; participants worked at one secondary school in Texas. A basic qualitative study is difficult to duplicate due to different life experiences, especially when using only one school (Flick 2018). Out of a potential sample of 67 participants available for the study, the actual sample was 23. Although an adequate number of participants was obtained to produce useable results in a basic qualitative study, the results only represent one school in the district implementing the training in question. A possibility of bias was taken into consideration based upon teachers' concern for adverse outcomes from the school or district administration. Steps were taken to minimize these limitations, such as protecting identity and acknowledging no district or school administrator would ever see individual results, to ease the mind of the participants. All staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and front office staff) were allowed to complete the questionnaire to maximize participation.

Chapter Summary

The problem and purpose of the study were stated, as well as the research questions. Previous information from the literature was provided, and the methodology of the study was discussed briefly. All aspects of the study aligned with the problem. Teachers' perceptions of safety within the school after training was unknown. The problem statement and purpose aligned because the perception of the school staff was not known. Use of a basic qualitative study methodology allowed exploring perceptions through a systematic questionnaire of one secondary school campus. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on the surrounding the topic of active shooters. The previous literature reviewed assessed the perceptions of students, faculty, and community in regard to historical data, SROs, and the increased laws on school grounds

towards weapons. Chapter 2 includes the gaps in the literature towards the perception of staff toward the training provided by the school district.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared to maintain safety in a dangerous situation. Active shooter instances occur in the United States each year and at far greater rates than any other nation in the world (McQuiller, 2019). Stakeholders from the federal government to the individual school district seek to prepare and train staff to deter a catastrophe from occurring or at minimum prepare teachers for how to react and save as many lives as possible.

Contained in the chapter are background knowledge on school shootings, the effects on school stakeholders, and where the perceived gaps are in the literature. All faculty should perceive a safe building and safety within the school to be effective teachers. An abundance of data was found on teachers' perception of violence and the effects of violence on the school, but limited information on how training and preparation affect their perception. Chapter 2 includes a review of literature about school safety and the perception of the staff through the following themes: (a) the conceptual framework, (b) current concerns, history, (c) mental health issues, (d) threat assessment, (e) facility management, (f) arming teachers, (g) gun regulations, (h) Texas laws regarding guns, (i) school resource officer presence, and (j) perceptions of safety. The literature review concludes with a section on the gap in the literature.

Search Strategy

The literature presented in Chapter 2 consists of articles collected through the following search engines: (a) EBSCOHost, (b) ProQuest, (c) Homeland Security Digital Library, and (d) SAGE Journals. Keywords of the searches consisted of *teacher's perception of school shootings*, *school shootings*, *school shootings and mental health issues*, *school resource officers and school shootings*, *state laws on school shootings*, *arming teachers*, *student perception of school*

shootings, the media and school shootings, zero-tolerance policy, perception, and school staff trainings for active shooters. After the initial articles were found, a snowball method using reference lists effectively helped in the search for other pertinent articles. Through these searches, specific journals consistently appeared, which were then targeted for more articles with searches related to school shootings, teacher perception of school shootings, and teacher training on active shooters. The specific journal searches provided the names of the leaders in the field in the overarching categories to search for to analyze the progression of knowledge.

Conceptual Framework

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as “a person’s particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations” (p. 6).

The focus of the study was to identify the self-efficacy of the staff during a dangerous active shooter situation based upon the training received. Typically based upon a difficult task, efficacy defines the construct of a person’s behavior through motivation, thought, and overall performance. Raeder et al. (2019) explained the promotion of self-efficacy is through the demotion of fear and anxiety. Self-confidence likely leads to a positive outcome. The more positive the faculty and staff’s sense of self-efficacy, the more likely they will persevere in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997).

Teachers who are more prepared for an active shooter will naturally maintain higher self-efficacy, translating into a higher probability of effectively responding to the active shooter. Bandura (1997), who developed the theory of self-efficacy, explained perceived efficacy affects people’s actions through effort exerted towards a given goal; the level to which a person can endure trials and tribulations in life; and the confidence in adverse conditions, displayed through quick decision-making. Thought processes of either positive or negative self-confidence and the

effects of stress and depression, as a response to the actions produced, are either outcomes or precursors based on one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The theory of self-efficacy explains how an individual perceives a given situation and can manipulate the situation in an abundance of ways based upon a historical relationship with the situation and degree of confidence of the individual (Raeder et al., 2019).

Maintaining high self-efficacy tends to support preparation. Regarding school safety, self-efficacy could be the difference between teachers' ability to act clearly and effectively through the training versus a panic response (Raeder et al., 2019). Districts in which staff consistently practice the safety protocol create the opportunity for positive self-efficacy, translating to the possibility to save more lives in an active shooter scenario. School leaders prepare the staff on the process for effective results in a potentially tragic situation (Weber et al., 2018). The principal's persistence in thorough training and quality leadership exudes quality self-efficacy, in turn creating a staff who will follow effectively and act with confidence. Based on the theory of self-efficacy, the research developed to assess the perception of preparation of the school staff based upon the completion of the training and the tools available on the campus.

Current Concerns about Active Shooter Situations

Limited evidence exists for any preventative programs related to school violence. Based on Barnes et al. (2017), violent behavior toward other students and teachers diminishes through mentoring, coaching, or intentional individual time. In a similar study, Williams et al. (2018) noted students need to feel a sense of belonging to feel safe and defuse the negative tension instead of acting out in aggression. Foundational training prepares faculty and staff to use the tools provided to keep students safe from harm, whether from each other or an outsider. In response to the Sandy Hook tragedy, the National Association of Secondary School Principals

executive director released a statement: “A principal’s first responsibility is to foster a safe, orderly, warm, and inviting environment” (Connelly, 2013, para. 5).

In Texas, teachers receive mandatory training every year, and districts apply what leaders deem necessary for the teachers to be successful in the classroom and keep the building safe (Weiler et al., 2018). School districts try many variations of the same concepts to prevent serious safety issues from arising. As school staff prepare, often warnings based on the words of the students are heeded to prevent escalation to violence (Yablon, 2017). Teachers need to perceive they are safe to focus on the students and instruction each day. If the teachers feel and act as if the building is safe, then the students will feel safe. The feeling of safety begins with training and practice to show how one can be safe in the event of a crisis.

In the past decade, Texas joined a select group of states allowing campus faculty and staff to carry concealed firearms on campus during school hours (Texas HB 1009, 2013). Since 2010, 11 school shootings have occurred in Texas high schools and colleges. The worst shooting in Texas was at Santa Fe High School in May of 2018, where nine students and a teacher were killed, and another 10 were wounded (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). Santa Fe did not have armed faculty and staff. Some district leaders believe knowing some faculty are armed deters potential shooters. President Trump requested a federal commission on school safety after the Parkland (Florida) and Santa Fe (Texas) school shootings in 2018. During the 2014–2015 school year, only 1.7% of youth homicides happened at school, representing 20 students out of 1,168 (Warnick & Kapa, 2019).

History of School Shootings

The first documented school attack in America came in 1764. Four Indian warriors entered a Pennsylvania schoolhouse and murdered the students and teacher (Paradice, 2017). The

vulnerable location of schools leaves students susceptible to attacks. According to Paradise (2017), there have been 343 shootings at educational institutions between 1840 and 2015, and over half were premeditated. This phenomenon is not new, and lawmakers continue to discuss ways to combat attackers to keep the students and educators safe in the building and on campus.

Since the 1966 shooting at the University of Texas in Austin, there have been 20 mass murder events on school grounds (Paradice, 2017). A mass murder event is considered by the FBI as an event where four or more people perish (Neuman et al., 2015). As each mass murder event occurs on campus, stakeholders look for ways to improve the safety of staff and students through metal detectors, extra SROs, thorough background checks on those allowed around students, cameras, locks, and more. Shooters continue to find ways to enter the building and create havoc. Columbine started the modern era of school shootings, with two enrolled high school students killing 13 students. Since then, Virginia Tech (32 deaths), Sandy Hook Elementary (26 deaths), and Stoneman Douglas High School (17 deaths) have resulted in the most casualties (Paradice, 2017). The campus type does not appear to matter, as all levels from elementary schools to universities are affected.

School shootings are always analyzed to look for predictors for possible future knowledge to avoid other occurrences. The data have indicated 22 mass school shootings in the 1900s (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). Of the 25 shooters in these cases, 22 were White and 22 were male, with the combination of the two being 19 White males. The numbers carry over, showing a constant trend into the 2000s. Since the turn of the century, 13 mass school shootings have occurred. Male shooters caused all 13 of these cases, and 11 were White (Katsiyannis et al., 2018). White males are the most common shooters on school campuses. The more difficult issue

is the majority were adolescents, showing the ease with which underage persons can obtain weapons, whether from home or elsewhere.

Legal codes regarding firearms start as early as the Bill of Rights with the Second Amendment guaranteeing the people the ability own weapons (U.S. Const. Amend. II). Congress has enacted various laws to protect school campuses and prevent weapons on campuses. The Gun-Free Schools Act (1994) requires any student in possession of a firearm on school property to be expelled for at least 1 calendar year. The law adjusted the Gun-Free School Zones Act (1990), which made firearms illegal to possess on a school campus but was found by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional.

After the Sandy Hook Elementary massacre in 2012, President Obama asked Congress to produce a bill to help better protect schools from shootings. Neither of the proposals became law due to filibusters (McQuiller, 2019). In response, President Obama proposed 23 executive actions toward firearm accessibility and violence. Three of these executive actions dealt with schools specifically. First, President Obama directed the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to aid law enforcement, first responders, and school officials with continued training and security assessments. Second, President Obama wanted to develop an emergency management planning guide to help prepare schools for active shooters, and he asked the departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Justice to work together to create the planning guide. Third, President Obama requested the Community Oriented Policing Services section of the Department of Justice to give preference toward applications incorporating SROs in police departments (Giffords Law Center, n.d.). The only issue with these orders is executive orders can easily be negated, whether by a future

President or Congress, and each executive order has to be able to fit within the budget of the United States.

Before the Columbine shooting in 1999, there were no young adult books discussing school shootings; by 2018 there were at least 20 (Jensen, 2018; Walsh, 2018). The cultural script has changed the landscape of people and motives. Before Columbine, most motives were revenge or unknown; since Columbine, most motives appear to have been seen as a desire for notoriety (Ash & Saunders, 2018). The literature initially focused on the bullying narrative, but further examination included the notions of intense grief, fame, or the incomprehensible. Media coverage has an impact. Shooters see the amount of television and news coverage each shooter receives, and the coverage continues to increase (Lin et al., 2018). In comparison, streakers used to be popular across stages or sports fields, but now the cameras ignore and avoid the individuals; in return, the numbers dropped drastically. The same could have an effect on school shootings based upon media coverage.

Mental Health Issues

The notion of shooters struggling with mental instability consistently enters the conversation when attributing cause or reason. Seung-Hui Cho entered a classroom building on the campus of Virginia Tech University in possession of multiple firearms with the intent to cause harm on the morning of April 16, 2007. The shooter opened fire on various rooms, killing five staff members and slaughtering 27 fellow students while injuring 24 more (CNN Editorial Research, 2020). Cho obtained the weapons legally as a citizen above the age of 18. The investigation revealed mental health issues, with multiple counselors noting concerns in his thought processes. The possibility of prevention created an uproar in the gun control debate to

require thorough background checks with flags connected to mental health issues (Cornell & Maeng, 2018).

The debate resurfaced after Adam Lanza collected firearms bought by his mother, killed her, and drove to nearby Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, to brutally massacre 6- and 7-year-olds, teachers, and staff members. Adam's diagnosis of mental health issues again brought to light the issue of weapons available to the mentally unstable (Kamal & Burton, 2018). The argument gained little traction with gun control laws due to the purchases being made by a mentally stable mother (Fisher et al., 2017).

Philpott-Jones (2018) depicted the two sides of the mental health debate politically, with the pro-gun rights citing mental health to be the ultimate issue to control instead of the weapons. Conversely, the gun control advocates have shown violent crimes cases pertaining to the mentally ill represent only 3% nationally (Philpott-Jones, 2018).. Issues begin with the government monitoring mental health issues through a national database uploaded individually by state. The Justice Department found a lack of consistency in reporting these findings from state to state. Seven states, Alaska, Montana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wyoming reported just over 100 records, whereas New Jersey and Pennsylvania documented more than 1 million mental health records as of 2015 (Office of the Inspector General, 2016). Seung-Hui Cho's records were among those unsent by Virginia (Philpott-Jones, 2018). Discrepancies in the gun control debate over where the blame lies are null and void unless all parties account for accurate data for the FBI to maintain order through the background check system in place.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated 20% of students nationally require mental health accommodations (Kann et al., 2016). Despite this statistic, the number of

social workers continues to decrease in public schools (Teasley, 2018). School districts struggle to provide proper counseling services within the district because of the lack of funding available. For example, Philadelphia school districts decreased the workforce by releasing nonessential personnel, which included counselors (Teasley, 2018). School counselors in multiple states have gone on strike for more pay after 2017 to combat some of these issues, because with less money designated for counselors in school budgets there are less counselors in the school than should be, which in turn effects the ability to properly monitor and support students with mental health issues. The American School Counselor Association (2019, 2020) encouraged schools to consider a counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250. Yet, the American School Counselor Association (2019, 2020) reported a national average ratio of 1:430 during the 2018–2019 school year. School psychologists are also vital staff members to promote the mental health of students. The National Association of School Psychologists prefers a ratio of no more than 500–700 students per psychologist (Griffith, 2018; National Association of School Psychologists, 2019), but the national average in 2018 was 1:1408 (Griffith, 2018). Students struggle to obtain the services they need when the ratios are high, creating more strain on students with mental health issues.

Threat Assessment

Upon hearing of a student's comments or inappropriate behavior, a district staff member typically calls the student in for an assessment. The assessment model guides whether the student is a legitimate threat to the school. Styles of threat assessment questions vary around the world, but all have the same goal. Leuschner et al. (2017) examined many of the American assessments and combined what applied to the German educational laws to create a threat assessment, which was simple to implement with teachers to effectively monitor schools. The student answers the questions, and the data show the level of threat the student imposes. Assessments do not capture

the human element of gradual change, which is why more than a simple evaluation should be done to achieve a thorough examination of the student (Goodrum et al., 2018). School psychologists often help with threat assessments and developing individualized interventions when necessary, and the perception of a professional involved can put minds at ease (Kelly, 2018). Threat assessment is not a single, straightforward procedure to follow, but a combination of protocols to make sure all aspects of the building and people are safe.

In the United States, the evidence-based model is based on the Safe School Initiative findings (Vossekuil et al., 2004). The model bases the information on reports from other students. Most mass shooting situations were premeditated, and others were aware of trends in violent behavior—each previous case connected to a scenario of desperation for the shooter (Yablon, 2017). Threat assessment consists of four components: “identifying a person who may pose a threat, gathering information about that person from multiple sources, evaluating whether the person poses a threat of violence to others, and developing and implementing an individualized plan to reduce any threats” (Modzeleski & Randazzo, 2018, p. 112). Teachers and students should be advocates for safety to make sure the school is safe. Transparency requires trust between teachers and students to be able to tell information about others without fear of backlash from the accused.

Cornell and Maeng (2018) focused on helping the students who are identified as a threat, rather than isolating the individuals and creating more of an issue. Administrators, counselors, and other district representatives should work together to form a proper plan and protocol to aid the individual and protect the rest of the school. The typical process for a shooter falls into the pathway to violence (Kepp, 2018). First is the incident of a traumatic event, resulting in violent ideations openly discussed with others; then a plan begins to form with the accumulation of

weapons and a site is chosen. Next is the preparation and finally, the attack or breach of the facility selected (Kepp, 2018).

Facility Management

Educational facilities require written plans in the event of a natural disaster or active threat. Districts often assess facilities through agencies to see the effectiveness of the infrastructure and ability to protect people for any scenario: tornadoes, fires, power plant accidents, earthquakes, hurricanes, winter weather, active shooters, terrorism, bomb threats, or gas leaks (Rasli et al., 2017). Human-initiated incidents are unpredictable and have zero trends to predict. Schools may assess building strength and the ability to penetrate from the outside by unwanted guests with intent to harm. The trend on school campuses is to add more security to an existing building, such as metal detectors, cameras, and key-card entry systems (Jonson, 2017). Research indicated these additions assist in the safety process (Jonson, 2017), but shooters still may find a way in. In Sandy Hook Elementary, Lanza shot through the glass because school staff would not let him past the front entry. Buildings can have multiple safety measures, but the faculty should understand those measures and the training helps them perceive safety.

In the event of a crisis, the aftermath should contain reflection to assess the situation and how improvements could deter or negate future issues. Wombacher et al. (2018) discussed the aftermath of the Sandy Hook catastrophe and how to rebuild the community and people affected by the situation. The building was demolished and a new school built on the same spot as a memorial to those lost. Payton et al. (2017) assessed the perception of parents toward school safety from a potential school shooter. Payton et al. (2017) determined school facilities needed better alert systems and working emergency response plans with local law enforcement.

Facilities are not perfect, but protocols can minimize the effects of possible entry with proper software and building hardware to strengthen points of entry.

To ease all stakeholder's minds, each school should create an emergency action plan, regularly practice drills, and implement security protocols to allow reporting of suspicious events within the building. Kepp (2018) suggested safety strategies of active threat plans updated each year, anonymous reporting opportunities, facility security assessments to establish weaknesses in the building, and exercises to prepare all stakeholders to respond in the event of an active shooter. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2017) updated the emergency action plan template to help prepare businesses and schools on how to handle emergencies. Kepp (2018) noted the categories focused on similar concepts, including access control, notification, evacuation, emergency responder coordination, accountability, communications management, short-term recovery, and long-term recovery. The resources allow for more successful preparation toward perceived safety and adequate training for staff.

Arming Teachers

Schools around the country have started arming teachers, adding to the perception of school districts protecting constituents and taking an aggressive role against school shootings (Kelly, 2018). In Texas, many district leaders have resorted to arming teachers. The addition comes from the mindset most homes have a gun, and the aggressor may think twice if other weapons are likely to be on the campus. According to a questionnaire, where a person is known to be armed, felony convicts were 56% less likely to attack (McQuiller, 2019).

Teachers with weapons cause concern for many, but districts in Texas have begun implementing or voting to implement firearms on school campuses. Public health professionals have disagreed with this action, questioning training and liability (Rogers et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Rogers et al. (2018) noted an increase in weapons brings an increased risk of injury. The district highlighted in this study created a training program directed by the local police department. Teachers volunteered to apply and pass multiple checks before entering the program. These checks include extended family criminal records, psychological evaluations, lie detector tests, and more. Meticulous care and thorough detail create a perception of care and trust, which precludes positive perception (Lenzi et al., 2017). Criminals predominantly search for the easiest and safest target for themselves, such as those places where weapons are illegal. Without the perception of ease for a shooter, given the existence of firearms on campus, the perception of safety on campus naturally should rise (Weiler et al., 2018). If teachers are aware adults on campus have a weapon and the morale and unity of the school are high, then teachers may trust each other and feel safe instead of more concerned. Staff needs to believe in positive intent from fellow teachers for this type of policy to be perceived as productive and effective in prevention(Weiler et al., 2018).

Funding is problematic when preparing to arm teachers. Schools already struggle with receiving enough state and federal funds to support the faculty and staff necessary to educate students. A group of public health students identified many of the concerns with arming teachers, and first and foremost was where the money would come from (Rogers et al., 2018). Teachers already pay for pencils, paper, decorations, and much more, but some districts request teachers use their personal weapon. Teachers may be required to fire a weapon at a student, and the idea causes problems for many reasons. As of 2018, the price to arm teachers and train adequately for protecting students and fellow faculty ran between \$61,000 and \$95,000 annually for a 12-school district, depending upon the extent of training, shooting practice, and the type of permit for the gun holder (Weiler et al., 2018). Other costs consist of one-time or occasional fees to arm

teachers ranging from \$12,000 to \$24,000. To broaden the cost to a national level, the estimated cost to arm every campus would cost between \$974 million and \$1.2 billion the initial year and between \$600 million and \$1 billion each subsequent year (Weiler et al., 2018). School districts can request the taxpayers of the town to pay for the program to arm teachers in a bond, but detractors believe the money should focus on the education of the student.

Rajan and Branas (2018) expressed the side effects of the prevalence of weapons on campus to cause the perception of violence to be likely, causing teachers and students to become more stressed. School boards should be vigilant when assessing the perceptions of constituents through public opinion feedback to see how the community feels about weapons in schools. Communities can become concerned about children's proximity to weapons (Yacek, 2018). Location factors determine perspectives on gun ownership versus the ideals of different parts of the country.

Gun Regulations

Gun regulation remains within the confines of the U.S. Constitution. States may add laws to make purchasing a weapon more difficult, but detractors quickly point to the constitutional right in the Second Amendment to bear arms. As of 2017, 40 states have state laws limiting the ability of local entities to create restrictions (Vernick et al., 2017). Individuals who desire to buy a firearm from a licensed firearms dealer go through a background check before they can obtain the weapon. Anyone with a felony, domestic violence misdemeanor, controlled substance abuse, or previous commitment to a mental institution may not purchase a gun legally. A background check is not required if the seller is not a licensed gun dealer (Siegel et al., 2017). Vernick et al. (2017) reported 3 million documented attempts of people declined by background checks since 1994, and a questionnaire of crimes involving handguns found 75% of perpetrators obtained the

weapon without a background check. Most concerning is there is no law preventing firearm purchase by persons on any terrorist watch list (Gostin & Duranske, 2018). Those who desire to commit crimes will find a way to obtain the necessary weapons.

Interstate commerce poses a problem. In 2012, David Lewisbey was caught by FBI agents through a sting operation trafficking 43 firearms from Indiana to Illinois (Coates & Pearson, 2017). Indiana does not enforce a background check requirement nor requires owners to register their weapons. Law enforcement struggles to connect the owner with a gun if the weapon is used in a crime, whereas the neighboring state of Illinois has some of the strictest regulations in the country. States' rights to regulate gun control are complicated by the ease of crossing state lines with weapons. An example comes from J. S. Lewis (2018), who reported those states with the strictest gun regulations had nearly double the number of mass murder situations than those states with the most lenient laws. J. S. Lewis (2018) explained the sample size from 2009–2015 was not large enough, but the findings did suggest questions. The Constitution preserves states' rights, but this weakness shows a significant cause for concern for consistency with firearm sales and the movement of the weapons around the country with ease.

Texas Laws

Texas is lenient on gun laws. The only law pertaining to a minor prohibits selling or giving a weapon to a child under the age of 18 without the express written consent of the child's parent (Texas Penal Code, 1973/2017). A minor may possess a firearm, and parents are not required to supervise children while possessing said firearm. Texas did follow the Gun-Free School Zones Act (1990), which made gun possession on a school campus illegal. This law was quickly challenged and overturned through *United States v. Lopez* (as cited in Vessels, 2019). Lopez was convicted for bringing a firearm to school but appealed to the United States Supreme

Court. The Supreme Court found the Gun-Free School Zones Act unconstitutional, with a 5:4 decision, because the law had no significant effect on interstate commerce (Vessels, 2019). Addendums to the original law were mandated for the states to require students to be removed from the school for a period of at least 1 calendar year if found in possession of a firearm on school grounds (Gun-Free Schools Act, 1994). Texas penal code does require harsher punishments if a crime occurs within 300 feet of any school property or school function (Texas Penal Code, 1973/2017). The Texas Education Code (2013/2019) has multiple legal codes regarding weapons. Expulsion for a minimum of 1 year results from possession or use of a gun at a school-sponsored event or on school property, and the possession or use of a weapon at a school-sponsored event or on school property by a nonstudent is a third-degree felony (Texas Education Code (2013/2019)). The law allows school districts to impose a policy of arming teachers and allowing concealed carry on campus. Some dissent against this thought because of the liabilities and concerns already with an SRO on campus carrying a weapon.

SROs

SROs are employed for the safety of the students on school campuses. The SRO's job is to protect and serve the students in the building against harm. Some have suggested officers on campuses creates a prison-like atmosphere. According to Wolf (2018), the rights of students diminish with the presence of an SRO by limiting free speech, allowing schools to search to seize when necessary, as well as invading privacy. Wolf quoted the National Association of SROs defining the position as "commissioned law-enforcement officers selected, trained, and assigned to protect and serve the education environment" (p. 220). Those in favor of the position believe the stance can deter perpetrators with the intent to harm students on the campus. Based upon the information gained from prior situations, an SRO may be useful because the officer

redirects the attention of the shooters from the targets, students and teachers, to an officer returning fire or confronting the assailant. The Columbine shooters acknowledged they knew the schedule of the SRO and attacked during his lunch. Once an SRO confronted the shooter, the shooting ended at Arapahoe High School in 2013. The assault ended within 80 seconds and the shooter committed suicide once confronted by the SRO. The student came to school with a shotgun, machete, and three Molotov cocktails (McQuiller, 2019).

SROs were first employed in schools in the 1950s in Flint, Michigan, where violence existed due to drug use and racial tensions (Ryan et al., 2018). Legislatively, SROs connect back to the Safe Schools Act of 1994 and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Acts of 1968 amendment in 1998 (Counts et al., 2018). The laws provided funding for police departments and school districts to work together to pay for SROs on campus. Primarily, schools in urban areas with larger student populations received officers first.

Since legislation demanded SRO presence, the juvenile courts have received a significant rise in referrals and arrests (Counts et al., 2018). The disparity of referrals and arrests of ethnic minority groups and students with disabilities versus the general school population is staggering (Counts et al., 2018). Additionally, legislation lacks clarity on the requirements of the SRO position. Each state sets the standards for the job, which may be vague. Texas has one of the clearest sets of standards, providing clear requirements with a Memorandum of Understanding of the position (Counts et al., 2018). The person is required to be a certified police officer, certified SRO, and go through 16 hours of training specifically related to the post (Counts et al., 2018). Such requirements put Texas in the top five states for legal clarity on the position, and the requirements of the state still do not meet all the recommendations of the federal grant(Counts et al., 2018).

SRO use has been argued by many, including Bleakley and Bleakley (2018), to support the school-to-prison pipeline because of the use of law enforcement in everyday academic life to aid in school discipline, not legal discipline issues. The ongoing debate against SROs contends students are more likely to be arrested and prosecuted when an officer resides on campus, leading to the statistics proving those students who are arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated are far less likely to graduate (Owens, 2017). Bleakley and Bleakley (2018) found students are 5 times more likely to be arrested for disorderly conduct when an SRO is present on the campus. The Bleakley and Bleakley (2018) posited these conduct issues would not be brought to the attention of law enforcement if SROs worked outside the building. Disorderly conduct charges exceed 10,000 a year against students, which shows a direct causality to criminal behavior during adulthood. The students enter the judicial system early and are labeled as criminal offenders instead of keeping the adolescent misbehavior on the campus (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2018). This stance does not blame the SROs but rather the system that makes the law prevalent in an educational environment. Schools are meant to teach academic and social constructs, especially to those students with a difficult home life. Students need the chance to learn from mistakes instead of immediately entering the juvenile courts.

The school-to-prison pipeline shows significant discrepancies based on the student's prior degree of contact with law enforcement. A study of Colorado high school students showed an overwhelmingly positive perception of SROs on campus (Zullig et al., 2017). The results indicated students responded *mostly true* on average to a series of questionnaire items involving the relationship with and perception of the SRO (Zullig et al, 2017). Items ranged from "officer makes me feel safe" to "can talk about personal problems" (Zullig et al, 2017, p. 111). The data indicated the more contact the student had with the SRO, the more positive the student's

perception of the officer was. Students with a positive relationship with the officer created an environment of reporting potential threats from students. Students with negative interactions, such as fighters, had negative perceptions of the SRO (Zullig et al., 2017).

Much of the school-to-prison pipeline is based on struggles with emotional and behavioral issues (Emmons & Belangee, 2018). Additionally, students of color, at risk of dropping out, or receiving special education services represent a disproportionate percentage of the students at juvenile detention centers (Emmons & Belangee, 2018). Students with behavioral or social disorders act out to attempt to control the situation or receive the desired response of removal from a situation they find uncomfortable. The fight-or-flight mentality connects to the resistance to a shooter (Kepp, 2018).

Jones et al. (2018) described a student who acted out because he could not read and did not want others to know; instead of learning or letting others know, the student would act out to get removed from class. Finally, this behavior caused him to be arrested for an outside-of-school incident and sent to juvenile detention (Jones et al., 2018). According to Emmons and Belangee (2018), 85% of juvenile detention center inmates qualify for special education with either a mental or learning disability. With proper accommodations through special education or Section 504 services, teachers may understand some behaviors stem from learning disabilities and not an inappropriate attitude. Without intervention from the school or law enforcement, these students can fall into the pathway to violence in response to a traumatic event, resulting in violent ideations, formation of a plan and location, the preparation of weapons, and finally the attack (Kepp, 2018). Perceptions heighten around students who are not mentally stable or show unusual behavior, relating to threat assessment.

Perceptions of Safety

Perception is everything. School officials devote time and money to help teachers feel safer through social skills training, practice drills, and added precautions. Because a real scenario cannot be duplicated, schools attempt to inform teachers in every possible way to create a perception of safety (Barnes et al., 2017). Perception is psychological. A person desires to feel safe and prepared, whether reality matches their perception or not.

Schools can effectively regulate the perception of school staff through consistent training and drill practice (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017). Training may include simulation of a threat to practice protocol. As the protocol becomes fluid and second nature to the staff and students, the perception of safety increases (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017). One benefit of increased safety perception is attendance. Staff and students who feel safe will attend more often instead of avoiding the building (Williams et al., 2018). Students follow the attitude and actions of the adults on campus. If the staff do not attend school, then the students are more likely to not attend because of the lack of discipline and care.

Drills to increase the perception of school safety can lead to adverse side effects for the staff, for example, burnout and reduced work engagement (Bass et al., 2016). Training and preparation need to be balanced, or the constant awareness of a threat can create an expectation of an attack, leaving the staff more concerned than feeling safe. If school staff perceive an attack is imminent, then staff will feel stressed rather than secure. School leaders protect the staff through proactive discussion and action to alleviate the concern of school safety. Perception generates reality; the attitudes of adults on campus affect student perceptions (Arslan, 2018). Both staff and students should be trained mentally and physically to promote positive

perceptions and safety in the building. The following sections describe research on school safety perceptions of students, college students, and the community.

Student Perception

Previous research focused on the perception of students. Research authors discussed the effects of violence in schools on grades, attendance, and psychological mindsets (Fisher et al., 2017). Fisher et al. (2017) found mixed results as to how school shootings around the country affected the mindset of the student. Other studies showed more direct effects to perception from a sense of community among the students and staff. Others studied the correlation between safety surveillance and the impact of cameras on campuses. The results indicated camera use inside the building had little effect due to the issues of lack of trust, whereas the presence of cameras outside the building led to higher levels of perceived safety amongst students (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2018). Leaders should educate students on the necessity and security of cameras.

Many studies have shown the opinions of students and violence in schools. Student concerns for school safety are relative to the building, bullies, and the relationships between peers and intruders coming into the building (Williams et al., 2017). Students concerned with an outside intruder were typically female, whereas gender was not a factor in conversations and concerns about bullying on school grounds (Williams et al., 2017). Male students tended to exude confidence in their ability to fend off physical violence (Williams et al., 2017).

The most significant denominator for student comfort is the teachers. When students can feel safe with teachers, students instantly feel connected to the school, and positive perception increases (Mitchell et al., 2018). Teachers control the perception of the campus (Mitchell et al.,

2018). School leaders can increase teacher perceptions of safety with care and control through planning and exercises early and often throughout the school year.

School avoidance connects to the perception of safety. According to Williams et al. (2018), students will avoid school if they fear what will happen at school. White students are less likely to skip school for fear of violence, whereas ethnic minority students tend to attribute decreased school attendance to the perception of violence. Ethnic minority students may associate school avoidance with the fear of being attacked, not by bullies, but by gangs or pseudo-gangs who form against one another (Aldridge et al., 2017). Little evidence was found to support students avoiding school for fear of school shootings (Aldridge et al., 2017).

College Student Perception

Other studies focused on college students as they perceive new laws allowing weapons on campuses. Geography and school size play significant factors in perceptions about the legislation (Schildkraut et al., 2018). Texas legislation passed allowing guns on university campuses, and the reviews were mixed, depending upon the school. According to Wallace (2019), students in the South perceived gun-carrying to be socially acceptable and, to some degree, desirable. Geography plays a significant factor in gun ownership and approval of concealed carry laws. People in the South tend to support guns, whereas those in the Northeast tend to support gun control.

Firearms on college campuses are a growing phenomenon, with Utah adopting the first concealed carry law for colleges in 2004 (Ward et al., 2018). No other state followed until 2011, when Mississippi and Wisconsin passed similar laws. Since then, state legislatures increasingly have passed laws allowing college students to protect themselves on campuses with firearms if they choose: (a) Kansas in 2013 ;(b) Idaho in 2014; (c) Texas in 2015; and (d) Georgia,

Arkansas, Colorado and Oregon in 2017 (Morse et al., 2016). Students across the country have debated heatedly the appropriateness of these laws and how students are affected. Resident life directors found gun policies to be challenging to manage when students signed up for resident housing, allowing students to switch roommates if the roommate carried and the situation created a sense of discomfort (Ward et al., 2018).

The most common argument for colleges is the discussion between First Amendment rights and Second Amendment rights. Academics who argue for the First Amendment claim academic freedom, which, although not directly mentioned in the Constitution, has been supported through the Supreme Court (Lewis, 2017). Academic freedom incorporates the protection of higher education institutions against interference by politics regarding educational policies. According to Justice Frankfurter in *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* (1957), the university has the right to four essential freedoms: who may teach at the school, what to teach in the classes, how to teach, and who may learn. Professors have expressed concern concealed handguns will interfere with the free flow of ideas because students may be concerned about disagreeing with a potentially unstable student with a concealed weapon.

Those on the other side of the debate adamantly fight for the rights of the Second Amendment to bear arms. These individuals focus on the issue of self-defense, which takes root in the court case of *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), deciding an individual may possess a firearm in the home for self-defense. As states enact the laws dictating concealed carry laws of university campuses, no higher court has ruled students have a constitutional right to carry specifically on school campuses. Future debate in the Supreme Court may occur over the legality of the state law to carry weapons on school grounds to choose between the First Amendment and the Second Amendment (S. K. Lewis, 2017).

Public Perception

Perception of the community regarding school safety has been reported in the literature. The following sections describe several school shootings and the specific circumstances. For each event, the reaction of the community is described as well, varying from calls for gun regulation to programs to arm teachers.

Sandy Hook

On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School and proceeded to shoot and kill 26 people (Kamal & Burton, 2018). Adam Lanza started the massacre at his home by killing his mother, then driving to the nearby school in Newtown, Connecticut. Upon arriving, Lanza walked into the school and, using his mother's weapons, opened fire on the principal and the school psychologist. Once past the security door, Lanza opened fire on anyone he saw and entered any unlocked room (Kamal & Burton, 2018).

The author of a study after the Sandy Hook shooting questioned students in another area to see if school shootings affected student perception to cause concern for safety (Fisher et al., 2017). No empirical evidence was found to show students not in geographical proximity to the incident felt less safe after a school shooting. Despite legislation to promote safety protocols, Fisher et al. (2017) suggested not sacrificing the students' perception of safety through the implementation of new safety protocols.

The public immediately reacted with demands for gun control. Over 100,000 people signed a petition for President Obama to act against guns, while the National Rifle Association encouraged the National School Shield Plan, which would allocate billions of dollars toward armed officers on all school campuses (Kamal & Burton, 2018). The Brady Campaign sought to expand national background checks, and President Obama formed a task force proposing nine

major reforms for Congress to implement. Well over 300 bills related to protecting schools came to the table in either state legislatures or the federal government. The National Rifle Association posed as a barrier for gun rights. Instead of a law, 23 executive orders were initiated in response by the Obama presidency (Kamal & Burton, 2018). Although, without Congress preparing for any of these orders in the budget, the orders were not required to be carried out.

Parkland

On Valentine's Day in 2018 in Parkland, Florida, a former student walked up on the campus of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School carrying a gun case with an AR-15 inside. Due to multiple failures in the protocol to lock down the high school campus, the shooter was able to walk into a building and kill 17 teachers and students, wounding another 17 before walking out of the school without being initially caught (Kissel et al., 2019). The breakdown began with a coach in a golf cart opening gates for dismissal watching the student walk on the campus with the gun case. Another teacher saw him enter the first building but did not radio for an emergency shutdown or security response. Once the shooting began, the SRO protected himself and stationed himself outside the building, hiding nearby after reporting the incident (Banker et al., 2018).

A new wave of reactions occurred after the Parkland shooting. Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods voluntarily ceased selling assault weapons and set new standards for the companies by raising the age for purchase (Galea et al., 2018). The students of Parkland took action as well, giving speeches, creating social awareness through Twitter and YouTube, and creating the March for Our Lives rally on March 25, 2018. Only students were allowed to speak at rallies across the country, with multiple students from the high school taking turns giving speeches to fight for better gun control (Kissel et al., 2019). David Hogg, another Parkland

student, used an audio recording of the incident as a platform for multiple interviews, including *The Ingram Angle* on Fox News (Kissel et al., 2019). President Trump suggested those teachers willing to carry a gun at school receive a bonus and proposed firearm training for school personnel (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). These are extreme contradictions compared to the response from President Obama after the Sandy Hook Incident.

Santa Fe

May 18, 2018, Dimitrios Pagourtzis walked into Santa Fe High School, just south of Houston, Texas, and opened fire in an art classroom with a shotgun and a .38 revolver owned by his father (Hanna et al., 2018). The boy admitted, after the fact, he meant to kill those he targeted and avoided harming the people he liked to be around. Pagourtzis killed nine students and one substitute teacher and wounded another 10. The shooter was said to be a bit of a loner and often wore trench coats to school. Students offered mixed reports, but most said an alarm went off to leave the building, similar to a fire drill, before they heard gunshots. Once the gunfire rang out, teachers and students immediately started running from the school grounds. Pagourtzis quickly encountered two SRO officers, ending the shooting and minimizing the travesty (Hanna et al., 2018).

The president of the Santa Fe School District's board of trustees, J. R. Norman, spoke of the policies and procedures working but acknowledged the fact of the school being vulnerable to attacks (Romero, 2019). The reports through CNN from the local law enforcement showed alarms were set off for students to leave the building close to the time the shooter began and law enforcement took 4 min to respond to the first 911 call and enter the building (Hanna et al., 2018). Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick alluded to violent video games and the number of entry points into schools in Texas as contributing factors instead of gun laws (Romero, 2019).

The debate over arming teachers started after Parkland and grew with the Santa Fe shooting. Senator Mark Christensen from Nebraska asserted the concern about how long it can take police to arrive in an active shooter situation (DeMitchell & Rath, 2019). The argument after Santa Fe and Parkland no longer assessed only gun control but added school protection, understanding shootings would continue. Focus shifted to the government and analyzing how to deter shooters rather than attempt to prevent access to weapons.

Preparedness

Clark et al. (2019) questioned educators at the collegiate level on the level of preparedness toward training and protecting students. The consensus across 366 faculty showed 45% felt moderately prepared to handle a situation involving an active shooter. Most schools (78.7%) had an active shooter policy in place, yet the other 21.3% of institutions did not have a policy, or the policy was unknown to the employees. Educators at these institutions responded to the open-ended questions with concerns of a lack of preparedness, policy, and proactive techniques. One participant expressed many students and faculty carry a form of protection instead of being vulnerable (Clark et al., 2019). In 2017, four instances of an active shooter situation arose in health care facilities. The most significant finding in the study was 208 institutions across the country (56.8%) did not participate in active shooter drills to prepare the staff or students at the school. Only 57.3% acknowledged training to be mandatory, and less than half ever involved students in the training process (Clark et al., 2019).

Preparedness comes as part of any job, yet most teachers do not feel prepared for a shooting event, despite the increasing prevalence across the United States. In Rhode Island, Perkins (2018) asked teachers to fill out the Teachers' Perceptions of School Safety & Preparedness Survey to evaluate how prepared the teachers of the state felt. Teachers expressed a

sense of safety when cameras, fences, and other features were in place. Only 43% of schools reviewed and modified crisis plans each year. The number of teachers who admitted to receiving little or no training over a crisis situation was 63% (Perkins, 2018). The findings indicate the necessity for drills and the understanding among school leaders of the correlation between practicing for the real situation and the perceived notion of preparedness among the staff.

Once the training protocol is set, a pressure test should be used to evaluate the procedures. Based on the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) set forth after the 1999 Columbine shooting, a tabletop discussion should assess the process, allowing all stakeholders to walk through the procedure to make sure all safety aspects are taken care of appropriately (Sikes et al., 2018). ALERRT training was created in 2002 and set the standard for training procedures according to the FBI (Martaindale et al., 2019). A tabletop presents each step of a situation, and participants consider what-if situations to create a productive environment to save lives. The ALERRT training then calls for a pressure test to play out the scenario to see how prepared the staff are (Sikes et al., 2018). Law enforcement teams work alongside schools to conduct these drills most effectively. The more simulations practiced, the more improved outcomes in staff preparation. Great amounts of detail in training turn into effective perceived preparedness. School district leaders are attempting to develop strategies based upon the specific schools and buildings in the districts.

Gap in Literature

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared in a dangerous situation. Published research using basic qualitative study methodology has discussed the perception of students, teachers, and the public in regard to school safety. The gap is in the preparation before the action and the self-efficacy the training

generates. Fisher et al. (2017) focused on the students' perception of school violence after the Sandy Hook incident. Students did not perceive to be unsafe unless they were in close proximity to a recent shooting, and the fear of an active shooter dissipated with time (Fisher et al., 2017). Lenzi et al. (2017) discussed the community's perception of school safety based upon the news they hear and the connections with district employees or students. Lindstrom Johnson et al. (2018) analyzed the perceptions of schools based on the presence of SROs and safety equipment, such as cameras. The study explored how adding additional precautions to the building can manipulate the perception of the safety of the stakeholders in the school, from the community to students to faculty. Literature reported mixed reviews on SROs on school campuses, with some claiming law enforcement on school campuses connects to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Multiple studies discussed how to prevent future occurrences. DeMitchell and Rath (2019) expressed the necessity to arm teachers and the positive effects of weapons present on campus, based on the support from President Trump. Others observed the college-level reaction to concealed carry laws; whereas students and faculty on some campuses welcomed the change, others ridiculed the adjustment, and some professors left university positions (Schildkraut et al., 2018). The University of Texas lost many of the faculty and staff once the concealed carry law on campus passed through the state legislature (Schildkraut et al., 2018).

None of the studies looked into the training of the staff and how well prepared the staff perceived they were in the event of an active shooter. Only Weber et al. (2018) discussed the preparation of school staff, but the others focused more on natural disasters and the process rather than the perception and self-efficacy the training provides. Training is important to staff self-efficacy and perceived safety. The goal of this study was to assess teachers' perceptions of training methods and the resultant perceived safety of a school.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, literature was reviewed pertaining to the need for school safety, a historical context of school violence, threat assessment, federal and state regulations, presence of an SRO, arming teachers, and stakeholder perceptions of safety. One's perception affects individual reality and how one feels with or without training, whether or not guns are on the campus. The literature review contained ample examples of the necessity of action to protect schools, and this research study assessed the perception of preparedness and protection available for the faculty and staff. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the methodology used to gather and analyze data on the perceived safety of faculty after training. The process for the research is described as well as the rationale behind the study. Professional handling of the data to protect security and anonymity is outlined as well.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared to maintain safety in a dangerous situation. The faculty and staff members of one secondary school campus were asked to complete a questionnaire to assess the level of comfortability with the plans put in place by the training and the perception of safety they have after completing the training. Case studies allow for in-depth research on a particular issue for analysis of the given problem (Goodrum et al., 2018). Questions covered the training set up by the district, the protocols put in place for safety, and the perceptions of the staff members about the level of perceived safety on the campus. The research would help the district assess whether school employees feel safe based upon the training and provide insight into perceived gaps in the training (Cuellar & Mason, 2019).

All questionnaires were conducted anonymously through SurveyMonkey.com. Answers were recorded and stored in a password-protected account and will be kept locked away for confidentiality for 5 years. The questionnaire results were analyzed and coded in connection to the research questions to assess the reality versus the perceptions of the faculty and staff. After coding, the answers developed into themes to show the school staff's perceptions of the safety and security training. Any results with possible identifiers were discarded to protect the participants. The results would give the district insight as to where the staff perception is and how the perceptions could be improved. Chapter 3 includes exhaustive detail on the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, research procedures, data analysis, the reliability and validity of the research material, and the ethical procedures in place. The research questions were the following:

Research Question 1: How are the faculty and staff trained to prepare for an active shooter situation ?

Research Question 2: How are programs, if any, implemented to prevent an active shooter situation from occurring?

Research Question 3: How do faculty and staff perceive the safety of the school where they work?

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared for a dangerous situation. A qualitative approach was chosen based upon the pursuit of the perceptions of educators regarding safety after the new district training (Lenzi et al., 2017). Opinions of faculty at a secondary school provided an adequate sampling of faculty perception of the given training. The district in question had multiple terroristic threats in the previous 5 years, and the district responded with creating a position entitled Director of Safety and Security to assess the safety of each building and processes in place. Boundaries are the given district, the sampling is the group of teachers at a secondary school, and the thematic analysis was based upon the participants' perceptions. The director of safety and security created new training processes for the staff. District leaders expressed they have created a much safer district through efforts at each building. This study would show if the assumptions were accurate and an effective training program was in place and implemented by the secondary school.

A basic qualitative study was selected to acquire an understanding of teachers' perception of safety upon the completion of the district training and seeing what programs are available on the campus to support teacher perception of safety. Through the use of qualitative methods, a questionnaire and focus group interviews were used to obtain the information confidentially and

(in the case of the questionnaires) anonymously. Frey (2018) discussed the use of questionnaires and the appropriate method for obtaining anonymous information. The purpose of a basic qualitative study is to provoke rigorous reviews of procedures to assess the effectiveness of the protocol (George, 2019). Benefits of the research design include showing the effectiveness of the new training based on the perception of the faculty and staff of one secondary school campus. Qualitative research allows for flexibility, whereas quantitative analysis is rigid (Frey, 2018). A basic qualitative study most commonly requires face-to-face interactions with others through one-on-one interviews or focus group meetings.

Role of the Researcher

The role of one conducting a basic qualitative study is to gather, analyze, and assess the data collected (Cai et al., 2018). An appropriate and unbiased group of questions is used to evaluate a specified group's perceptions of a given situation, anonymously, and through personal interactions—in this case, the safety of the school as a stakeholder. Contact with questionnaire participants was only through email. Some participants were interviewed in a focus group to confirm the findings of the questionnaire through triangulation (Mertler, 2017). The focus group portion of the analysis changed the data-gathering role from an observer to a participant.

The researcher works at a separate school from the school in the study and has no power over the faculty and staff of the participating school, whether or not they are acquainted with him. This lack of a work or authority relationship allowed the participants to answer the questions without bias or concern for reaction in the work setting (Rhodes & Carlsen, 2018). As an employee at a school in the district, the researcher has a working knowledge of the training processes and previous terroristic threats. The relationship with the district allowed for more in-depth knowledge and access to district personnel to retrieve information about the training, the

rationale behind the training, and the working knowledge of the instructors. Staff received no incentives to participate other than to strengthen the understanding of stakeholders on the perceived effectiveness of the training on safety and security.

Research Procedures

The staff of one secondary school campus was asked to complete a questionnaire with open-ended questions to gather qualitative data for coding the level of comfort with the plans put in place by the training and teachers' perception of safety after completing the training. Case studies allow for an in-depth questionnaire of a particular issue for analysis of a specific problem (Goodrum et al., 2018). Questions covered the training set up by the district, the protocols put in place for safety, and the perception of staff members about the level of perceived safety on the campus (see Appendices A and B). The faculty received an informed consent form via email to sign or approve before the questionnaire was sent (see Appendix C). Faculty who did not respond did not receive any further contact.

Population and Sample Selection

The population of the study consisted of faculty and staff on a secondary school campus in a rural district in North Texas. At the study school, 67 staff members in total received the questionnaire, with the goal of 50% participation. District administrators provided an email list of all faculty on the campus for the study. Of the 67 on the list, the goal was to receive 34 completed questionnaires. Only 23 faculty and staff participated in the study (see chapter 4). Administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals received an email for the online questionnaire, to simplify the process as much as possible for the participants to complete all questions, allowing for an ample sample size of 23 to analyze. All participants were useful in the study because they were members of the school district and were required to go through the training. Employees

hired after the school year began who did not go through the full training were not included in the study. Leaders of the district chosen believe strongly in the new safety and security training program and the processes put into place. The challenge was to see how the employees felt after the modifications to the training and safety plan of the district were in effect.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire provided through SurveyMonkey.com. Through a paid subscription, the website analyzed the data simplistically while providing charts and graphs to support the information.

Participants answered open-ended questions online for the first collection of data (Appendix A). After the questionnaire, a focus group gathered through an online Zoom meeting to grasp further the perspectives of the teachers based on the data received through the online questionnaire (Appendix B). Questions were well thought out and asked in a semi-structured manner to allow for conversation but keep the intent of the research as the focus (Frey, 2018). The focus group responses were recorded and notes were taken to ensure all information was assessed. Responses in the focus group stayed within the confines of the group, and any response with a possible identifier was not included in the study.

The questionnaire was aligned with a similar purpose and the format was used to create the instrument used in this study. Questions were open-ended to gather responses and opinions in teachers' words. An online platform was chosen to provide a safe and secure environment for participants to share thoughts and feelings.

Field Test

Three experts in the field reviewed the new questionnaire for validity (see Appendix E). The first expert had 21 years of experience as a police officer, 12 years of experience as an SRO,

and two certifications: Master Peace Officer and National Association of SROs Practitioner. He was a member of the National Association of SROs and Texas Association of SROs. The officer was an instructor for Standard Response Protocol, ALERRT, and Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events. The second expert was a safety coordinator for an elementary school of 1200 students, who works daily on the safety of a campus and trains teachers how to protect themselves and students. The third expert is the safety coordinator of a high school of 2000 students. He has also worked at the district level to write some of the training processes for his district. The questions added explicitly tied into the training sessions provided by the district. Appendix A is the revised questionnaire after expert review. The open-ended questions allowed participants to express opinions within the scope of the study adequately covering in detail the purpose of the study. Questions were thorough and specific to focus the answers on the research questions, providing a valid instrument. The same questions were used in the focus group (Appendix B),

Data Collection

The data collection allowed the participants to share perceptions of the topic under study within the framework of open-ended questions. All participants responded to the same questions, and the data self-generated online via SurveyMonkey. Each faculty and staff member received an email directly to the member's work email address with up to two reminders separated by 1 week. The questionnaire remained open for 1 month with a goal of obtaining at least a 50% response rate. District administrators sent out an email to encourage participation. All questionnaires remained anonymous and confidential. The basis of the study came from other schools, predominantly those where school shootings already occurred. Consistency allowed for

procedures to be collected based on practical results in previous situations. The two previous cases focused on were Parkland, Florida, and Columbine, Colorado.

Returned questionnaires created the pool for random selection of focus group participants to be interviewed at a later date. The questionnaire window lasted for 1 month. At the end of the month, participants were chosen at random from those who had not opted out of potential interviews through the initial letter emailed out. Potential participants who returned the opt-out form (Appendix F) were deleted from the list and not considered for the interview process. Following the closure of the questionnaire, a focus group session was held with six randomly chosen participants. Six faculty members met with the researcher to go through the questions again. Each person was allowed to respond. The interview process allowed for follow-up questions to be directed to the participants for clarity and a deeper understanding of the perceptions about the district's procedures. Recordings of the session allowed for a review of the event to make sure all details were captured for analysis. Participants were reminded they were not required to answer all questions, and participants could discontinue participation from the study at any time. Notes were taken and all interviews were recorded. All documentation was stored within a locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study process.

Once the questionnaire data were pulled from SurveyMonkey.com, the data were kept on a specified computer with password protection into the account and another line of security password protecting the documents. Upon the conclusion of the study, the individual questionnaires would be kept locked in a file for 5 years and the SurveyMonkey account deleted to protect all parties involved.

Data Preparation

Before conducting the questionnaire, the participants granted consent to use the responses for the benefit of the study. The consent clarified the privacy and anonymity of published data, keeping all names protected, which included any possible identifiers in the answers provided. SurveyMonkey.com allowed for exporting the data into an Excel file for further analysis and the possibility to eliminate inconsequential data. Once downloaded, the manual coding began, first through the questionnaire responses and then through the notes from the interviews. The free responses of the participants were analyzed and then grouped based upon commonalities found within the answers provided. Upon receiving the information, the frequencies of coded responses were assessed to identify trends within the given responses to make assessments.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to interpret the perceptions of faculty on the safety and security of the district based upon the newly implemented training. In studying the problem, the goal was to discover the benefits of the new system and the gaps in training perception for the district to reassess. Use of a questionnaire as well as focus group allowed for triangulation. The interview portion allowed for detail and validity to be assured before data were finally analyzed.

The focus group was semi-structured with the intent to allow further questioning as needed to prompt the participants for more information or clarity. Questions on the questionnaire were asked again to the focus group as a starting point. As suggested by Marguire & Delahunt (2017), a coding theme was created based upon the given qualitative answers to find commonalities for themes for the evidence to follow. Through the qualitative questionnaire and the focus group responses, consistent topics, answers, and themes were found to group the

material and analyze. When content is qualitative, the ideas would be similar to code, but not exact matches like in quantitative research (Majaro-Majesty, 2018). Each questionnaire was examined and collated into an Excel spreadsheet to sort the data. SurveyMonkey.com provided indications to give a basis for initial coding and themes.

Reliability and Validity

The goal of the research was to provide valid data for districts to use to find adequate training for the safety of students and faculty from threats. Reliability depends upon the consistency of the results, and validity refers to the accuracy of the data. Triangulation allowed for stronger support of findings than only using the questionnaire. The use of a questionnaire and focus group interviews allowed for multiple data points to support one another. Reliable data collection measures an individual topic, with meanings and specifics defined to eliminate bias or inconsistencies. Reliability grew through effective questioning with unbiased tones and grammar (Kern, 2018). The questionnaire, given through email, allowed respondents to answer without judgment or persuasion on their own time and space.

The advantage of using different avenues for data gathering is triangulation to maintain the validity and reliability of the methodology (Frey, 2018). On the questionnaire and in the focus group, qualitative questions were asked to elicit answers in the words of the respondents, reducing the potential influence of bias. Triangulation helps when there are discrepancies in the details between members of the focus group or between one person's questionnaire and oral responses in the focus group (Majaro-Majesty, 2018). Other benefits of triangulation include gaining more information than anticipated, minute details, and honest realities about the basic qualitative study (Majaro-Majesty, 2018). The questionnaire was reviewed by a decorated SRO to verify appropriate and practical answers were received. Results allowed for transparency and

solutions which, if successful, may be shared with surrounding districts to replicate within school systems to create a positive and safe learning environment.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before research began to ensure the protection of the rights and welfare of the participants involved in the study. Appropriate questions were selected, and the data analyzed ethically and effectively to protect the integrity of the study and the participants (Cantwell & Van Kampen-Breit, 2015). Concerning a basic qualitative study, the study may be adapted to fit the specific understanding of the material desired. The topic of perceived safety and security on campus afforded the opportunity to identify particular strengths and weaknesses.

Once the study was approved by IRB and school and district administrators, all faculty and staff in the secondary school received the informed consent form letter and signature page (see Appendix C). Information gathered from the research was presented in the findings to provide transparency and clarity to the district for the study and the district's leadership to move forward appropriately with the correct data. All participants could stop participation at any time in the study. No information was used identifying participants, whether by position, name, gender, race, or nationality. All information was confidential, and any questionnaires with clear identifiers were discarded and removed from the study. Human subjects have the protection to share thoughts without repercussion or judgment. The opinions of the participants were private and were freely given trusting identifies were kept anonymous.

The IRB reviewed all instruments before the study was approved to protect the participants personally, the livelihood earned, and placement within the study school. Any data with the possibility to identify an individual were dismissed from the research. All questionnaire

and focus group data were stored on a password-protected personal computer. Data collected will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 included a detailed description of the methodology and procedures of this study. The basic qualitative study was designed to comprehend the perception of secondary school teachers toward safety and security training within a specific district. An online questionnaire through SurveyMonkey.com was used to generate the data to analyze, code, and draw thematic conclusions. The focus group was convened using Zoom to clarify answers and ask any necessary follow-up questions. Reliability and validity were established for the instruments before any information was gathered from the participants. All participants were protected based on signed informed consent, and data will be secured for up to 5 years after the research is published. Chapter 4 presents the collection of the data and the findings and analysis by research question. Findings revealed the perception of faculty and staff toward the safety and security training within the district.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

Schools should be a safe place for all stakeholders. Students and teachers should feel safe, not just be safe, to achieve success within the education environment (Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016). Shootings continue to be a constant threat for school districts to prepare for and make sure all stakeholders feel comfortable to focus on the importance of education, not the possibilities of danger around them. Faculty perception can be as important as reality. In this basic qualitative study of a rural North Texas district faced with multiple threats during the 2017–2018 school year, the results explored the implementation of pieces of safety training and whether or not the training provided the faculty with the perception of being prepared. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to analyze the perspectives of faculty on being prepared in a dangerous situation.

First, the data were collected from one online questionnaire filled out by 23 faculty and staff and a Zoom focus group of six faculty and staff members. Analysis of the responses presented the answers to the qualitative research questions in tabular form under the data analysis section. The results of the questionnaire share teachers' perceptions by answering each of the research questions identified for the study.

Research Question 1: How are the faculty and staff trained to prepare for an active shooter situation?

Research Question 2: How are programs, if any, implemented to prevent an active shooter situation from occurring?

Research Question 3: How do faculty and staff perceive the safety of the school where they work?

The results indicated the presence of multiple programs and people designated for safety on the campus and in the district proved useful for the selected school staff to feel prepared and safe overall. Reliability and validity of the research were assessed before the chapter summary.

Data Collection

An email with a request for permission to recruit for participants from the school was sent on June 12, 2019. The superintendent of the district responded 5 days later providing permission to conduct the study (see Appendix G). Sixty-seven faculty and staff members at the chosen school were sent the questionnaire and given 1 month to respond on SurveyMonkey.com. The faculty members received an original email on February 25, 2020, which invited the staff to participate in the anonymous questionnaire. Then, a follow-up email was sent on March 9, 2020, to remind and encourage the staff to complete the questionnaire. The original email resulted in 17 respondents, and the follow-up email yielded 6 more respondents. At the end of the month, March 25, 2020, the respondents totaled 23, giving a return rate of 34%. This was less than the goal of 50%, but an acceptable rate of return on the questionnaires. Faculty received the informed consent forms before taking the questionnaire, and 23 returned the consent forms before taking the questionnaire. Another 14 participants returned the opt-out form declining to participate, which means 55% responded in all. The rest of the participants chose not to submit the questionnaire or send informed consent back.

After the questionnaire closed, 12 of the questionnaire participants, 18%, were invited to participate in the focus group via Zoom on April 8, 2020. Six participated in the focus group, 50% of those invited. Due to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the proposal required minor alterations, changing the focus group from in-person to meeting through a Zoom video chat. The same questions from the questionnaire were asked on the Zoom conference call. Some

minor follow-up questions were asked for clarification. Participants discussed the questions for approximately an hour on a recorded Zoom call. The recording was to reference the data collection for analysis.

Data Analysis and Results

A combination of the anonymous online questionnaires, the Zoom focus group, and the research notes formed the coding process sources and allowed for triangulation to occur. The answers to each questionnaire question were analyzed separately for consistencies and patterns. Responses were color-coded with common ideas within each question as themes arose. Color-coding aided in finding direct quotes to support the findings.

Participants' answers guided the data groups formed as patterns emerged to focus the findings through thematic coding. The inductive approach prevented previous notions or hypotheses from guiding the findings. No existing theories were present in the process, but the research analyzed the answers by the six steps of thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Become familiar with the data through multiple readings and viewpoints.
2. Generate initial codes based on commonalities found within each dataset and from each perspective.
3. Search for themes, which naturally occurred by grouping the answers to each question.
Deeper themes emerged within each question.
4. Examine the themes presented by the codes and how effectively a thematic map could form.
5. Define the themes with labels and sublabels.
6. Write a report based on the codes and themes presented.

Faculty answers covered the previous training experience given by the school district, outside the school district, and how faculty felt within the specific school each day. All questions were open-ended and encouraged explanations and examples to provide clarity for the perception given. The questions referenced the following literature review materials: SROs, active shooter scenarios, and access to the building from outsiders.

The results showed the perceived effectiveness of the school's training. Teachers perceived the training to support the staff's needs to feel like the building and training would keep everyone safe in the event of an active shooter. Each research question was analyzed and supported by multiple questions on the questionnaire. Some opposition or negative feedback arose against the building structure as well as some regarding the training provided.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "How are the faculty and staff trained to prepare for an active shooter situation?" Teachers' responses were overwhelmingly positive about the district's training: 78% feel adequately trained, and 8% gave a moderately confident answer, whereas the other 13% qualified or gave a negative response. When elaborating, the faculty mentioned the multiple professional development sessions at the beginning of the school year as a solid base of information. One participant responded to the question, "Do you have any substantial training in school safety?" with, "At length professional development before the year and throughout the year, followed up after with drills."

Participants consistently responded the school administration effectively used drills to ensure the staff understood the expectations in an active shooter situation. The district instituted a new Director of Safety and Security position 2 years ago, which two participants mentioned as an upgrade. Four other participants mentioned being a part of the safety committee. One

responded to the question, “Do you feel you are adequately trained in the safety procedures of this school?” with, “Yes. I am on the safety committee, and we have real-life training scenarios every 2 weeks.” Table 1 presents the ways teachers reported perceptions on being effectively trained based on the questionnaire results.

Table 1

Theme and Subthemes for Research Question 1: How Staff Are Trained

Theme	Subtheme or code
Training is effective preparation.	Badging system
	Professional development
	Drills with students throughout the year
	Drills without students multiple times
	Safety committee meetings every 2 weeks

The 13% of faculty ($n = 3$) who responded with negativity about feeling trained responded with multiple concerns. The following statements are examples of concerns: “No, I would like more situationally-based training,” and “No, there is no real way to shelter quickly in case of tornados or active shooters.” Another faculty member had just moved to the area and did not know the procedures for lockdown. The dissenting faculty did not offer a clear consensus against the training methods of the district. Much of the other dissent against the preparation focused on students not taking the situational training seriously. Additionally, a teacher in the focus group mentioned mental health concerns and a heavy workload by counselors.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, “How are programs, if any, implemented to prevent an active shooter situation from occurring?” The participants highlighted four effective programs implemented by the district and school: Guardian program, Raptor program, safety team, and

badging system. Participants were divided about the effectiveness of the tip line system. Details are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Theme and Subthemes for Research Question 2: How Programs Are Implemented

Theme	Subtheme, code, or description
Armed school staff	Guardian program Concealed carry Vetting and training Support school resource officer (SRO)
Safety team	Teachers, administrators, and SRO Multiple meetings per week
Screen outsiders coming on campus	Raptor program Emergency management system Screen visitor driver's license Badging system
Anonymous tip line	Tip line effective Tip line not effective
Student training	Students let in outsiders Students do not take protocols seriously

The Guardian program is where multiple staff members carry concealed weapons on campus daily. Each approved staff member for the concealed weapon team went through a vetting process by the district and then trained with the city police department to support the SRO and the district. One faculty member responded the Guardian program “creates a sense of peace because I trust my fellow teachers who carry to protect me.”

The safety team meets multiple times a week and consists of teachers, administrators, and the school SRO. Conversations revolve around safety scenarios, the chain of command, and how best to support all stakeholders in extreme situations. After the meeting, the staff receives a copy of the meeting's minutes so all can engage in the conversation.

During the focus group, the participants clarified the Raptor program. Participants explained the program as a system to screen visitors entering the building for a meeting or to pick up a child early. The program scans the driver's license to look for various concerns, such as custody violations and sex offenders. Raptor Technologies (2020) explained the emergency management system as follows:

Maintain real-time visibility during drills, active incidents, and reunification events. The Raptor® Emergency Management school security system helps districts prepare for, respond to, and recover from any emergency. Introducing Raptor® Alert, a new panic button solution. Exceed compliance with "Alyssa's Law" and emergency communication mandates. (para. 2)

The Raptor program consistently appeared in faculty responses as useful. The faculty and staff expressed that the Raptor program added another safety layer by checking each visitor in the front office for any legal concerns.

When asked about the perception of outsiders getting into the school, one person answered, "It does happen, but I do not believe it is a frequent occurrence. The district trained teachers with a very strict badge in policy." Only the administrators have a key for the outside doors. All other entries use the district-assigned badge. The badge only allows district personnel access to buildings they are associated with for work. Teachers use a district badge to enter the school. District staff trained the staff not to "tailgate" each other into the building and to scan the

badge even if the door is held open. The purpose of all staff members scanning upon entry clarifies the person has permission from the district to enter the building. This program keeps account of all who enter; in case of an emergency, the police may need to know who was on campus.

A questionnaire question asked, “Do you feel the anonymous tip line is adequately advertised and/or utilized?” The tip line runs to the county sheriff’s department. Students and faculty use the tip line to share information about anything concerning. If the information shows cause for concern, a report is sent to the school to investigate first. Further, if the tip is an immediate threat, the sheriff’s department calls, and the administration and SRO immediately react.

Staff who expressed concern for the programs did not have strong concerns but did share possible weaknesses. One explained, “Outsiders occasionally get in through doors opened by students trying to be polite. It would be good if we could have reminders for students that no one should be allowed in the school except through the office.” Student training, or understanding, appears to be more of a concern for the staff with programming. When asked what the perception of terroristic threats at this school is, one teacher responded:

I do not think people think it could happen to us. Students do not always take drills seriously. I do feel staff takes things seriously, especially since we don’t know when drills are coming anymore. I know I always feel like it is real.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, “How do faculty and staff perceive the school’s safety where they work?” The teachers’ responses were mixed. Details of emergent themes are in Table 3.

Table 3*Theme and Subthemes for Research Question 3: Perceived Safety*

Theme	Subtheme, code, or description
Staff perceive the school as safe	Knowing a plan is in place Multiple people carrying weapons on campus Guardian program School resource officer Locked exterior doors, security cameras Front office protocols for visitors and badge access system The green emergency button (Raptor program) to call for help
Structural safety issues with the school	Glass Inability to hide Outsider access

Participants who believed the building to be safe responded to the question “What are some things that make you feel safe at this school?” with the following answers: “Locked exterior doors; badge entry system; security cameras” and “Our procedures, the front office protocols for visitors and our badge access system.” Another stated, “Knowing there is a plan in place if a need arises. Also knowing that we have multiple people carry on campus.” Teachers responded, “District has a professional director of safety & security; we have a Guardian Program” and “Having a School Resource Officer and how they come when called. The green emergency button also makes me feel like they would come.”

Staff repeated similar perceptions of safety, with consistent answers from many respondents. The consistency and confident, quick answers from the staff showed the effectiveness of the training. District and school leaders and staff take active shooter situations seriously. The SRO’s presence and the requirement for teachers to use a badge to enter the building were the most prevalent answers for safety within the building. One thing only

mentioned by two people in response to the questionnaire item about things making them feel safe was the Guardian program; the program was mentioned anecdotally in response to other questions. In the Guardian program, multiple staff members carry concealed weapons approved by the district after a stringent vetting process and training through the city police department.

Figure 1

Responses Regarding the Aspects Making Teachers Feel Safe at School



The glaring issues for the school's safety focused on the building structural flaws. One participant responded passionately:

I do not feel that the way the school was built is safe at all. I cannot understand how the structure of the school was approved when it was built, as it seems that there are many glaring safety issues. There is way too much glass throughout the school, which affects the safety of students and staff both in weather-related safety incidents, and possible school shooter threats. . . . My students have expressed to me that they do not feel safe in

our current classroom, and I do not feel safe either. It is something I worry about on a daily basis. Also, there are numerous staff who do not have designated classrooms here and instead are using the teacher centers during their off times, which are also all glass and not able to be locked by staff members. I worry most days about what I would do if there was an active shooter on campus during my conference period, as I would have almost zero protection. Some small things have been done, such as tinting the windows in these areas, but I still do not feel safe as anyone with inside knowledge of these structural particularities would know the weaknesses in the school setting.

The concern with the amount of glass in the building was consistent throughout the questionnaire responses. Faculty stated the amount of glass on the outside of the structure creates vulnerabilities. Those concerned about safety responded with the three major concerns of glass, outsider accessibility, and lack of hiding ability.

Reliability and Validity

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared in a dangerous situation. An anonymous questionnaire, a focus group, and research notes provided triangulation. Study reliability came from the questionnaire questions taken from a previous study and then vetted by a professional SRO with over 20 years of experience. The SRO helped adapt the questions to support the overall mission of the study.

Transferability

Findings are transferable when easily applicable to another context or situation (Daniel, 2019). The results in the research are not fully transferable due to the specificity of the basic qualitative study approach. Qualitative results are often only transferable to similar settings. Aspects teachers reported may be incorporated in other safety plans or training in similar school

sites. Yet, schools are not the lone target of a terroristic activity or where training occurs to prevent or minimize an active shooter. Every place of business should provide staff training and have programs in place in case of a difficult situation. The situation is not isolated. As previously discussed, people are more self-confident or comfortable in extreme scenarios when adequately trained (Bandura, 1997), as supported by the findings of this study.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the possibility of repetition for the study in another scenario with accurate results (Daniel, 2019). Chapter 3 discussed the methodology of the study. Steps necessary to complete the study and the method to repeat the study with consistency and accuracy were outlined in detail. The questionnaire can be duplicated and given to staff at any school across the country. Few questions were directly related to specific programs available on the individual campus studied, except for the tip line question.

Confirmability

Daniel (2019) defined confirmability as presenting the findings of a study in a manner free from bias. The research began with no preconceived notions for how the participants would respond to the study. Results of the participants' answers shaped the study through triangulation. Documentation of the methodology showed limited contact with the questionnaire participants, and direct quotes in the results minimized the possibility for bias. The SRO and the committee members for the study audited the questionnaire and found no bias leanings. Any findings expressed the consistencies identified in the responses of the participants.

Chapter Summary

The study of the perception of faculty for school safety situations and the comfort level after training involved 67 faculty members receiving a questionnaire. Of those staff members, 23

completed the questionnaire; six of those participants participated in the focus group Zoom session as well. The study collected responses between February and March of 2020. Qualitative data collected were analyzed by looking for similarities between responses and analyzed by triangulation. The open-ended constructed response portion of the research allowed for triangulation of the data with focus group responses as well as previous research. Responses identified the teachers' perception of the safety protocols of the building and the training provided.

Faculty and staff reported being trained to prepare for a dangerous safety situation. Participants described specific programs implemented to prevent a problematic safety situation from occurring. Additionally, respondents reporting feeling safe in the school. Teacher respondents did identify a few concerns. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the results, implications for the school and district, and further research recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The United States has had 20 mass murder events on school grounds since the 1966 shooting at the University of Texas at Austin (Paradice, 2017). In 1999, the Colorado-based Columbine High School initiated the modern era of school shootings, with 13 student deaths, a shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007 resulted in 32 deaths, Sandy Hook Elementary experienced 26 deaths in 2012, and 17 students were killed in 2018 at Stoneman Douglas High School (Paradice, 2017). National government efforts involve attempting to support schools in training staff members to keep the school safe through multiple endeavors (Jonson, 2017). The purpose of the basic qualitative study was to explore staff members' perceptions of safety based on the school district's training. Understanding whether training methods for an active shooter scenario were perceived competent in a single school where the previous year multiple terroristic threats occurred was the goal. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions of the study are discussed first, and then the study's limitations are acknowledged when considering future use of the data. Next, recommendations are made for future research and the necessary adaptations to the study for more quality data results. Then, the implications for leadership explain how the research could benefit society. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the information presented.

Findings, Interpretations, Conclusions

This basic qualitative study acquired data from 23 teacher questionnaires and a focus group of six teachers from a North Texas secondary school. The focus group contained the same questions as the questionnaire; the instrument was reviewed by an expert SRO officer for validity. Permission to conduct the study was provided by the superintendent of the school district. Once appropriate stakeholders gave permission and the study parameters were set, the IRB of the American College of Education approved the basic qualitative study to continue.

Research Question 1 was the following: How are the faculty and staff trained to prepare for an active shooter situation? The faculty reflected on the effectiveness level of the training provided and the consensus of the responses were positive. One participant said, “I know that administrators do their best to ensure our safety on campus. The district in itself takes a very strong stance on making sure we can be as prepared as possible.” . In comparison, in a prior research study by Clark et al. (2019), less than half of educators questioned felt moderately prepared in the event of an active shooter. Clark et al. (2019) also shared the lack of follow through with the training. The current study had a far smaller pool of participants, but further research may look at the difference between the training given to each group to find a possible correlation. Participants mentioned a badging system for building entry, training and drills, and regular safety committee meetings.

The participants who did not perceive safety training was practiced or considered serious enough on campus gave their own opinion. One participant stated,

Access to a secure area incase of an emergency, I do not feel that I have this on this campus. I do not have access to a space I can lock myself in. My desk is in a very accessible space and that is where I spend my lunch and prep time. I have no keys to any rooms to feel the sense of a locked space.

The participants opinion agreed with a study by Perkins (2018). Perkins (2018) found a majority of schools admitted little to no training over crises. Each teacher holds a different perception standard, and school districts work to make all faculty members feel safe for successful, positive self-efficacy to be maintained.

On the concerned side of training, one teacher during the focus group discussion brought up mental health concerns. The teacher expressed the lack of resources to appropriately help

students because a student could more likely act irrationally. Two of the most notable attacks since Columbine have clear connections to mental health: Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook Elementary (Cornell & Maeng, 2018). People with mental health issues still can obtain or have access to weapons, especially in rural and suburban Texas. The teacher mentioned the counselors were spread too thin and student actions caused concern because of irrational thinking. Questionnaire responses did not support this concern. Many previous studies have verified the lack of monitoring mental health as a safety issue (Philpott-Jones, 2018). Teasley (2018) stated school districts struggle to provide proper counseling services because of the lack of funding. The faculty desired safety for all participants; counselors play a vital role in supporting students and staff to perceive positive motives.

Research Question 2 was the following: How are programs, if any, implemented to prevent an active shooter situation from occurring? Texas passed HB 1009 in 2013, allowing concealed firearms on school grounds during school hours. The district represented in the study created a program under House Bill 1009 to train and prepare certain staff members to carry concealed weapons on campus. Numerous teachers referenced this program in questionnaires and the perceived safety the program brought to the staff. The program supports safety, although no teacher knows who carries a loaded weapon because the members of the program are kept anonymous, even from the school administration. Results of the study showed a concealed carry program to be beneficial for self-efficacy. During the focus group, one teacher brought up the benefit for those in the program to train on the assigned school campus. The teacher said, “The training should incorporate how to use the structure of the building as a benefit in the event of an active shooter.” After a clarifying question, the teacher explained the uniqueness of the building and how to use the uniqueness as an advantage to protect the students and staff and capture the

shooter. Felony convicts were 56% less likely to attack a place when a person was known to be armed (McQuiller, 2019). If a building has armed teachers and potential shooters are aware of the arming policy, an active shooter is less likely to attack.

Arming teachers has caused a national debate and varies by state. According to Weiler et al. (2018), the price for a district with 12 schools to arm teachers and train adequately for protecting students and fellow faculty runs between \$61,000 and \$95,000 annually, depending upon the extent of training, shooting practice, and the type of permit for the gun holder. Administrators at the school studied did not put a price tag on safety and chose peace of mind, or self-efficacy, for the staff members instead of risking the alternative. Based on teachers' perception of the programs in place, the administration chose the correct path, because the overwhelming majority supported the programs and the perceived safety imposed.

Research Question 3 was the following: How do faculty and staff perceive the safety of the school where they work? Questionnaire Question 1 asked respondents to identify some things that make them feel safe at this school. Of the responses, 43% were the SROs stationed on campus. SROs have been in schools since the 1950s and have consistently been researched since the Safe School Act of 1994 (as cited in Counts et al., 2018). Questionnaire results confirmed prior studies showing SROs to be a positive force on campus (Zullig et al., 2017). The benefits correlate to the concealed carry program, as both redirect the active shooter's attention away from the students and teachers and onto a direct threat. Teachers shared the comfort level with the SRO to be positive. Faculty expressed the perceived comfort of the students with the SRO to be positive on three occasions when asked about the students' perceived feelings about safety. The teachers' reports of students' positive perception in this basic qualitative study contradict the prior research of certain studies focused on the school-to-prison pipeline shared by Bleakley and

Bleakley (2018). Questionnaire responses showed support for the SRO program rather than the adverse effects seen in some more urban locations.

Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as increasing an individual's level of effort and perseverance towards a given goal, the level to which a person can endure trials and tribulations in life, and the confidence in decision making in adverse conditions. Based upon the questionnaire results, the teachers had a high self-efficacy in the area of training for an active shooter situation; 78% believed themselves to be effectively trained. Teachers believe in the training and thereby mostly reported feeling comfortable in the work environment. The most negative safety-related perception was the amount of glass in the building. Teachers recommended building the rooms and working space with less focus on aesthetics and more on safety. With this change, teachers reporting being able to focus more on the students and less on concerns with the surroundings and weaknesses in the structure. Faculty seldom provide input into the building of schools. If the goal is safety in the building and teacher perceived self-efficacy and safety, all stakeholders would benefit from feedback in the building process.

Limitations

After completing the data collection and analysis, the study's limitations remained as previously stated: (a) sample size, (b) data collection method, and (c) experience. The study was limited to only one secondary school in a rural district in Texas. Responses given do not show an overall perception of the discussed situation across a large area or even a complete district view. Of the 67 staff on the campus, 23 participated in the questionnaire, and 6 of the 23 participated in a later focus group through Zoom. Most data were collected through an anonymous online questionnaire. A questionnaire collection limits the ability to perceive visual, nonverbal, and

behavioral cues seen in person. The time constraints for scheduling might have limited participation.

The school and district had not experienced an active shooter situation. Information from survivors of an incident would naturally glean more credible results toward actual preparation instead of perceived preparedness. Questionnaire and focus group questions allowed for free responses, with no guidance or multiple-choice options. The format prevented bias from impacting the responses. An anonymous questionnaire allows for short responses without the ability to ask follow-up or clarifying questions. One-on-one interview methodology could prove to be more beneficial in future studies.

Recommendations

Schools and public facilities across the world continue to experience tragic situations of active shooters. The Texas Education Agency requires every school in every district to create, train, and manage a crisis plan. Based on the study's results, the school does have an action plan for these situations. Most respondents reported the training as positive. Yet, some mixed results remain as to whether the school trains and practices the drills enough to make teachers have a positive perception of the training situation.

The creation of safety director positions continues to grow. Directors should look to research to implement more comprehensive and more frequent safety audits to ensure the most up-to-date practices are carried out. Most schools in Texas use the Safety Response Protocol created by the "I Love U Guys" Foundation (2020). The system creates healthy practices to help support students, teachers, and administrators, but through the study, more practice of the drills needs to be required for all stakeholders to perceive the building and systems are safe and secure.

Policymakers should hold schools accountable for the training and create a system of questionnaires to gauge the school faculty's perception. Situations with an active shooter happen in an instant, and muscle memory takes over. The more accountable the schools are to conduct training, the more prepared and natural an active shooter situation will feel in the moment. Students should feel comfortable as well with the roles given. Some skeptical students may dismiss the notion of an active shooter situation. The more training the students receive, and the more details are shared, the better students can react and cooperate during an active shooter situation.

Future research should be more specific in analyzing the different programs schools use to train the staff. The recommendation for the school is a more in-depth look into the concealed carry program and the training required of the staff. Specific training should support the program's participants in how to assist police officers during an active shooter situation and how to utilize the unique structure of the building to the teachers' advantage. Other recommendations would be to complete a long-term analysis of the training practices to assess the beginning-of-the-year professional development. The same analysis would benefit the practice drills during the school year and the after-event assessments done by the school.

Implications for Leadership

Results are significant to school leaders desiring to train the faculty appropriately to have the faculty perceive the building is safe and protocols are in place in the event of an active shooter. The study focused on how teachers perceive training and where improvements could make the process more effective. The findings were written as observations learned from the information gathered, in hopes for future successful research and strengthened training procedures. The results of the study could support administrators in future professional

development opportunities to see where teachers perceive more support is necessary. When examining active shooter and building safety for secondary schools, future research should consider the faculty's perception in the present study.

The research could contribute and provide a further understanding of the larger body of previous research on active shooter training and the perceptions of those receiving the training. Study findings only show one method to prepare teachers, and the faculty at the study school had a positive overall perception of safety. Comparing this teacher training to other programs of training around the state or country could be beneficial. The existing literature has shown small samples of given areas or school districts, but a larger population of the state or country is missing. A quantitative study of a larger sample, even one covering the over 8,000 public schools in Texas, would be beneficial for more accurate feedback on what creates a positive perception for teachers. Such a thorough study could show more trends and procedures found to be beneficial. The knowledge deficit on whether trainings support teacher's self-efficacy leaves some schools vulnerable to a terroristic attack or the school's faculty with a negative perception of the training provided to them. Texas has been vulnerable to multiple active shooter situations in the previous 5 years, the most prominent being at Santa Fe High School (Rajan & Branas, 2018).

The present study contributes to the narrative of school districts taking action to prevent active shooter situations and willingly listening to the faculty to make improvements. With increased communication between campus and district staff, the more likely change becomes, and staff may feel secure in the processes in place. The intent is to assist the district to be better informed and work with other districts to grow the same sentiment.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty on being prepared in a dangerous situation. This basic qualitative study explored how one school trained the faculty for an active shooter situation and analyzed the faculty's perception after trained. Teacher participants identified the perceptions of the building and training for a foundation for future research. The results of the study indicated repeated drills and the presence of an SRO as positive factors and building infrastructure as a negative factor in perceived safety. Themes coincide with the research examined in the literature review. Programs in place at the studied school of individual faculty carrying a concealed weapon and the anonymous tip line. The programs showed promise based on staff responses. Since active shooter situations continue to happen in public schools, additional research exploring the qualities of other programs around Texas and the United States could fill the gap. All students and faculty deserve a safe, educational experience, and further analysis on the topic could additionally impact long-term positive change.

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Appendix A

Revised, Final Faculty Member Questionnaire

SCHOOL SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

We are conducting this study in order to better understand how safe the faculty feels in school. We want your opinion about what is happening in your school so we can evaluate your perception of how safe faculty feel in school. Your school administration has agreed that the study may be conducted in your school. To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual, as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section, will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate in this study, please answer the following questions. You may skip questions if you feel you cannot provide an answer. You may also turn in a blank questionnaire if you wish to not participate.

1. What are some things that make you feel safe at this school?
2. How do students feel about safety at this school?
3. How is weapon possession, like knives and guns viewed at the school?
4. What is the perception of terroristic threats at this school?
5. What is the perception of outsiders getting into the school?
6. What factors are important when you think about your safety at this school?
7. Do you feel comfortable bringing safety concerns to your administrator's attention?
8. Do you feel you are adequately trained in the safety procedures of this school? If no,
please explain
9. Do you feel the anonymous tip line is adequately advertised and/or utilized?
10. Do you have any substantial training in school safety? Please explain.

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

SCHOOL SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

We are conducting this study in order to better understand how safe the faculty feels in school. We want your opinion about what is happening in your school so we can evaluate your perception of how safe faculty feel in school. Your school administration has agreed that the study may be conducted in your school. To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual, as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section, will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate in this study, please answer the following questions. You may skip questions if you feel you cannot provide an answer. You may also turn in a blank questionnaire if you wish to not participate.

1. What are some things that make you feel safe at this school?
2. How do students feel about safety at this school?
3. How is weapon possession, like knives and guns viewed at the school?
4. What is the perception of terroristic threats at this school?
5. What is the perception of outsiders getting into the school?
6. What factors are important when you think about your safety at this school?
7. Do you feel comfortable bringing safety concerns to your administrator's attention?
8. Do you feel you are adequately trained in the safety procedures of this school? If no,
please explain
9. Do you feel the anonymous tip line is adequately advertised and/or utilized?
10. Do you have any substantial training in school safety? Please explain.

Appendix C

Consent Form

Informed Consent

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

Project Information

Project Title: A Case Study on Preparation of Faculty for School Safety Situations

Researcher: Philip Meaker

Organization: American College of Education

Email: Philip.meaker@gmail.com **Telephone:**

Researcher's Faculty Member: Sandra Quiatkowski

Organization and Position: American College of Education, Library Director

Email: Sandra.Quiatkowski@ace.edu

Introduction

I am Philip Meaker, and I am a doctoral candidate student at American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Sandra Quiatkowski. I will give you some information about the project and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them then.

Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study which will assist with understanding beliefs and perceptions on faculty preparation for school safety situations. This qualitative study will examine how prepared the faculty feels in the event of a school safety situation.

Research Design and Procedures

The study will use a qualitative methodology and case study research design. questionnaires will be disseminated to all faculty within the case study school. The study will comprise of 67 participants, who will have the opportunity to participate in filling out the questionnaire online. After the questionnaire is open a month, a focus group session will occur through Zoom. Participants will be randomly selected to participate in a conversation around the online questionnaire questions.

Participant selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because of your experience as a faculty member of the case study school who can contribute much to the understanding on perceived

preparation, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria: Employed by the school being studied.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions and you do not have to participate. If you select to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

We are inviting you to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to fill out an anonymous questionnaire online and possibly a Zoom focus group. The type of questions asked will be all open-ended in regard to perceived feelings.

Duration

The questionnaire portion of the research study will require approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you are selected to participate in the focus group, the time expected will be a maximum of 1 hour.

Risks

The researcher will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us find out more about school safety. The potential benefits of this study will aid the keeping students and faculty safe within the school setting.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet or encrypted computer file. Any information about you will be coded and will not have a direct correlation, which directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information.

Sharing the Results

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. It is anticipated to publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is voluntary. At any time, you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussions.

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Philip Meaker (Philip.meaker@gmail.com). This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

Certificate of Consent

I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print or Type Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type name of lead researcher: _____

Signature of lead researcher: _____

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm the individual has freely given assent.

Print or type name of lead researcher: _____

Signature of lead researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature of faculty member: _____

Date: _____

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Appendix D

Original Faculty Member Questionnaire

SCHOOL SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

We are conducting this study in order to better understand how safe the faculty feels in school. We want your opinion about what is happening in your school so we can evaluate your perception of how safe faculty feel in school. Your school administration has agreed that the study may be conducted in your school. To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual, as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section, will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate in this study, please answer the following questions. You may skip questions if you feel you cannot provide an answer. You may also turn in a blank questionnaire if you wish to not participate.

1. What are some things that make you feel safe at this school?
2. How do students feel about safety at this school?
3. How are drugs/alcohol perceived at this school?
4. How is weapon possession, like knives and guns viewed at the school?
5. How have you modified your behavior to feel safer?
6. What is the perception of terroristic threats at this school?
7. What is the perception of outsiders getting into the school?
8. How are fights perceived at this school?
9. How do you feel the district training has prepared you for school violence?
10. What factors are important when you think about your safety at this school?

The following are demographics we would like to know.

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. What is your ethnic background?
 - a. Asian
 - b. African American
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Native American
 - e. White (Non-Hispanic)
 - f. Other _____
3. What is your position in the school?
 - a. Administrator/Counselor
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Paraprofessional
 - d. Other _____
4. Do you have any background in or substantial knowledge about school safety?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Please provide any comments you may have:

Appendix E

Email Correspondence with Content Experts



Jan 16, 2020, 9:11 AM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Mr Meaker,

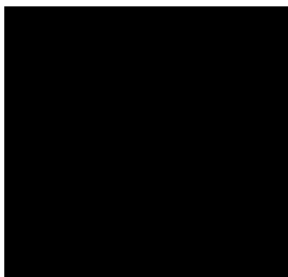
I would suggest removing the demographics from the survey, however I do like the last question that inquires about the persons background in school safety. I would encourage you to put it in the survey.

Suggested Questions that could be added:

- Do you feel comfortable bringing safety concerns to your administrator's attention?
- Do you feel you are adequately trained in the safety procedures of this school? If no, please explain.
- Do you feel the anonymous tip line is adequately advertised and/or utilized?
- Do you have any substantial training in school safety? Please explain.

Suggested Questions for removal:

- How are drugs and alcohol perceived at this school?
- How are fights perceived at this school?
- How do you feel the district training has prepared you for school violence?
- Have you modified your behavior to feel safer?



RE: Survey Feedback

Yesterday at 3:01 PM

Mr. Meaker,

Thank you for sending me the questionnaire, I look forward to seeing the results of your work. [I hope we can discuss what you learn to implement on my campus.](#)

I would encourage you to lower the number of questions to 10 as most people will not complete a longer questionnaire. The easiest questions to leave out are the demographic questions, but that may be good for your results for analysis. If you are focusing your study on school safety in active shooter situations then I do not see the need for the following questions:

- How are drugs and alcohol perceived at this school?
- How do you feel the district training has prepared you for school violence? (or change the ending to "an active shooter situation")
- How are fights perceived at this school?

Please let me know if you have any further questions I can help with, good luck!

Kindly,

Tue, Feb 9, 4:05 PM (17 hours ago) ☆ ↩ ⋮

Mr. Meaker,

I am honored that you thought of me to help with your dissertation. I am excited to see what you learn, this is such a critical topic. I have been overseeing campus safety operations at one of the largest elementary schools in this District. It is a daily task to make sure all 1200 students are safe from all threats. It takes work and as a previous security coordinator I appreciate your study.

Although we are in a pandemic, the blessing is that we have not had a school shooting this year that I am aware of.

As for your study, I think that you need to focus your questions more toward an active shooter situation instead of being so broad. If you are focused on the view of the faculty and staff I would recommend you delete the question about student's feelings.

I would also consider refining some of your questions:

1. Good
2. Delete
3. Delete
4. Are you concerned with weapons, like knives and guns at school?
5. Good
6. Good
7. Good
8. Delete
9. Good
10. Good (maybe refine or divide into two questions: the physical building and the training provided)

I like the demographic questions because that is relevant to perception, but I would delete the "position in the school" question because that will likely deter teachers from answering questions because of anonymity.

I hope this helps, let me know if you need anything else.

Sincerely,

Appendix F

Faculty Member “Opt-Out” Form

SCHOOL SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE FACULTY MEMBER “OPT-OUT” FORM

Our school is taking part in a school safety questionnaire conducted by Philip Meaker, M.S., a graduate student at the American College of Education. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Quiatkowski of the American College of Education. We want your opinion about what is happening in [the school district] so we can better understand how safe our faculty/staff feels in school.

A questionnaire containing 10 questions will be administered to you. This questionnaire is expected to take about 10 minutes to complete.

To ensure that identities are not stored/reported, any combination of demographics that would identify an individual, as well as any identifying information conveyed in the open comment section, will be redacted before storing and/or acted upon if there is any statutory reporting requirement. Names or other personal identifiers will not be included in the final thesis documented or in any subsequent presentations.

Participation is completely voluntary. Participants may skip questions if they feel that they cannot provide an answer. They may also turn in a blank questionnaire if they decide to not participate.

For questions about this research, please contact Philip Meaker (Philip.meaker@gmail.com) or his faculty advisor, Dr. Sandra Quiatkowski (Sandra.Quiatkowski@ace.edu). If you wish to not participate in this research study, please indicate below and return this form via email.

I do not wish to participate in the school safety study conducted by Philip Meaker, M.S., a graduate student at the American College of Education.

Name (Printed): _____


X

Signature

Date

Appendix G

Superintendent Approval

RE: External: Dissertation  Personal 

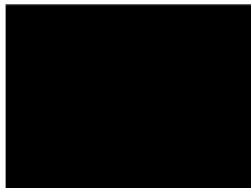


[REDACTED]
to me =

Mon, Jun 17, 2019, 10:51 AM   

Philip,

I am sorry I let this go so long. You have my permission to send the short survey to secondary staff.



From: Philip Meaker <philip.meaker@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 12, 2019 8:54 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: External: Dissertation

This message was sent from outside of Weatherford ISD. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

[REDACTED]

I hope your summer has started off well. I know that the end of the school year was extremely busy, but I was wondering if you had a chance to review the email I sent in regards to my dissertation proposal? I have attached the survey again for your reference. With your permission I would appreciate it if I could sent a link through [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) to this survey to the staff of all secondary campuses. It is 100% anonymous and there will be an opt-out letter attached as well for those who wish to not participate.

I understand this may be a process to be approved. Please let me know if you have any questions and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Philip Meaker