Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Public School Violent Intruder Drills

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This qualitative study consisted of semistructured interviews conducted with preservice teachers. Using prospect theory as the framework, the key research questions addressed preservice teachers' perceptions of violent intruder incidents and drills as well as their experiences participating in drills and training related to self-efficacy. Key findings included that perceptions change over time with the accumulation of experience and that teachers have the added responsibility to process student emotions subsequent to events and drills. Participants reported a range of self-confidence, which for some was impacted by the type of training received. Participants desired more opportunities to learn and consistency between schools.

Keywords: intruder drills, school safety, preservice teachers, student teachers

INTRODUCTION

The role of school teachers has expanded beyond educating children in areas of academics (Manuel, 2016). In addition to the traditional subjects of math and reading, now included in the responsibilities of many public school teachers is preparedness to react in the face of potential threats to the safety of the students (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2019). Public awareness of school shooting events, or so-called rampage shootings, has prompted public schools to adopt violent intruder drills in emergency preparedness plans. These school intruder drills have been developed by safety experts, who endorse them as best-practice procedures for reaction to a violent intruder with the purpose of preserving life and maintaining safety for school students and staff, along with the inclusion of other measures, such as physical barriers, surveillance cameras, and barricades for all interior doors (Strobach & Cowan, 2019).

In a heavily cited study, Zhe and Nickerson (2007) examined the effect of violent intruder drills on students and found no difference between treatment and control groups with respect to level of anxiety or perception of school safety. Yielding a different conclusion, Peterson, Sackrison, and Polland (2015) found college females who participated in a training on responding to a shooter expressed higher levels of fear than a control group. Expanding beyond student perceptions, Alba and Gable (2011) conducted a study to learn about the experiences of school administrators and first responders with respect to violent intruder preparedness and found that administrators at both the elementary and secondary level expressed interest in receiving more direction from the state with respect to best-practice guidelines.

Research has also addressed knowledge acquired subsequent to emergency response trainings within schools. Dries (n.d.) found one training approach to school violence increases knowledge of intervention and skills for triage and response as well as self-efficacy. However, Olinger Steeves, Metallo, Byrd, Erickson, and Gresham (2017) discovered school employees held inconsistent knowledge about their

school's safety plans, which often did not include best-practice recommendations. Furthermore, Perkins (2018) found educators have limited confidence in the ability of local law enforcement to respond to school crises effectively.

Outside of schools, Gould, Meek, Gibbs, Sawford, Wessely, and Greenberg (2015) studied trainers who taught self-protection to military personnel and found instructors reported higher levels of mental health symptoms, such as anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder, compared to trainees. The experiences of firefighters related to job retention has also been researched. For example, although the time commitment and family or work conflicts serve as barriers for volunteer firefighter retention rates, 40.03% of respondents also indicated unsatisfactory training was an additional barrier (Malinen & Mankkinen, 2018). Henderson and Sowa (2018) also reported that training and skills development were positively correlated with Pennsylvania firefighters' intention to continue to volunteer. Together, these findings suggest that, although training and skill development may be important for the retention of some first responders, engaging in such may lead to increases in unwanted mental health symptoms.

Like those of first responders, factors that motivate teachers to enter and remain in the teaching profession have also been studied. A survey of high school students found approximately half expected to work in a professional occupation, and only 10% of those aspired to teaching, indicating a potential shortage of future educators (Han, Borgonovi, & Guerriero, 2018). Self-efficacy and prior experience were found to be the strongest motivators for preservice teachers to enter the profession in a study conducted by Hennessy and Lynch (2017).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What perceptions do preservice teachers have about violent intruder incidents and drills within public schools?

RQ2: What are the experiences of preservice teachers who engage in violent intruder drills and training related to self-efficacy?

Problem Statement

Considering ongoing incidents of violence, maintaining safety within schools is of utmost importance. In an effot to do so, schools across the country are adopting emergency preparedness plans that include the practicing of drills to best respond to such events (NASP, 2019). The impact of ongoing acts of violence and subsequent drills, specifically for preservice teachers in the face of a global teacher shortage, is unknown to the academic and professional community tasked with recruiting strong, quality teachers for the future. The problem this study addressed was the lack of knowledge about the perceptions of preservice teachers who have lived through an era of highly publicized school shooting events and have participated in school trainings and drills in response to violent intruders. Through an exploration of the preservice teachers' experiences of school shootings and violent intruder events as well as their experiences of related drills with respect to self-efficacy, a better understanding has been developed. The findings of this study add to the existing body of knowledge by providing the unique perspective of preservice teachers with respect to violence and drills on how to respond to violent intruders within public schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research stemmed from Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory, which posits gains and losses are weighted in order to inform decisions that involve risk. According to Kahneman and Tversky, when making a decision that involves risk, people first edit the available information; one form of editing is to simplify the information, which includes "the discarding of extremely unlikely outcomes" (p. 275). However, when considering the frequency of an occurrence, people also employ heuristics, specifically the availability heuristic, which informs judgement or perception and leads to biases in decision-making (Tversky & Kahneman, 1972). With prospect theory, after editing, the

remaining information is evaluated and the decision with the highest valued prospect is selected (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Although decision weights do not factor in the *actual* likelihood of an event occurring, the *perceived* likelihood does impact the weight assigned (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Despite the rarity of violent school intruder incidents (NASP, 2019), given that emotionally charged examples are more easily recalled (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) and incidents of school violence have typically received extensive media coverage (Muschert, 2007) such incidents may be less likely to be edited out as extremely unlikely (see Hopwood & Schutte, 2017). Additionally, Hopwood and Schutte (2017) found a significant effect size when conducting a meta-analysis of exposure to disasters and violence in the media on negative psychological outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and fearfulness. This is important because emotions impact self-efficacy, which is another influence on decision-making (Bandura, 1977), and these psychological effects may be considered special circumstances, according to prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

METHODOLOGY

A pilot study and main study were conducted using identical methodology. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was employed. This approach was consistent with the purpose of the study (see Creswell and Creswell, 2018), which aimed to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of preservice teachers. Learning more about the point of view of others benefits the scientific community when limited prior research on a phenomenon has been conducted (Stadtlander, 2018).

Participants

All participants met the inclusion criteria of being currently enrolled in the student-teaching phase of a teacher education program or having completed that phase of their education degree program within the previous 6 months. One exception was made, however, for one of the pilot interview participants. That participant reported having just completed the internship phase of a school psychology degree program. Similar to student-teachers, school psychology interns are required to complete 1,200 hours of field training, with at least 600 of those hours in a school setting (NASP, 2019). Two individuals participated in the pilot study. The sample for the main study included a total of 15 participants. This number of participants is consistent with the recommendations of Burkholder, Cox, and Crawford (2016) to include between five and 15 participants in phenomenological research in order to reach data saturation.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through two social media platforms: LinkedIn and Facebook. An announcement was posted multiple times to specific groups within those platforms, which were believed to attract members who might meet the inclusion criteria for the study or know of individuals who meet the criteria. The announcement was also posted to various university alumni networking groups. The recruitment postings also included intentionally applied hashtags, such as #StudentTeachers and #EducationAndSchools. To increase participation, a $25 Amazon gift card was mailed to each participant following the interview.

Instrumentation

A semistructured interview protocol was developed and refined through the use of the pilot study. The interview consisted of open-ended questions and probing follow-up questions. This format benefits qualitative research by serving as a vehicle for the solicitation of individual experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which was consistent with the alignment of this study. In addition to participant responses to interview questions, researcher observations and impressions were recorded in notes created during the interviews.

Data Collection

All interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom over the course of 3 weeks. Each lasted approximately 32 minutes, on average. The record feature of Zoom was employed to audio record the interviews. Transcriptions of the interviews were emailed to each respective participant individually to review for accuracy. None of the participants responded with feedback other than expressions of satisfaction with the accuracy.

Data Analysis

After the completion of data collection, the raw data was organized into codes. Using an inductive process, the codes were converted into larger categories and themes. Field notes and each transcription were read through multiple times so meaningful segments could be identified. Ravitch and Carl (2016) described this as the coding process. While engaging in this activity, the conceptual framework of the study and the research questions were periodically revisited. Finally, after identifying the emergent themes, each piece of data was read one more time to ensure an accurate understanding, thus boosting the validity of the study.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of preservice teachers who have participated in violent intruder trainings and drills. Using prospect theory as the framework, the key research questions addressed preservice teachers' perceptions of violent intruder incidents and drills as well as their experiences participating in intruder drills and training related to self-efficacy. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 15 preservice teachers in the student-teaching phase or who had completed that phase of their education program within the preceding 6 months. The resulting data were analyzed using a multistage, inductive process to convert coded segments of participant responses into larger categories and themes.

RESULTS

Through meticulous and repeated consideration of the data, codes and subsequent emergent themes were identified. Three themes emerged in response to the first research question. Two themes emerged in response to the second research question.

Research Question 1

Through the first research question, I sought the perceptions of preservice teachers about violent intruder incidents and drills within public schools. Participant responses to the semistructured interview yielded three emergent themes: awareness of violence, vulnerability, and professional impact. Each of these themes were broken down into subthemes, which consisted of multiple codes or categories.

Awareness of Violence

Awareness of violence was one recurring theme that emerged from the data. This included the conscious awareness of the very existence of violence within schools, as well as awareness of statistics, or the prevalence of actual incidents. The subthemes of lightbulb moments and prevalence of actual incidents capture how and when participants became attuned to school violence and their beliefs about how common school shootings or violent intruder incidents are.

Within the data, several participants recounted their lightbulb moment, or when they first considered school violence. When asked what role violent intruder incidents or drills had, if any, on their thought process when deciding to pursue a career in education, 11 participants indicated violent intruders were not a factor. Most had not consciously considered it. Others indicated actively putting thoughts about violence out of their minds: "I try not to think about it because I don't want that to influence my decision on something I really do enjoy doing." Beyond initial consideration of school violence when deciding on a career path, many participants described moments during which the potential for school violence rose to the forefront of their minds for the first time. These moments often transpired as a result of experiences or

witnessing media coverage throughout the duration of their time as a college student. One participant stated school violence "wasn't something that was on my brain until I started talking about it at school and then seeing some of the shootings on tv in schools and, like, on tv shows." Other participants witnessed violence between students for the first time during the course of their student-teaching. These lightbulb moments may have contributed to the belief many participants shared about the prevalence of actual incidents.

Although not all participants spoke of their beliefs about current trends, six reported thinking the prevalence of actual incidents of school violence is on the rise. None of the participants cited any clear statistics on the prevalence of violence. In fact, some participants were misinformed, confidently stating rates such as "1 in 20 schools will experience a school shooting within a year." Where such beliefs originated, for example, whether participants heard these rates through viewing media coverage or learned of such statistics in an educational environment, was not revealed. In addition to lightbulb moments and prevalence of actual incidents as subthemes to the emergent theme of awareness of events coming into view from the data, vulnerability was identified as a second recurring theme for the first research question.

Vulnerability
Within the data, subthemes of personal vulnerability, safety differs between schools, and mind over matter emerged. These subthemes were meshed together under the overall theme of vulnerability. In addition to the connection between the concepts relating to vulnerability, responses from the participants shed light on possible rationalization techniques for the juxtaposition of preservice teachers' awareness of violence within schools and their desire to teach.

Although not all reported feeling unsafe, almost half of the participants expressed feeling personally vulnerable in school settings. That is, seven of the 15 participants shared sentiments, such as "I think [a violent intruder event is] very likely" or "it's likely that something like that would happen, whether it's an active shooter or a bomb threat, or whatever it may be, someone would be trying to cause harm to my students, and possibly even to me." Six of the participants insinuated violence can happen anywhere, believing schools are no more dangerous than other places. The notion of unpredictability was found repeatedly, coded as *never know*. It should also be noted that 10 of the 15 participants reported feeling safe. Although some articulated feeling more adamant about schools being safe than others, with seven providing comments coded as *do not feel safe*, and ten as *do feel safe*, the implication is that such perceptions must be more complex than simply feel feeling one way or another because mathematically those straightforward beliefs exceed the number or participants in the study.

A second subtheme under vulnerability related to the variability of perceptions of safety between schools. Eight participants shared believing their own schools were safe. Simultaneously, codes of *other schools are less safe* and *differs between schools* were assigned to comments such as "it depends on the school. For instance, my high school, anyone could just walk through the front door at any time." Respondents mostly agreed that high school buildings were more vulnerable than others due to lax safety measures. Several also indicated believing urban schools have a culture more accepting of violence, but perhaps are less vulnerable due to subsequent increased security measures.

Mind over matter was the third subtheme that emerged under the overall theme of vulnerability. Most of the participants made comments such as "I don't want to think about it every time I step in the school." Four participants put such thoughts out of mind so much that, when asked directly, they reported having never been impacted by school violence; however, they later shared experiences to the contrary. For example, after saying she has never had any personal experience with violent intruder events, one participant described being at college when someone "came on to campus with a machete and, uh, they kind of, ran over some people with their car." Other participants minimized their experiences, too, seeming to rationalize their lived experiences.

Despite intentionally putting thoughts of violence out of mind or unconsciously forgetting or minimizing past experiences of actual victimization, many of the participants provided responses indicating they think about victimization or believe it could happen to them. For example, one participant stated,

I can be one of the people that's killed in a violent intruder incident. And, I even thought about that during the student-teaching because my room was right near the one entrance. Like, if there was an intruder, my classroom would be the first target. So like, that's something to think about.

Another stated, "I do think about it happening. I kind of look at it as like a 50-50 shot it's happening, um, all over." Along with the thoughts about potential victimization, six participants indicated knowing violent intruder incidents and drills are a part of public education these days. This was evident from statements, such as "I think a lot of teachers are really aware that their physical ... being put in a position, physically, where they would have to protect their students."

The variation between participants of expressed levels of vulnerability, along with statements and actions to the contrary and consideration of willingness to protect students at all costs shows some participants may find comfort in putting on a brave face. That is, some reported consciously feeling safe, while subconsciously engaging in behavior or sharing thoughts that indicated feelings of vulnerability to varying degrees. This may be indicative of rationalization techniques employed by student-teachers to work through the juxtaposition of school violence and their future career goals.

Professional Impact

A third emergent theme from the data related to the first research question was identified as professional impact. Subthemes included drills impact students, appropriate for all, and new responsibilities. This theme covers thoughts student-teachers have about how their role as educators applies to ongoing school violence and subsequent safety drills practiced in the classroom.

The perception preservice teachers have about the impact of drills on students contributes to the professional impact of ongoing school violence and violent intruder drills. Every participant expressed believing the practicing of drills with students should be done, either to raise awareness, empower students to respond, or both. In addition to raising awareness among students and empowering them, 11 of the 15 participants provided responses coded as drills *cause anxiety/trauma*. One participant shared, "I think that was probably one of the hardest days in my student-teaching experience was having them practice this lockdown drills, and then just ask ... just all these questions, like 'if this were real, would I die?'" Taken together, in addition to all participants indicating they believe engaging in violent intruder drills is needed, most also shared beliefs about the emotional harm such practices cause for students.

Another subtheme that emerged under professional impact was labelled appropriate for all. Participants expressed the need for drills to be done at the appropriate developmental level of the students, considering both age and ability. A lot of the comments included recognition of the need to minimize fear, particularly among younger students. Beyond the age of the student, participants recognized the need to support other unique qualities of individual students. One participant, describing a time when she led her students through a different type of safety drill, stated that the class

knew about the drill plenty ahead of time. So, we practiced it a few times ... and then when the actual drill happened, I remember one of the students, his knees just locked because he was so stressed and so overwhelmed at what was happening.

Another shared, "in an Autism support classroom, drills are really hard to do. I've seen, with fire drills it's very hard for our students to react well in a situation where they're not ... where it's not something they're used to doing." These thoughts suggest preservice teachers recognize training students and practicing drills cannot be done using a cookie cutter approach, and there are multiple factors to consider in order to ensure the drills are done appropriately to match the unique developmental level of the students.

A third subtheme within the overall theme of professional impact, which relates to the change in responsibilities teachers now face in light of ongoing school violence and as facilitators of violent intruder drills, was new responsibilities. Several participants highlighted the need for preparation, such as knowing the basic procedures and where to go during the chaos of an event. In addition to being prepared for drills and actual events, six participants also discussed the need to stay vigilant. This included the need to stay vigilant of concerning behaviors of students that may be warning signs of mental health needs, as well as

vigilant of the environment because in a real intruder event, there might not be an announcement over the loud speaker. A responsibility that is not constant, but would fall on the shoulders of educators in a real emergency event is the need to make a decision. Some participants described being given scenarios during drills and deciding what course of action to take with the class. These decisions were reportedly "nerve-racking," particularly as other school adults followed the lead of the student-teacher. However, beyond making decisions during drills, some participants spoke about the challenge of deciding how to respond in the event of a real emergency situation. For example, some expressed anxiety about the consequences of their actions, such as "it's definitely scary thinking about I might have to protect my students one time, and then if I do protect them, like, was I really protecting them or did some of them end up passing with me?" Regarding such decisions, one participant summarized her thoughts succinctly: "that's a lot of responsibility for a lot of little children."

In addition to making decisions, participants also reported on the responsibility to preserve the mental health of their students surrounding violent intruder drills. One stated "even though it's a drill ... I would have to be emotionally in charge of all of my students while trying to keep my own [emotions] in check." That task is not simple, according to some participants. One noted, "it's hard because they have to be quiet at the same time, so you can't console them." Through their statements, participants recognized the need to help students digest their thoughts and feelings following both drills and actual events as an additional professional responsibility.

Although to some, violent intruder drills may seem like a small addition to the tasks expected of teachers throughout a school year, the preservice teachers in this study unveiled several perceptions of the impacts the drills have on them professionally. These include managing the multi-faceted effects the drills have on students, assuring the drills are conducted at the appropriate developmental level of the students, and the need to be prepared and vigilant at all times.

Research Question 2

Through the second research question, I asked about the experiences of preservice teachers who engage in violent intruder drills and training related to self-efficacy Two themes emerged from the data: self-confidence and sufficiency of training. As with the themes from the first research question, each of these were comprised of subthemes, which consisted of multiple codes and categories.

Self-Confidence

One emergent theme related to the second research question dealt with the confidence participants expressed about their ability to respond in accordance with guidelines and training received on violent intruder drills. This included various impacts such trainings have on preservice teachers and their beliefs about how they would actually respond in a true violent intruder situation. Subthemes of training impacts adults and instinctual response captured the concepts repeated throughout the data.

As a subtheme to self-confidence, the impact of running drills and learning about concepts of school safety on participants was noted multiple times. Several participants spoke about experiences and trainings as a college student, which caused them to think about their role during violent intruder events for the first time. Experiencing chaos and stress came up repeatedly. One participant stated, "a lot of times, you know, you feel like, what more could I do? Am I doing enough? You know, is this the right decision? Is this going to protect my students?" Such comments describe the emotional impact running drills with students have on some preservice teachers.

Outside of classroom drills, participants spoke of the emotional impact of the educational trainings themselves. Most mentioned A.L.I.C.E. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) trainings or videos. Although some described hearing only stories about actual school shootings, others reported sitting through actual simulations or reenactments of events. For example, one participant stated a trainer

> lined us up and had us sit ... he walked between us and, just kind of, pointed at the floor on both sides, which is apparently what the Kent State shooter did. So, he was trying to show us, if you just sit there, you're sitting ducks and, and ... and you're going to be killed.

She later described her emotional reaction following that training, stating:

> It was scary for me … it was awful, you know? Like, I hadn't even been in the classroom yet with the kids there, and this was something that we were already doing, and it was just … yeah, it was nerve-racking.

Another participant also described how she felt after participating in a violent intruder training. She shared, "it definitely left me feeling, like, a little scared or nervous the rest of the day to have that training." These segments suggest school safety trainings may teach more than simply the steps to follow in an emergency.

As a result of what was learned through trainings or experiences at student-teaching sites, many participants commented on the importance of preparing the physical environment for defense against violence. One participant talked about asking each of her second grade students to bring in a can of soup to keep at their desks all year as an object for throwing at a potential attacker. Others mentioned setting up the classroom in a way that would make evacuating or barricading a simpler process. In addition to the emotional impacts of training mentioned earlier, these were some practical ideas the preservice teachers could apply for the safety of themselves and students.

A second subtheme identified under the overall theme of self-confidence had nothing to do with the training received or any drills practiced. Nine out of the 15 participants provided response segments indicating their belief that instinct would drive their response to a real emergency event. As one put it,

> I would like to know some more options on what I could do, but yeah, at the same time, whatever happens that day is going to happen, and you're going to do your first instinct and hope for the best.

Incorporating both the impact of training for violent intruders with and without students and beliefs about an instinctual response, most indicated a mid-range level of confidence. That is, some participants expressed confidence and some a lack thereof, but most fell somewhere in the middle.

Sufficiency of Training

A second theme emerged from the data in response to research question two with subthemes of preparedness and amount of training varies. The theme sufficiency of training covers perceptions preservice teachers have with respect to the sufficiency of the training they have received. Specifically, how satisfied participants are with the types and amount of training they have completed as they move on to the start of a career in education fall within the theme of sufficiency of training.

Participants reported various levels of readiness when thinking about their own ability to lead an emergency response. Codes, such as *feel prepared*, *feel unprepared*, *disagree with recommendations*, and *want more training/guidance*, made up the subtheme of preparedness. Of the 15 participants, only three explicitly reported feeling prepared. Likewise, only three reported feeling unprepared. The remaining nine presented feelings of ambiguity.

The ambiguity in perceptions of preparedness stemmed from the recognition that guidance and procedures vary between trainings, districts, and even buildings. One participant explained,

> The drills that my district implements with the kids could be completely different from what I've learned. And so, I might be telling the kids 'we need to do this, this, this, and this,' and they might be like, 'but that's not what we practiced.'

Another shared, "where I graduated from, they don't do A.L.I.C.E. training. They're just not there yet, which is a shame because you would think that all schools would, kind of, come together and say, you know, what is the best way." Others expressed dissatisfaction with recommendations they received from trainings, believing them to be outdated or simply not the best course of action.

In addition to schools and districts following different procedures, some classroom procedures vary within schools. So, although one participant shared feeling more prepared at the end of a week during which her student-teaching school practiced violent intruder drills every day, others implied feeling unprepared due to a lack of training in all settings to match their certification. For example, one stated "I was only with the regular education class whenever we did the drill. I would like to see how that life skills teacher approached these as well." Much of the data showing a lack of preparedness or ambiguity overlaps with the other subtheme (amount of training varies) within the overall theme of sufficiency of training.

When considering sufficiency of training for response to school violence as it relates to preservice teachers' self-efficacy, discussion dealing with the amount and source of such training was also noted repeatedly. Subsequently, amount of training varies was identified as an emergent subtheme. Of the 15 participants, only seven reported gaining experience through their college program. Within those, only a few indicated the training was a requirement for graduation. The others mentioned discussing school violence with professors only informally following highly publicized school shootings in the media. At student-teaching sites, some preservice teachers participated in emergency response trainings during convocation or teacher in-service days. However, not all were given that opportunity. Additionally, not all participants experienced violent intruder drills at their student-teaching sites. Coupled with the inconsistency between guidance and lack of any sort of consistent curriculum for learning such procedures, this suggests the amount of training and experience varied widely between the participants.

Summary

From the data, five themes emerged and answered the research questions. Specifically, in response to the first research question, through which I sought the perceptions held by preservice teachers for violent intruder incidents and drills, the data yielded by this study unveiled three emergent themes: awareness of violence, vulnerability, and professional impact. In response to the second research question, through which I sought the experiences of preservice teachers who engage in violent intruder drills and training related to self-efficacy, two themes emerged: self-confidence and sufficiency of training.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contain the unique perceptions of preservice teachers. Themes that emerged from the collected data of this study show confirming and extending examples of how Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory can be applied to the decision to pursue a career in education in light of school violence and subsequent response drills.

Although anxiety about the safety of schools in the United States has been on the rise since the tragedy at Columbine High School in 1999 (Elsass, Schildkraut, & Stafford, 2016) and experts now claim that mass school shootings have become "part of the American cultural landscape" (Langman, 2009, p. 3), many participants in this study had not thought about school violence or what school violence could mean for them as future educators until after they had begun their program requirements. In addition, many reported awareness that rates of violence in schools has been on the rise in the last few years, the years in which they were working through their certification program. According to prospect theory, people eliminate extremely unlikely events from their conscious thoughts when making decisions that involve risk (Tversky & Kahneman, 1972). This may explain why many reported having not previously thought about school violence. As participants engaged in educational experiences, both in- and outside of degree requirements, lightbulb moments transpired and inaccurate beliefs about the prevalence of school violence rose for many, demonstrating the impact of emotionally charged experiences, such as viewing reports of school shootings in the media or participating in simulation trainings, on the saliency of thoughts. With comments about not wanting fear of violence to deter them from fulfilling a meaningful personal goal, participants' continuation despite trepidation is consistent with the findings of Konstantinidis, Taylor, and Newell (2018) that the magnitude of incentives can buffer risk-aversive behavior even when extreme outcomes are possible.

Despite the prevalence of violent intruder drills in public school safety plans, only 29 states met the basic standards of safety in 2016 and only 69.3% included mental health services (Silverman et al., 2016).

The findings of the current study demonstrate preservice teachers' perceptions as a unique population may be consistent with the teachings of Elsass, Schildkraut, and Stafford (2016) with respect to heightened levels of anxiety within schools. Furthermore, participants shared confidence in their own school's safety while recognizing the vulnerability of others and minimized prior firsthand experiences with school violence, which was interpreted as a way to keep uncomfortable thoughts out of their mind. Again, engaging in such mental activity may serve to justify selection of their career choice through editing out extreme examples.

Beyond engaging in the motions of the drills themselves and making difficult decisions, such as whether to barricade themselves and their students in a classroom, try to escort students out of the building without encountering the assailant, or lead the class in a group attack and throwing objects or attempting to tackle the threat (NASP & National Association of School Resource Officers, 2017), participants explained the impact of violent events and drills on students requires teachers to provide lessons at the appropriate developmental level of the students in their classrooms to help students process subsequent thoughts and emotions. In addition to responding to situations as immediate responders, as suggested by Harris, McCarthy, Liu, Klein, Swienton, Prins, and Waltz (2018), and serving as makeshift paramedics by applying tourniquets or nursing wounded individuals, preservice teachers also envision the added responsibility of maintaining the mental health of the students in their classrooms, a responsibility traditionally reserved for mental health professionals.

Data supplied by participants in this study revealed a change in their perceptions over time along with the accumulation of training and experience. With the provision of examples from past school shootings during trainings and attention drawn to current incidents portrayed in the media, which changed the amount and detail of available information to weigh, participants considered school violence differently than they had previously, perhaps impacting their level of self-confidence. Although causation cannot be determined due to the qualitative nature of this study (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018), participants' gained experiences would impact the saliency of concepts related to school violence. This revelation carries potential for understanding the decisions of preservice teachers. As noted previously, that is, the availability heuristic is employed to inform perception, which then impacts decision-making (Tversky & Kahneman, 1972).

The reporting and understanding of violence in schools has shifted dramatically in the last few decades, resulting in changes to the recommended approach and response to student violence suggested through professional associations and government mandates (NASP, 2019). These changes have also led to the rise of school safety experts (Brown & Munn, 2008), the inclusion of active shooter drills in public school crisis preparedness plans (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018), and discussions about the perception of safety in schools (Radu, 2018). Participants in the current study voiced their thoughts regarding the sufficiency of the training they received with three reporting feeling prepared and three unprepared. The remaining nine expressed feelings of ambiguity. Inconsistency of the amount and actual guidance between districts, buildings, and classrooms contributed to these results. Manuel (2016) found that although teachers chose their career path in order to make a difference or positively impact children, a decrease in self-efficacy was correlated to higher attrition, with over one third of the participants expressing uncertainty about whether or not they would continue teaching in 5 years. The sufficiency of training surrounding school violence and preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness are areas of self-efficacy that may now enter the conversation about teacher attrition, particularly as the results of other studies suggest the violent behavior of students (Bass, Cigularov, Chen, Henry, Tomazic, & Yiqiong, 2016) and additional responsibilities placed on teachers (Round, Subban, & Sharma, 2016) may be contributing to low numbers.

With limited prior research on the perceptions of preservice teachers in light of ongoing school violence and the implementation of violent intruder drills, the results of this study not only open the door for future studies comparing preservice teacher's varying levels of found perceptions to that of motivation, but also highlight the need for additional research to unveil the full scope of perceptions that exceed the limitations to this study, as well as the changes in perceptions of preservice teachers over time. I recommend that future studies quantitatively compare varying strengths or levels of such perceptions to other qualities held by members of that population. Perception of school safety could also be compared to how valuable preservice teachers consider a career in education. Comparing such relationships to those of individuals who are not pursuing a degree in education could provide additional insight on motivation to pursue the career. A

quantitative or mixed-method study comparing preservice teachers' level of anxiety regarding school violence to different experiential or setting variables is also recommended. For example, research that considers the relationship between anxiety and the type of training received or between classroom environments could inform training practices.

One of the strengths of this study was the revelation that the perceptions of preservice teachers of school violence and violent intruder drills may change over time and with the accumulation of training and experience. As such, I recommend that future studies examine these trends. A longitudinal study spanning high school through college coursework and training could illuminate the impact of gained experience on perceptions. Furthermore, expanding that research to consider trends in perception of professional teachers, or those actually employed in public school districts, as they continue to gain experience is also recommended. Such studies could contribute to the existing knowledge on teacher attrition and retention.

Themes that emerged from the data include participants' feelings of vulnerability, recognition of added responsibility, wide-ranging sense of self-confidence, and desire for more consistent and sufficient training with respect to school violence and violent intruder drills. Revealing participants' unique perspective, the findings can inform those responsible for providing experience and training to preservice teachers about potential gaps in education which, if filled, could reduce or alleviate any existing anxieties and better develop the skills of future educators. I recommend that administrators review education certification programs to identify any potential areas of needed improvement. Preservice teachers could benefit from learning basic de-escalation strategies and how to access mental health services for themselves and their students within their communities. I also recommend that the national department of education consider requiring consistency between certification programs. The results of this study highlight participants' concern about inconsistent guidelines. Universal certification requirements with respect to educators' role in school violence and violent intruder drills could benefit individual preservice teachers' feelings of preparedness as well as ensure a more consistent knowledge base of future educators just entering the profession. Finally, the repeated practice of drills in schools to boost comfort and familiarity is recommended.

The findings of this study hold the potential to impact positive social change by illuminating areas of needed continued educational growth for preservice teachers. The results of the study also support the application of prospect theory to better understand the juxtaposition of preservice teachers' motivation to enter the field despite ongoing school violence and violent intruder drills. Understanding what compels some to enter the field of education and others not is of utmost importance in light of current national teacher shortages as reported by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2019). Research has already found prior experiences and self-efficacy serve to motivate individuals to pursue a teaching career (e.g., Du Preez, 2018; Frei, Berweger, & Buschor, 2017; Han et al., 2018; Manuel, 2016). As reported rates of violence in schools continue to rise since the 1990s (Agnich, 2015; Elsass et al., 2016; Langman, 2009), implementation of violent intruder drills led by teachers has also risen (NASP, 2019). With a lack of existing knowledge about the combination of violent intruder incidents and drills with motivation to enter the profession, through this study I intended to unveil the experiences and perceptions of preservice teachers. Having achieved that intent, discussions about the connection between such experiences, perceptions, and motivation can begin and with additional research may, ultimately, lead to a better understanding about how to recruit and retain effective, quality educators of the future.

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