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Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs

Teresa Renee Robinson
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Teresa Renee Robinson entitled "Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Educational Administration.

Vincent A. Anfara, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Thomas N. Turner, Gary C. Ubben, Neal E. Shover

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Thomas N. Turner

Gary C. Ubben

Neal E. Shover

Accepted for the Council:

Linda Painter
Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from
Middle School Administrators and SROs

A Dissertation

Presented for a Doctor of Education

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Teresa Renee Robinson

December 2006

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents whose devoted attempts to plant deep seeded values of perseverance and commitment have finally succeeded to take root and be an valuable determinant for the completion of this endeavor. To my sister, who provided me with relentless support and encouragement which allowed me to achieve goals that once were only dreams. It is also dedicated to nine of the most supportive and professional individuals that I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. Without the faithful nine's friendship and encouragement, I know this accomplishment would not have become a reality. As we individually reach our goals, I can only wish for many future journeys with these very precious individuals. To my husband and daughter who supported me both emotionally and financially throughout this endeavor.

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I have spent the last three years amassing information and knowledge. During these years there are many people who have offered support and have provided assistance to make this dream a reality. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all. I would especially like to thank my faculty and staff at Lanier Elementary School for their willingness to stay late when many times I could not and for being understanding for missed meetings and forgotten appointments. You are truly a dedicated group and I am truly honored to be a part of your professional lives. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Vincent Anfara, for his patience, encouragement, and friendship. His confidence in me never wavered and I thank him for always challenging me to rise to his expectations.

ABSTRACT

The safety of school children is on the forefront of American's minds. Recent sporadic shooting of innocent children while they were in the care of school officials is once again raising concerns about the level of safety and security on school campuses. It is apparent that it is increasingly difficult to protect these children while they are at school and it is almost impossible for school administrators to do this alone. It is essential that community leaders, school officials, and school communities acknowledge the necessity of intervention programs to ensure that school campuses are safe and secure. One such intervention already in place in schools nationwide is the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program. This intervention places a uniformed police officer on the school campus to assist with safety, security issues, and law enforcement issues.

This study focused on four SROs assigned to four middle schools in one rural school district in Eastern Tennessee. The focus of this study was to develop an understanding of the roles of an SRO, based on perceptions from the SROs and the school administrators, in the middle school setting. This study employed an exploratory, multi-site case study design. The data collection procedures included semi-structured interviews, reviewing various documents, and field notes from observations.

The data revealed that while the SROs were executing their required duties to provide a safe and secure school setting, other unintended roles appeared that further enhanced the learning environment. These unintended benefits allow the SRO to develop relationships, allow them to detect problems earlier, and provide the SRO opportunities to address these problems before they become dangerous situations. The data revealed

some issues with the lack of training and policy conflicts that created problems with decisions made in a timely manner. Consequently, the use of the SRO and their effectiveness could have been minimized or compromised. School administrators are the school leaders, they control whether the SRO program is fully implemented or is merely utilized for law enforcement matters. It is essential that the principals and SROs have a clear understanding of each other's roles in order to jointly lead the way to provide a safe and secure school setting.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to Dwyer, Osher, and Warger (1998), the 1997–1998 school year served as a dramatic wake-up call due to the fact that there were so many acts of violence in schools. The harsh reality is that the days of children sitting quietly with hands folded in front of them, waiting for the lesson to begin, are long gone (Stripling, 1997). As a result of this there is a growing realization that school systems must find ways to address violence and other similar student behaviors. This would be addressed appropriately through the use of interventions that support proactive, preventative, and positive student behaviors instead of focusing on punishment.

Educational and training strategies need to be a part of the school's curriculum in order to improve students' attitudes and to develop coping skills to help reduce the occurrence of violent behaviors (Hamilton Fish Institute, 1999). Schools, law enforcement agencies, students, and parents all have to learn to work together to create a protected learning environment so that students feel safe enough to learn, teachers feel secure enough to teach, and administrators are able to return to their chosen profession, which is educating children (St. Charles Parish, 1998 - 1999).

Statement of Problem

Violence and the fear of violence are very real problems in today's schools (Remboldt, 1998). According to Stephens (1997), violence has invaded far too many of our nation's schools. Fistfights are being replaced by gunfights and fire drills are being replaced by crisis drills (Stephens). Among the incidents that have been documented by

daily news reports are those in which an eighth grade student was tortured by a group of bullies, a teenager was shot by a jealous friend, and a teacher was assaulted by an angry student. According to Elliott, Hamburg, and Williams (1998):

The fear and trauma in the nation's schools are having an impact on the entire school context and all students in these contexts: on teaching practices; children's readiness and capacity for learning; hiring and retention of teachers, administrators, and other school staff; the openness and accessibility of the campus; student rights to privacy; the physical building and grounds, and the quality of the learning environment more generally.

(p. 9)

School violence can occur in any school system. It is not isolated to any particular socioeconomic group, ethnic/racial group, or population center (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural) (Stephens, 1997). One after another, school communities across the country—from Oregon to Virginia, from Arkansas to Pennsylvania, from Mississippi to Kentucky—are being forced to face the fact that violence can happen to them (Dwyer et al., 1998). As a result of this realization, educational institutions have turned their focus to ways of strengthening security in their classrooms and on their campuses. School systems across the nation have sought professional advice about possible intervention programs from the local police departments in order to improve the physical security of their schools. One such intervention, which resulted from this collaboration, was the placement of armed police officers in the school setting. These police officers have come to be known as School Resource Officers or SROs.

Since the early 1950's SRO have been assigned to schools in only a few counties across the nation. Current programs have more SROs than ever assigned to specific schools on a fulltime basis. SROs are assigned to a school campus during school hours and after hours as needed. After a thorough search of the literature, the number of SROs nationwide could not be determined. The National Association of School Resource Officers lists its membership as 9,000, but that is not an indication of the total number, due to the fact that membership is not a requirement for these officers.

Many school districts nationwide have had SRO Programs in place for years, but little is known about the officers' impact on schools or about the officers' roles. This lack of understanding frequently results in the administrators being hesitant to assign SROs duties that are not directly connected to the task of maintaining security for the school campus. As the incidents of school violence increases, it becomes even more important that school administrators have a thorough knowledge of how to utilize the SROs in the schools. Because SROs generally respond to the guidance and direction from the school administrators, it is essential that this knowledge includes an understanding of the SROs roles and responsibilities. When the SROs are effectively utilized, the school and law enforcement agency are on the same team, and the role of the law enforcement officer is extended to include prevention and behavior intervention activities. This means the presence of SROs in the school needs to be viewed as a resource, not as a response, to address problem behavior.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the role of the SRO in a middle school setting based on the perceptions of four principals, four assistant principals, and four SROs assigned to four selected rural middle schools in the River County School District, located in Eastern Tennessee. Additionally this study was designed to identify any similarities in these perceptions. And finally this study was designed to identify barriers that impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities.

Research Questions

As more school systems introduced SROs into the school setting, different and often conflicting views emerged about the how the SROs roles allow them to be a law enforcement resource, foster a working relationship with administrators, and facilitate the creation of a safe learning environment for teachers and students. In order to achieve these goals it is essential for administrators and SROs to have an understanding of these roles. This study sought to answer the following research questions, which were derived from the work of Atkinson (2000) who has adapted the Correlates of Effective Schools to apply to the roles of the SRO. This study sought to answer the following four questions:

1. What does the SRO do to provide middle school administrators with the necessary law enforcement resources and supports as these relate to (a) legal issues, (b) safety issues, (c) crisis management planning, and (d) crime prevention strategies?

2. What does the School Resource Officer (SRO) do to encourage collaboration and establish and maintain a working relationship with middle school administrators in order to create and maintain a safe school environment, and detect and prevent crime before it occurs?
3. What are the similarities in the SROs' and administrators' perceptions of the SROs' role?
4. What barriers impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities?

Definition of Terms

In this section words and concepts are defined that are pertinent to understanding this study. While some words and concepts have multiple definitions, I have purposefully chosen the following definitions for use in this study.

1. School Resource Officer (SRO): A police officer specifically trained for interactions with students, parents, teachers, and be present in classrooms throughout the school day (Center for Schools and Communities, 1998- 2000).
2. Safe School: A “safe school” is one whose physical features, layout and policies and procedures are designed to minimize the impact of disruptions and intrusions that might prevent the school from fulfilling its educational mission. It is characterized by a climate that is free of fear. The perceptions, feelings, and behaviors of members of the school-community reveal that the school is a place where people are able to go

about their business without concern for their safety (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2003).

3. Orderly School: An “orderly school” is one characterized by a climate of mutual respect and responsibility. Students relate to each other and to teachers and school staff in acceptable ways. Expectations about what is acceptable behavior are clearly stated, and consequences for unacceptable behavior are known and applied when appropriate. Students and staff feel responsible for the successful operation of the school (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2003).
4. Secure School: A school whose physical features minimizes the impact of intruders (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2003).
5. Violence: The threat or use of physical force with the intention of causing physical injury, damage, or intimidation of another person (Elliott et al., 1998).
6. School Violence: Any act of intimidation, threat, harassment, robbery, vandalism, physical assault, such as fights, with or without a weapon, or murder that occurs on school grounds or buses going to and from school (Capozzoli & McVey, 2000).
7. Community Policing: A policing philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and community/police partnerships (Atkinson, 2000).

8. Middle School: School with no grade lower than six and no grade higher than eight.
9. School Administrators: The principal and assistant principal assigned to the selected school sites.

Delimitations

According to Creswell (2003), a delimitation is "how the study will be narrowed in scope" (p. 148). I chose to delimit this study in two ways. First, I chose to limit my study to only four middle schools. Choosing these four middle schools provided an investigation into the phenomenon that was isolated to just one county SRO program.

A second delimitation of this study was the inclusion of only school administrators and SROs in each school as participants. My research questions addressed perceptions of middle school administrators and SROs as they related to specific roles.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors. First, the use of qualitative case study design limited the ability of the findings to be generalized to other settings (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). The strategies used for data collection and data analysis have limitations. The emphasis on interviews was subject to issues to trustworthiness. The questioning techniques and the analysis of the transcripts were vulnerable to researcher bias. To help to address this issue, I had to be aware of internal biases and perspectives.

Significance of the Study

The significance for this study is based on several factors. First, there is a limited amount of literature and empirical studies related to the development of an understanding

for the roles of school resource officers. There has also been little systematic research conducted on the organizational and management issues regarding the use and role of law enforcement in schools. At this time there is a need for continued research on these issues and also on the development of an understanding for the organizational and management processes and strategies used by law enforcement agencies to promote safe schools. Without this clear understanding of the SROs' roles, administrators and officers may unknowingly withhold information or exclude each other from matters that may compromise the safety of the students.

Schools occupy a very special place in American society and are expected to serve multiple roles. Communities entrust their children, their most valued assets, to schools and they expect schools to be safe and to provide an environment conducive to learning. In the current context of violence, this can only be accomplished by developing an effective partnership between school and law enforcement agencies.

This study is best understood through the eyes of its intended audience. In this case, the intended audience includes school leaders, resource officers and those responsible for training them, as well as the policy makers and other leaders who design and supervise other similar programs. This study further sheds light on any similarities for how officers and administrators in one school district interpret the roles for a SRO. There is no evidence that school administrators share with each other how they use SROs within their building. There is also no evidence that SROs discuss their individual responsibilities with each other. This work provided information on how principals utilized the SROs and how the SROs perceived their roles and responsibilities. Also, to

date there is no attention given to the principals' interpretation of the SROs' roles that are defined in the training for the SRO. This study provided those responsible for the training of the officers and administrators vital information that is essential for better training for both groups.

School safety remains a genuine concern for everyone involved, but equally important is developing a clearer understanding of the SRO roles and further sharing this information with school officials. Because school safety remains a concern for school administrators, it is critical to develop a clearer understanding and a shared interpretation of the roles for the SRO. This study is relevant for current and aspiring administrators and officers. The results could have implications for staff development and preparation programs for both stakeholder groups. This study served as a mirror for principal and officers to improve training and increase knowledge, which should improve the SRO program and ultimately increase school safety.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to Merriam (1998), a literature review is “a vital component of the research process that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques the important thinking and research on a particular topic” (p. 66). Maxwell (1996) added that this type of research summary provides a theoretical framework that can guide or “illuminate” an investigation (p. 33). Maxwell further maintained that there are three other possible purposes of a literature review, including: (1) to provide a justification for the study, (2) to inform your decisions about methods, and (3) to use as a source of data that can be used to test or modify your theories (p. 43). All of these purposes are presented in this literature review for developing an understanding of the roles for a SRO in the middle school setting based on the perceptions of the school administrators and the SRO.

This literature review addresses five bodies of literature that frame this study. First, it outlines the existence of school violence, by identifying some of the possible contributing factors to school violence, and discussing some intervention techniques to address school violence. Second, this literature review discusses the School Resource Officer Program, including a brief history of the program, establishing the need for SRO, identifying the necessary qualifications for a SRO, funding for the program, SRO training, and identifying possible roles for the SRO. Third, this literature review provides a brief middle school description, identifying possible risky behaviors associated with a young adolescent (aged 10-15). Fourth, this review presents a brief discussion of related

empirical studies including research involving safety in the middle school setting, research on safe schools, and research studies involving the SRO program. Finally, the theoretical framework used for this study is explained. This framework involves a description of the characteristics for an effective school, and these characteristics are further expanded to include a description of the SRO contributions to assist the school in this achievement (Atkinson, 2000).

Literature Search Indicators

I restricted my search for this literature review to English-language journals and full-print texts and focused on ERIC journal documents, as opposed to unpublished papers and conference proceedings. My search strategy involved three on-line databases: ERIC, *Google*, *Infotrac*, *Dissertation Abstracts*, and *Wilson Web*. The search indicators “school AND safety,” “school AND resource AND officers,” and “community AND policing” were the most useful for pointing to relevant literature. In my ERIC search alone, I found 35 relevant articles since 1991 under the “school AND safety” indicator and an additional 25 relevant articles under the “school AND resource AND officers” indicator. I located two relevant dissertations under these two indicators for the same timeframe in a *Dissertation Abstracts* search. In the *Infotrac* and *Wilson Web* archives, I found 51 relevant articles. I also accessed web sites of government agencies using the same search indicators with the search engine *Google*, and I consulted with key officials working directly with School Resource Officer Programs across the nation. These officials suggested additional web sites, offered information about research methods, and supported the urgency for research on this particular topic. I continually updated the

following literature review during the course of my data collection, analysis, and verification.

Violence in Schools

According to Capazzoli and McVey (2000), school violence can be defined as any act of intimidation, threat, harassment, robbery, vandalism, physical assault, such as fights, with or without a weapon, or murder that happens on school grounds or on buses going to and from school (p. 11). These acts of violence not only affect the physical, emotional, and social aspect of students but also prevent school administrators from accomplishing the goal of educating students. Learning can only occur in an environment that is free of violence, so school violence is a problem that can no longer be ignored or denied; and communities and school districts have a responsibility to provide strategies to help deter and ultimately prevent these violent acts.

School Violence

Over the past several years, a number of highly publicized school shootings in the United States have captured national attention (see Appendix A). These tragedies increased community awareness causing them to now question the safety of their children while at school (McCann, 2002). These acts of violence have no apparent age, gender, or grade distinction. For example, on February 29, 2000, in Mount Morris Township, Michigan, a six year-old boy brought a .32 semi-automatic handgun to school and killed his first grade classmate, and on October 4, 2002, in San Antonio, Texas, a 13 year-old female middle school student fatally shot herself in the left temple with a 9mm handgun

in front of a group of friends in the school parking lot (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2003).

Rural School Violence

The schools selected for this study were located in a rural area of East Tennessee so it was necessary to discuss the potential for incidents of violence in the rural school setting. Rural schools have grown in size with a larger and more diverse student population. In rural areas, tackling the challenge of violence falls to the largest public institution, which is the community school (Schroth, Pankake, Fullwood, & Gales, 2003) Because no institution is spared from vandalism, murder, assault, or theft, rural classrooms are no longer a safe haven where children can hang out with friends. As a result, rural America can no longer be viewed as it was 50 years ago. “The traditional family farms, safe schools, and isolated communities are quickly vanishing” (Schroth et al., p.26).

While episodes in which students harm large numbers of their classmates at random are not the challenges faced by most rural school administrators, these administrators are more likely to deal with students bringing weapons to school in order to settle disputes involving specific students, to show off in front of peers, or to protect themselves in an environment they perceive as hostile. Many times, in rural settings, these acts are a result of something that has happened within the community and the resulting reaction is then carried onto the school campus. Recent school shootings in rural Eastern Tennessee hit close to home, proving to rural school districts nationwide that violence can happen in rural communities. To assist these communities and school

districts with strategies to stop violence in schools, it is important to understand exactly what factors contribute to these violent acts.

Factors Contributing to School Violence

There are many contributing factors to the problem of school violence, including availability of weapons, the increased access to the media, cultural issues, and gaps in the social systems (Mohandie, 2000). Today it is easier for children to act out violent fantasies because consequences are unclear, they possess the belief that no one is listening to them, and computers and television are providing them with easy access to potentially dangerous information. This is especially important because our society has continued to allow more and more violence to be shown on television and on the Internet, and many times young people spend a large amount of time unsupervised, which results in little or no control over the quality of programs watched or web sites accessed.

Addressing School Violence

The problem of school violence seems to be rising in light of the recent shootings in schools across the nation. According to Fink (2001), school violence cannot be viewed as a problem that schools can solve alone; rather it must be viewed as a multi-dimensional problem addressed by agencies working together. Efforts intended to reduce school violence must extend beyond school personnel to include parents, community members, and law enforcement agencies.

Some school administrators have discovered that violence can be reduced or possibly even eliminated with the implementation of a school and community-based

prevention program. Unfortunately, school administrators are faced with challenges that exceed the level of professional preparation or skills they possess as educators. Most teacher preparation and principal preparation programs do not include any focus on addressing violent behavior and managing unruly behavior in the classroom. School administrator training programs tend to focus on the legal issues surrounding student discipline and thus overlooking the practical day-to-day application of effective discipline practices. This many times results in school administrators feeling unprepared to effectively deal with the discipline issues that are involved when dealing with a violent student. This is critical due to the fact that almost all schools report various levels of bullying, teasing, verbal put-downs, harassment, cliques, shoving, stealing, and fighting. As a result of these alarming behaviors involving violence, schools are obligated to develop effective intervention strategies. One such strategy implemented in schools nationwide is the School Resource Officer Program.

School Resource Officer Program

The SRO program is a strategy that enables communities and schools to address school violence using both intervention and prevention techniques. Having an SRO on any school campus could possibly prevent acts of violence from occurring. The School Resource Officer Program places a sworn law enforcement officer fulltime in the schools with the goal of creating and maintaining a safe, secure, and orderly learning environment for the school community. The presence of this uniformed officer can also help to enhance the school's capacity to address safety and security concerns. If

problems do arise the SRO is there to quickly address them and intervene before a small incident escalates into a serious problem.

History of the SRO Program

According to Garrett (2001), the concept of the school resource officer was first initiated in Flint, Michigan, in the early 1950s. The overall goal of this program was to improve the relationship between the local police department and young people. Officers were placed in schools on a full-time basis to serve as teachers and counselors. Because of the program's great success Flint, Michigan, became a model for school resource officer programs across the country.

In 1962, Tuscon, Arizona, established a similar program to address the issue of juvenile delinquency (Kennedy, 2001). This concept flourished during the 1960s and 1970s, with emphasis in the state of Florida. The Florida legislature mandated that there be SROs in all middle and high schools. During the 1970s, many school districts across the country received special legislation to create their own police departments operating under the full direction of the school district. The officers remain employees of the school district, yet are fully sworn commissioned police officers.

In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals advised all law enforcement agencies to provide at least one annual presentation to address the law enforcement officer's role in society. They recommended that every agency with over 400 employees assign a fulltime officer to each junior and senior high school to teach classes, counsel students, enforce the law, and be a resource for the school administrators and staff. This declaration gave school resource officer programs their

first national recognition. In 1991, Sarasota, Florida, hosted the first national conference for school resource officers and the first Board of Directors for the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) was installed. (Kennedy)

Establishing the Need for an SRO

During the 1997–1998 school year, several high-profile cases of violence led schools and communities to investigate possible interventions and strategies to increase the level of safety for the students and staff (Hamilton Fish, 1999). The rash of teenage violence in the 1990s combined with the rash of school shootings caused school officials to examine existing policies addressing the need for a safe school environment (Maranzano, 2001). Many school systems have chosen to address the problem by placing SROs on school campuses. Because of the increased concern for the safety and welfare of the students, parents are prepared to accept the presence of SROs on the school campus (Maranzano). However, it is not the desire of anyone that schools have the appearance of being armed camps.

Funding for the SRO Program

Several methods are used to fund the cost of providing SROs in schools. One method is securing grants. In 2000, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) awarded \$68 million in grants to nationally hire 599 SRO's in 289 communities. These grants provided the funds necessary to hire the SROs. The SROs' multifaceted role required training beyond that traditionally offered in police academies. In 2000, Congress appropriated \$5 million for the COPS program to assist communities with this necessary training, with an additional \$3 million appropriated in 2001. These COPS

programs provided grants, which funded approximately 25% to 75% of the total cost, associated with the SRO program. In some cities, SROs are totally funded by the local law enforcement agency; in other areas they are funded by the school district, and in others they are funded by a combination of the two (Girouard, 2001).

Qualifications for a SRO

The most critical aspect of an effective school-law enforcement relationship is the selection of a qualified person to work in the school setting (Atkinson, 2000). The SRO must be chosen carefully. They must be not only qualified as a police officer, but also have expertise in the field of security (Jones, 2001). The SRO must have an interest in and be able to interact with young people and have a desire to work with educators.

SROs need to be supportive of problem-solving strategies and have previous positive performance evaluations. The school has many community visitors, so it is essential that the SRO possesses strong communication skills and portrays a professional appearance (Atkinson).

Training for the SRO

Law enforcement officers are trained to identify serious situations in the school environment that might contribute to a crime or other disruptive behavior. They also receive further training in order to collaborate with the administrators in developing plans to eliminate these potential problems. Some of these plans may include security assessments, crisis-management plans, and staff development training (Atkinson, 2002). The initial and ongoing training requires time and a financial commitment by the officer, school district, and local police department (Lavarello & Trump, 2001). The National

Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) provides such training and offers assistance to help develop successful SRO programs across the United States and in some international locations (Trump, 2001).

The SROs on-the-job training is ongoing and constantly being expanded (Lavarello & Trump, 2001). This on-the-job training is most effective when the SRO is consistently placed in a particular school setting. If a dedicated officer is assigned to the same location on a regular basis, then his/her knowledge base increases and this knowledge allows him/her to “know the players” in the school community, access the available community resources, and understand school and community policies.

SRO Roles

The primary responsibility of the SRO is to handle all calls for service from the school and, in the event of a crisis, coordinate the response of other officers dispatched to the school (Atkinson, 2000). SROs are asked on a daily basis to assist in resolving situations which may not be direct violations of the law, but if left alone would likely result in some form of criminal behavior (Atkinson). These officers are a part of the community police force, which provides them with direct access to agencies (Kennedy, 2001). Law enforcement officers can best be used as positive role models by setting examples, being honest, being consistent, showing respect, and providing any necessary resources (Atkinson). The SRO program provides not only the physical solutions, but also the educational programs necessary to address the issues related to school violence. Placing SROs in a classroom for a presentation exposes them to a broad range of students instead of a very small number of students (Atkinson). These classroom programs

educate children in crime prevention, substance-abuse education, and personal safety, and being assigned to the schools allows the SRO an opportunity to establish a positive rapport and develop a trusting relationship with the students (Kennedy).

SRO and Administrator Relationships

The assignment of a SRO to a school represents the community's commitment to the providing a safe school environment (Atkinson, 2000). On a daily basis, the program depends on the existence of a working relationship between school administrators and SROs. Working hand-in-hand with school administrators in each school, the SRO assists with finding solutions to problems that, if not addressed, could ultimately affect students in that school. Principals and SROs have different training and experience, but both share a common vision, which is to provide a safe and secure school. By having this common vision the SROs and administrators become members of a team that are united in making sure that the school learning environment is free of fear and is conducive to learning. Establishing this meaningful relationship and the team concept is a process which is built over time and cannot be done overnight.

Having an SRO in school is a new experience for most school administrators and it is essential for them to have a thorough understanding of the SRO roles. As a result of the interaction between administrators and SROs, school officials develop a greater understanding of the law, police procedures, and get to know the officers on an individual basis; and the SROs become better acquainted with school procedures, experience a collaborative relationship with administrators, and develop a broader perspective for community concerns.

Community Policing

Community policing is a philosophy that fosters and supports the intervention strategies that help to reduce the incidents of crime and misbehavior through a partnership between the police and the community. The community approach supports and reinforces the concept of good citizenship in students, by designing schools as neighborhoods where the students are considered citizens (Atkinson, 2002). The school itself is a community, with its own social structure; this complete social environment supports children in very subtle ways, much like their own families and neighborhoods (Elliott et al., 1998). Even in peaceful and cooperative school communities, conflicts do arise and there exists a need for education about attitudes and conflict management skills.

With the assistance of the SRO the members of the school community have the expertise and insight to create this problem-solving relationship. The problem solving that is present in community policing requires the SRO to become knowledgeable about the various resources available to the school and the community (Atkinson, 2000). In a community policing partnership the duty of the law enforcement officer is to design prevention and early intervention strategies. Like partnerships in other communities, a partnership with the school community involves an ongoing process of (a) interacting, (b) developing trust, and (c) exchanging information (Atkinson, 2002).

Community Partnership

According to Atkinson (2000), community policing emphasizes (a) police/citizens partnerships mutually responding to neighborhood problems; (b) the citizen as a resource; (c) officer expertise; (d) attention to factors which contribute to crime and disorder;

(e) use of a variety of strategies and tactics; (f) decentralized policing services; (g) increased officer authority and accountability (p. 4). The SRO must understand and work with the community at large because the community plays a vital role in the lives of the students and makes decisions about the operation of the school and the school district (Lavarello & Trump, 2001). This is a type of “community partnership” that involves neighborhood residents, elected officials, schools, churches, businesses, community organizations, and government agencies all working together with law enforcement to solve problems that arise within the school setting (Atkinson). Community partnerships create mutual goals, encourage more involvement to provide more information for solutions, and increase a desire to implement change (Jones, 2001).

Effective Partnership

School systems and law enforcement agencies work collaboratively to effectively implement an SRO program in a school. Interagency agreements between schools and law enforcement agencies are executed between the sheriff and the school district’s superintendent. The written agreement is called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Atkinson, 2000). No two schools are alike, so it is not possible to devise a plan that will work in every school (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1999). As a result of this, the MOU is a document that can change as the need arises (Atkinson, 2002). This MOU outlines the purpose of the partnership and the responsibilities for each agency involved, and it also establishes the framework for the operation of the SRO program in the school setting (see Appendix B). According to Bond (2001), the MOU outlines in detail the areas of responsibilities and the expectations of the school and the

local police. To ensure compliance with these expectations and responsibilities and to establish an effective school-law enforcement partnership, local school boards must establish clear policies about reporting requirements, local school divisions must develop procedures which ensure consistent reporting, and administrators and SROs must work together to develop procedures and system of ongoing communication (Atkinson).

Assessment and Evaluation

An important element for a successful law enforcement and school partnership is having an effective system for evaluation in place. The school administrators are often asked about the performance of the SRO as part of their personnel performance reviews. The three general areas SRO programs must set and adhere to are training, appearance, and job performance (Trump, 1997). Personnel performance is based on the partnership performance of the SRO assigned to the specific school (Atkinson, 2002). As any new program is selected and implemented, it is essential to make sure that the efforts are guided by a caring and welcoming climate and by excellent communication among all stakeholders (Caplan, Gough, & McKinnon, 2001). The implementation evaluation reveals to the stakeholders how well the SRO program is received and whether it is functioning as it was designed. The resulting evaluation assesses whether the partnership was effective for reducing crime, violence, disruptive behavior, whether fear of crime and violence was indeed reduced, and whether the school climate has improved (Atkinson). More importantly, the ultimate evaluation for a SRO will be a reduction in the presence of acts of violence (Elliott et al., 1998).

Middle School

Middle schools of today are quite different from those that existed decades ago. Middle schools students no longer sit in straight rows while listening to the teacher. Today's middle schools offer small group instruction, perform at different academic levels, and receive appropriate instruction based on individual needs. Teachers are available to provide guidance and all students are provided an opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities. Rather than focusing on providing the same educational opportunities for every student, the middle school setting provides individual students with experiences that meet particular learning and socialization needs (Manning, 2003).

Functions of a Middle School

The middle school is not just a school in the middle, but rather it serves as a bridge to high school. It takes students, who are no longer considered children, and provides them with an organized school setting and established curriculum that allows them to negotiate through the turmoils of adolescence. Jackson and Davis (2000) wrote that the “middle grades school is not a system as much as it is a community” (p. 219). According to Manning (2003), middle schools offer a school environment that provides adolescents with an opportunity to learn and interact in a humane, respectful, and psychologically safe learning environment, which emphasizes cooperation and a peaceful existence.

There is a critical need to assist young adolescents develop self-esteem, reliable close relationships, sense of belonging, and sense of usefulness (Carnegie Council on

Adolescent Development, 1989). The challenge for today's schools is to provide these building blocks for adequate development and preparation for adult life. It is important for administrators and SRO's to stay focused on the fact that young adolescents need a school setting that is student-centered and flexible with a strong emphasis on providing guidance and consistent monitoring.

Risky Behaviors

Early adolescents are frequently impulsive, and they act without regard for consequences (Mohandie, 2000). According to Dryfoos (1998), these young people do need room to experiment. So between the ages of 10 and 15, these young people often begin experimenting with a wide range of risky behaviors (Jackson & Davis, 2000). However, the past few decades have seen the effects of either an increase in cognitive capacity during these very formative years, or more complex social challenges which adolescents are unprepared to address.

Middle school students present administrators with a variety of challenges, including unstable home situations, academic struggles, risky behaviors, and peer pressure. Small counseling sessions by providing positive role models and developing trusting relationships with an adult can address these challenges. Patti and Lentieri (1999) wrote that the middle school years offer schools an excellent opportunity to provide students with the psychological support and coping skills for any internal and external conflicts they may encounter. If students are not provided with these necessary coping skills, the situation can develop into a "negative cause-and-effect spiral" that can eventually become violent (Capozzoli & McVey, 2000, p. 19). Early

adolescents must be allowed to experience decision-making about their own behaviors and values, but they must be given the tools to negotiate these unprecedented complexities. Many times as these young adolescents mature, the required guidance for development is minimized or totally withdrawn. This gives them a false sense of freedom without any constraints, which sometimes provides them with little or no control over their actions and possible outcomes.

Need for Intervention

Middle school students are old enough to experiment with some risky behaviors, but they are still young enough for preventive interventions to make a significant difference. Schools are looking for programs that will help middle school students develop the social and emotional skills that will encourage resilience and support the development of a caring and socially responsible young adult (Patti & Lantieri, 1999). If can schools develop an understanding of the behaviors that lead to violent acts and further learn how to identify before it is too late.

Research Studies

Middle School Violence Research

In a study conducted by Karcher (2002), a sample of 136 rural middle school age youths were selected to complete a 44-item survey to determine if a relationship existed between parenting practices, past violent behavior in elementary school, and feelings of connectedness to school and to teachers among middle school students. This survey measured youths' relationships with parents, siblings, teachers, peers, school, kids from other cultures, reading, religion, friends, neighborhood, cohesion, and self-esteem. As a

second part of this study the same sample of youths completed a 41-item survey, which measured lifetime involvement in reported types of violence, and more severe forms of violent behavior. The results of this study determined that there was a negative relationship between violent behavior and the ability to form connections with teachers. Violence distances youth from others; it undermines youths' relationships and weakens the effectiveness of any available social support.

According to a study conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1996), 12% of students in grades 6 through 12 reported they had been victims of physical attacks, robberies, or bullying while in school, and an estimated 25% of middle school students are afraid of being victimized by peers at school. The data further revealed that 19% of people entering the justice system for a violent crime were below the age of 18.

In order to effectively implement any intervention program it is essential to identify the most needed areas and the appropriate grade levels for intervention of at-risk behavior. A study conducted by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (1996) examined several sources of data to identify the areas of need and establish appropriate grade levels that responded to interventions. These sources included the Annual Report on School Violence 1994-1995, the 1995 North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and the 1995 End-of-Grade and End-of-Course teacher header sheets, which provided information about disruptive and violent behavior in schools. Based on administrator reports and teacher perceptions, many violent and disruptive behaviors are more common in the middle school grades. It was suggested in

the study that this could be explained by the fact that middle schools students are in a developmental stage and may be testing limits, and middle school personnel may have higher expectations for disciplined student behavior than the high school staff. The lower rates at the high school may suggest that violent and disruptive middle school students may drop out of school before they even reach high school.

Safe School Research

The vast majority of America's schools are safe places. Yet, reports of recent high profile shootings create the impression that violence is prevalent in our schools, which is instilling a sense of fear in the minds of parents, students, community members, and teachers. Schools that have serious crime and violence problems are perceived as having compromised the learning environment and endangering students and educators. Therefore, even a few incidents of sensational violence in schools are unacceptable as they have the potential to negatively impact the learning atmosphere in all school. This issue will remain urgent for some time and will require further comprehensive research and evaluation in order to help create a sense of optimal security.

Because school safety is directly related to the optimal utilization of the SRO by using well-defined roles and responsibilities, I felt it necessary to review the current research on school safety and violence. A study conducted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (2000) concluded that more than one in three students (39 percent of middle schoolers) reported that they do not feel safe at school. This research further concluded that 37 percent of middle school boys believe that it is acceptable to hit or threaten a person who makes them angry. In addition, there are more than 15 percent of middle

school males that took a weapon to school at least once. Finally, 31 percent of middle school boys said they had access to a gun.

In a study conducted by The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (2000), *Protecting Teens: Beyond Race, Income, and Family Structure*, it was reported that one out of every four students who were surveyed said they had carried a gun or knife to school. In addition, students, regardless of their race or gender, who had frequent problems with schoolwork, were more likely to become violent and carry weapons. Finally, the researcher determined that school performance is a strong determinant in whether a young person becomes involved in drugs or becomes violent.

The Gun Free Schools Act requires that each state receiving federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act must have a state law that mandates all local educational agencies in the state to expel from school, for at least one year, any student found bringing a firearm to school. As a part of this mandate states are required to report information about the implementation of this act. To meet this requirement, each state is to submit an annual report of each reported incident of firearm possession. In 2000 the U.S. Department of Education conducted the study *Report on State Implementation of Gun-Free Schools Act – Year: 1998-1999*. During the 1998-1999 school year this report revealed that there were a total of 3,523 students expelled from school for bringing a firearm to school with 33 percent of this number being students in the middle school setting.

A study conducted by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) (2004) concluded that over 78 percent of school-based officers reported that

they had taken a weapon from a student on a school campus in the past year.

Additionally, over 37 percent of the officers stated that gang activity had increased during the past year. This study also revealed that 51 percent of the school-based officers said that the school's crisis and emergency plans are not adequate, and 66 percent of them further reported that the emergency plans are not utilized on a regular basis.

School Resource Officer Research

There has been little systematic research conducted on the organizational and management issues regarding the use and role of law enforcement in schools. At this time there is a need for continued research on these issues and also evaluations of organizational and management processes and strategies used by law enforcement agencies to promote safe schools. With the nation's focus turning to addressing the violence in schools and making schools safer, it is essential to explore and evaluate existence of the intervention programs that are established in the school setting.

A study conducted by Johnson (1999) was designed to evaluate SRO program in a southern city in order to determine the program's impact on school discipline problems and on violent behavior. The participants for this study were the SRO administrators, SROs, and school administrators and teachers assigned to nine city high schools and 18 middle schools. The SROs were given an 82 item self-administered questionnaire, and the SRO supervisors were given a semi-structured interview, which consisted of 40 open-ended and fixed choice questions. The school administrators and teachers were administered an 85 item, while the teachers were given an eighty-one item semi-structured interview schedule. The data revealed that the presence of a SRO, in the high

schools and middle schools, decreased the number of disciplinary problems from 3,267 in 1994-1995 to 2,710 in 1995-1996. This study further revealed the components of the SRO that appeared to be effective included (a) reduction in school violence, (b) availability of counseling services, (c) high visibility of SROs in the schools, (d) support services to school administrators and teachers, and (e) proactive approach to dealing with trespassers.

A study conducted by Jackson (2002) sampled 271 students from four schools in the southeast region of Missouri to examine whether students' perceptions of police would change from the beginning to the end of the school year, as a result of exposure and interaction with a SRO. The sample, including juniors and seniors in four high schools in the Southeast Missouri, was administered a time series questionnaire during August/ September 2000 and again in March/April 2001. The results of this study suggested that the use of a SRO in schools does not change students' perception of the police in general, and it further indicated that the students' perception of the SRO did increase positively as their contact with the SRO increased. This result helped to suggest that as more positive contact with the SRO increased, students' perception of the police would improve.

An SRO working in with the school setting would need skills and personal characteristics different from that of an officer patrolling the streets. In 2002, Lambert and McGinty distributed a 64-item Likert-scale questionnaire to 161 principals, 159 SROs, and 57 law enforcement administrators in North Carolina. This survey addressed two issues (a) develop an overall picture of the characteristics, knowledge, skills, and

tasks that were considered important for a SRO and (b) will these perceptions differ from the perspective of principals, SROs, and law enforcement officers. This study revealed that many significant differences in the importance ratings given by the three stakeholder groups, suggested that the SROs' job expectations need to be clarified and the roles for them need to be more clearly defined.

According to the results of a study conducted by Humphrey (2001), who surveyed teachers and students that were involved in an ongoing SRO program during the two-year study. The data from this study showed an improved school climate; students reported they felt safer, were less afraid, and were less likely to carry weapons, fight at school, or engage in bullying after the SRO arrived on the school campus. The teachers reported they felt safer and also gained a higher level of respect for the students. Both study groups reported an improved learning environment, with fewer classroom disruptions.

Stanfield (2003) investigated the role of SROs in the middle schools located in Dominion County. The study considered SRO perceptions and principal perceptions of the roles and made a comparison of both in each school. The study resulted in six findings (a) SROs considered counseling as part of law enforcement and principals did not, (b) some SROs said they enforced school rules while others were not comfortable with that responsibility, (c) principals said they had no influence on the SROs teaching appropriate behaviors, (d) role model behaviors were not described in the same way by the SROs or principals, (e) there were varying degrees of continuity from school to school, and (f) the appearance of role ambiguity, conflict and stress was discovered at one particular school.

Theoretical Framework

According to Dorn (2002), SROs are becoming an accepted part of the school environment, and are considered to be a critical component in many schools nationwide. Many times when SROs are assigned to the schools, they play a critical role in the school community. This role involves developing a relationship with school administrators to address problems within the school setting. When this is achieved, it is referred to by Atkinson (2000) as "Community Policing," which is defined as the creation of an effective working partnership between the school administrators and the law enforcement officer (SRO) through the use of collaboration and problem solving relationships.

Effective Schools and the SRO

According to Morrison, Furlong, and Morrison (1994), effective safe schools have the following characteristics: (1) safe and orderly environment, (2) high expectations for success, (3) clear school mission, (4) instructional leadership, (5) frequent monitoring of student progress, (6) opportunity to learn and student time on task, and (7) productive home and school relations. The theoretical framework for this study comes from the work of Atkinson (2000), which further expands these characteristics to include specific duties and responsibilities the SRO should complete in order to assist the school in achieving this end. With each duty and responsibility Atkinson identified the SRO's behaviors or roles necessary to accomplish these expectations (see Table1).

Community Policing

Community Policing is a philosophy that fosters and supports the intervention strategies that help to reduce the incidents of crime and misbehavior through a

Table 1
Effective Schools and the SRO

Effective Schools	SROs Contribution
<p><i>Safe and Orderly Environment:</i> Often referred to as “the number one correlate in effective schools.” In such schools there is an orderly, purposeful, atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. School climate is not oppressive but is conducive to teaching and learning. Teachers and students interact in a positive, cooperative manner.</p>	<p>SROs bring to the school setting the expertise of public safety specialists. They are trained not only to provide an immediate response to life-threatening situations, but also to ensure that laws are enforced when illegal activities occur, to conduct school safety assessments, and to work collaboratively with schools to resolve problems that threaten the safety of schools. Experience has revealed that the presence of a SRO has a deterrent effect on illegal and disruptive behavior. Reasons often cited are that the presence of a SRO communicates that the school and larger community have made school safety a priority, that there are clear expectations for behavior, and that violations will be consistently addressed.</p>
<p><i>High Expectations for Success:</i> In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can attain mastery of the essential content and school skills, and staff members also believe that they have the capability to help all students achieve that mastery. These schools are structured to assure that teachers have the tools necessary for student learning.</p>	<p>SROs reinforce clear expectations for appropriate behavior. Through law-related education, students learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a diverse democracy. Furthermore, problem-solving and crime prevention activities provide opportunities for students to take a meaningful role in addressing problems in their community – their school.</p>
<p><i>Clear School Mission:</i> In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The effective school’s mission acknowledges the school’s responsibility for students’ learning of the school’s essential curricular goals.</p>	<p>SROs can help schools to focus on their central mission – educating – by reducing the amount of time that staff must spend on disciplinary matters.</p>

Table 1 continued

Effective Schools	SROs Contribution
<p>Instructional Leadership: In an effective school, the principal and other staff members take an active role in instructional leadership with the principal becoming a “leader of leaders” (rather than a leader of followers), functioning as a “coach” or “partner.”</p>	<p>School administrators have more time to be instructional leaders when crime and other disruptive behavior are reduced.</p>
<p>Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: In the effective school, student academic progress is frequently measured using a variety of assessment procedures. The results of the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program. Improving the instructional program involves aligning the intended, taught, and tested curriculum.</p>	<p>As part of the community policing problem-solving process, SROs use data on crime and discipline to identify patterns and to develop strategies to address problem areas. There are parallels in the processes of monitoring student progress and community policing problem-solving: as the educator uses a variety of assessment procedures to monitor and improve student academic performance, the SRO takes a leadership role in assessing and improving school safety.</p>
<p>Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on task: In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills. For a high percentage of this time students are engaged in whole-class or large-group, teacher-directed, planned learning activities. Allocation of time frequently involves focusing on areas valued the most and omitting some less important content.</p>	<p>When disruptive behavior is reduced, teachers can devote more time to classroom instruction. Furthermore, as students learn to conform to higher standards of behavior, out-of-school suspensions decline, resulting in an increase in opportunities to learn and student time on-task.</p>
<p>Home – School Relations: Effective schools have formed partnerships with parents who are given the opportunity to play important roles in the school. These schools have built trust and communicated with parents who understand and support the school’s basic mission.</p>	<p>Partnership, characterized by trust and communication, is a central component of community policing. SROs add a public safety specialist to school-parent partnerships.</p>

Atkinson, A. (2000). *The successful school resource officer program: Building effective school and law enforcement partnerships*. Richmond, VA: Greystone.

collaborative partnership between the police and the community. The community approach supports and reinforces the concept of good citizenship in students, by designing schools as neighborhoods and students as citizens (Atkinson, 2002). The school itself is a community, with its own social structure; this complete social environment supports children in very subtle ways, much like their own families and neighborhoods (Elliott et al., 1998). The school setting offers a group of “community members” an opportunity to come together in a pre-determined location on a daily basis over a period of years. The school setting can be a very complex organization to understand, but with the expertise of each community member, problems can be solved and effective partnerships can be formed through the use of trusting relationships and shared visions. This partnership is built on an ongoing process of interaction, trust, and collaboration. This partnership can be achieved more quickly when the school administrator and the SRO recognize the common ground between their chosen professions.

School administrators have an increased awareness of, and responsibility for, the safety and security of students. Schools have long exercised their *in loco parentis* status by assuming the rights and responsibilities of parents for children. Similarly, School Resource Officers (SROs) working in the school setting are provided with an extension of the mission of law enforcement, which is to serve and to protect. School administrators have an obligation to assist students in becoming productive and law-abiding citizens. The SRO can reinforce these expectations and further help the students become productive and law-abiding citizens.

Conclusion

It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter that a literature review has four purposes. One purpose, according to Maxwell (1996), is as a justification for a study, or “how your work will address an important need or unanswered question” (p. 43). Such justification is evident in the fact that there has been a very limited amount of systematic research conducted on the organizational and management issues regarding the use and role of law enforcement in schools. And there is a need for continued research on these issues and also evaluations of organizational and management processes and strategies used by law enforcement agencies to promote safe schools. A second purpose, Maxwell said, is to inform decisions about methods. The literature revealed the lack of research done on the SRO programs and further exposed the need to develop an understanding of the roles for an SRO in a school setting. According to Creswell (2004), qualitative research should be used to study research problems where little is known about the problem and a detailed understanding of a phenomenon is needed. A third purpose of a literature review is as a data source that can be used to test a theory. One of the theories that was presented in the literature is the need for an understanding of the SRO roles in order to effectively utilize the SRO. Perhaps the most important purpose Maxwell (1996) discussed is the fourth, which implies that a literature review should offer, “a clear sense of your theoretical approach to the phenomenon you propose to study” (p. 106). The approach I brought to my research design was based on the section of the review of literature that addressed the need for an understanding of SRO roles. The literature

further revealed that without this understanding, schools could not experience a safe and secure environment which would reduce the incidence of school violence.

In this literature review I have familiarized the reader with five areas. First, school violence continues to be a concern for schools and for their communities; so I felt it was necessary to include vital information about some of the contributing factors to school violence. Second, schools use a variety of strategies to reduce school violence and to improve the safety and security of the school and I felt it was necessary to discuss the rich history behind this particular strategy, which involves placing police officers in the school setting, more specifically the School Resource Program. I discussed specific topics associated with the School Resource Officer selection process, including qualifications, training, and evaluations for an SRO. Third, since this study was conducted in the middle school setting, I felt there needed to be a brief review of the middle school literature, including a discussion revealing the function of middle schools, identifying the risky behaviors of middle school students, and finally stressing the necessity for intervention at this age. Fourth, I completed a brief review of research studies related to the topics addressed in this study. I reviewed research studies focusing on school safety and the SRO program. I provided a description of the theoretical framework used for this study, which addressed the role of the SRO and identified the duties and responsibilities associated with this role (Atkinson, 2000). This framework focused on the correlation between the roles of the SRO and the characteristics identified with effective schools.

School violence is a legitimate concern for school administrators and communities. Many schools face serious problems, and it is important to develop an understanding of problems so that effective strategies can be devised to prevent school violence and increase school safety and security. Schools use a variety of strategies to reduce school violence and improve the safety and security of the school. While principals continue to be responsible for the school safety, technically they do not supervise the officers. There appears to be a lack on understanding for the specific roles of an SRO and also a lack of training for the SRO and administrators to develop a working relationship. In order to effectively utilize the SRO in the school setting, there is a need to have a better understanding of the SRO program and the roles of the SRO in the school setting. As a result of this, it is possible that these well-trained professionals are not being utilized thoroughly, which is a waste of available resources and expertise that could be provided by a well-trained uniformed police officer.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the role of the SRO in a middle school setting based on the perceptions of four principals, four assistant principals, and four SROs assigned to four selected rural middle schools in the River County School District, located in Eastern Tennessee. Additionally this study was designed to identify any similarities in these perceptions. And finally this study was designed to identify barriers that impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities. This study sought to answer the following four questions:

1. What does the SRO do to provide middle school administrators with the necessary law enforcement resources and supports as these relate to (a) legal issues, (b) safety issues, (c) crisis management planning, and (d) crime prevention strategies?
2. What does the School Resource Officer (SRO) do to encourage collaboration and establish and maintain a working relationship with middle school administrators in order to create and maintain a safe school environment and detect and prevent crime before it occurs?
3. What are the similarities in the SROs' and administrator's perceptions of the SROs' role?

4. What barriers impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities?

This chapter focuses on (a) the sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures, (b) the methods by which I ascertained the accuracy of the collected data, (c) the rationale for and assumptions behind the research design, and (d) my role as a researcher and the biases I brought to the investigation. Figure 1 displays a flow chart of the research process utilized in this study. Also included in this chapter is a brief description of the four sites and the selected participants involved in this study. All methods and data collection procedures underwent consideration and acceptance before The University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board.

Assumption and Rationale for Using Qualitative Methods

According to Creswell (2004), qualitative research should be used to study research problems where little is known about the problem and a detailed understanding of a phenomenon is required. Due to the lack of information and research exploring the roles for a SRO, it was imperative to utilize qualitative methods to further develop an understanding for these roles in order to improve the training for both administrators and SROs. Merriam (1998) said that a qualitative design is appropriate for a researcher who wants to "address problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice" (p. xiii). Guidelines for the SRO program did not include specific assigned duties and tasks; rather these guidelines provided general descriptions of goals and duties along with some broad statements of expected behaviors. According to Maxwell (1996), a qualitative study allows the researcher to discover "how the participants make sense of

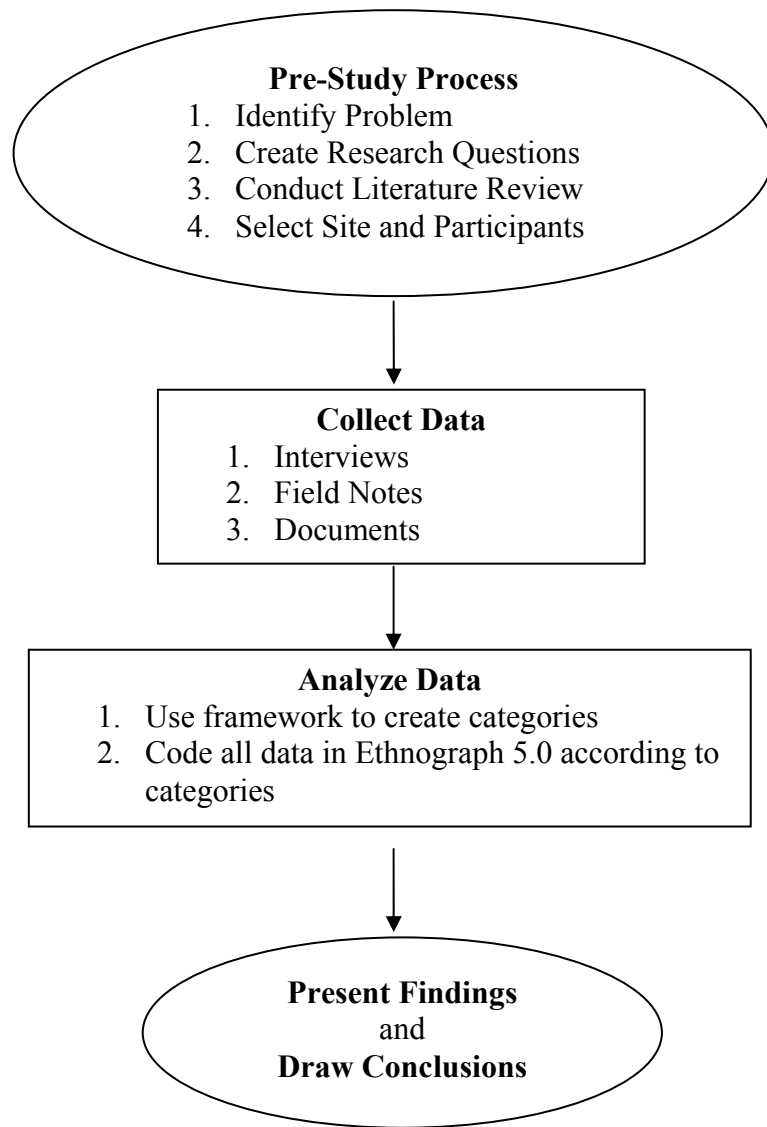


Figure 1. Research Process Overview

a phenomenon and how their understandings influence their behavior” (p. 17). In order to make improvements to the existing program, it was necessary to develop this understanding of specific roles, based on the experiences of the participants, and report these findings in a rich narrative description in order to ensure improvement in training for both the administrator and SRO

Type of Design: An Exploratory, Multi-Site Case Study

While there are a variety of research designs, the research questions for this study lend themselves most closely to an exploratory, multi-site case study. Stake (1995) described a case study as an investigation that explores in depth a program, an event, a process, or one or more individuals. According to Yin (2003), “the distinctive need for case studies evolves out of a desire to understand a complex social phenomenon” (p. 2). This study was significant for the amount of information revealed about the SRO Program and for how this information can be utilized be used to improve the existing training program for school administrators and SROs.

The uniqueness of a case study does not lie in the methods but in the questions and their relationship to the findings (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2003), it is appropriate to use an exploratory case study design if the research questions focus mainly on “what” questions. In order to establish uniqueness and a relationship between the questions and the findings, I designed four research questions using the “what” format (see Chapter One, Research Questions, pp. 4-5).

This case study was exploratory in nature because it satisfied Adler and Clark's (2003) criteria for conducting a study in a relatively new area. Although the School Resource Program has been in existence for a number of years, there is a growing need to develop a thorough understanding of the role for an SRO in order to design adequate training, for both the SRO and the school administrators, to ensure the effective implementation of a SRO in a school setting. Furthermore, this study's design, data collection, and analysis were guided by the conceptual framework developed by Atkinson (2000), which identified specific roles for an SRO and further identified the duties associated with these roles. There was not much evidence of research investigating the roles and duties for an SRO, which made this phenomenon a relatively new area to study. Since this was a relatively new area to study, I wanted to leave any pre-conceived assumptions or hypotheses out of the research in order to understand this phenomenon in the same way as the participants.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies the researcher is the primary tool for data collection and analysis. According to Merriam (1998):

Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective.... The researcher thus brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. (pp. 22-23)

I began my career in education 21 years ago as a classroom teacher and I am currently an elementary school principal. During the course of my teaching career, the focus on creating safe schools has changed dramatically. The increase of violence in schools has resulted in the creation of Crisis Management Teams and the placement of School Resource Officers in schools.

In 1997, as a new school administrator, I was asked to serve on the Crisis Management Team and was responsible for assigning duties and responsibilities to the School Resource Officer. I quickly realized that SROs were assigned to schools with little or no training for school administrators or SROs. Without adequate training I did not have a clear idea of how the role of the SRO could be developed in the classroom setting, rather than just providing a “security guard.” This problem was further compounded by the lack of training for the SROs for the complex issues associated with a school’s daily procedures and operations. In order for any future training to occur and be effective there had to be a clearer understanding of the SRO roles.

As a school administrator, I have had six years of experience with the School Resource Officer Program. Therefore, in conducting this research I had to be mindful of any potential biases that could influence this investigation. For instance, the experiences that I had previously with the School Resource Program were positive and very productive. I had to be aware of this bias in asking non-leading questions in my interview questions. These questions were formatted in such a way that the interviewee had the ability to express both the positive and negative aspects of the program being explored. Another observation from my previous experiences was that there was a

tendency for administrators, teachers, and parents to be receptive to the idea of having a uniformed police officer on the school campus, but I was also aware that this concept could be offering a false sense of security if the officer was not being fully utilized within the school setting. My role as a researcher was to collect data through interviews, documents, and field notes. Again, I had to be aware that there was the possibility that I would interview someone with whom I was acquainted.

I purposefully took the following measures to minimize my biases: triangulation of data sources through the use of interviews, documents, and field notes; production of audible and written records of all data gathered; creation of code maps and temporal records explaining how data analysis was undertaken; and the use of a data analysis grid.

While bias was an inevitable and expressed part of all qualitative research, it needed not be seen as a negative aspect to this research as long as I remained sensitive to understanding how “biases or subjectivity shape the investigation and its findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 23). Maxwell (1996) explained, “It is clearly impossible to eliminate the researcher’s theories, preconceptions, and values. The task is not to eliminate bias but to understand how values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” (p. 91). The process of combining rigorous and transparent data collection and analysis procedures and being critically aware of my own partiality helped to minimize biases for this study.

Site and Participants

The recent occurrences of school violence have forced many school districts to establish school safety departments and increase security on school campuses. Many

local school boards have adopted policies to address these expectations to provide a safe school environment.

According to the River County Board of Education Policy 3.203 state:

Each principal is responsible for seeing that the practice of safety is a part of the instructional program of the school and that it is appropriately geared to students at different grade levels. (lines 6 and 7)

The River County School Board Policy 3.203 further states:

The principal shall secure assistance from law enforcement officials when it is deemed necessary to maintain order or security during the school day or during extracurricular activities. (lines 27 and 28)

River County has experienced several incidents of violent acts against students, staff, and school administrators. One of these incidents included possession of a weapon, which ended in a hostage situation involving a school administrator. These occurrences helped to establish the need for assigning fulltime SROs to the school setting. Providing this service is very expensive and it not something that any school system can do alone. Hence, the River County School District and the River County Sheriff's Department worked together and established this school/law enforcement partnership. In order for any partnership to be effective there must be a common level of trust, common visions, and a clear understanding of each entity's roles. In order to facilitate and develop an understanding for the role of the SROs, it was essential to become familiar with a typical day for an SRO.

In selecting the sites for this study, I purposefully chose schools from the same county in Eastern Tennessee. This was done to ensure policy consistencies and other

factors that might have presented different variables when considering SROs and administrators from different county school systems. In order to ensure confidentiality, I assigned pseudonym names for each of the selected sites and participants. The sample for this study included the school administrators and school resource officers assigned to each of the selected four middle schools in the River County School District. I sent a letter to the Director of Schools for the River County School District and the principal assigned to each of the four school sites selected for this research study (see Appendices C and D). I further obtained permission from the River County Sheriff's Department to conduct this study using the SROs as participants (see Appendix E).

Site Descriptions

Indian Grove Middle School. Indian Grove Middle School (IGMS) is a beautiful new facility situated in a rural setting and is enhanced by a picturesque view of the mountains in Eastern Tennessee. It features an 114,000 square foot design. IGMS is comprised of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from three local elementary school. According to the 2005 Tennessee Report Card, the 2004-2005 enrollment was 703. An enrollment breakdown by grade level shows 220 sixth graders, 259 seventh graders, and 224 eighth graders with a gender profile of 386 male and 317 female students. The ethnic make up of Indian Grove Middle School showed that 97.4% of the students were Caucasian/white, 0.6% African American, 1.3% Hispanic, 0.6% Asian, and 0.1% are Pacific Islander. Free and reduced priced lunches were provided for 32.2% of the student body. During the 2004-2005 school year there were 68 suspensions and three expulsions. Forty-seven of these suspensions were male students and 21 were female.

One male student and two female students were expelled. IGMS boasts a safe school standing. The school had a promotion rate of 99.9% and an attendance rate of 94.4%; which were both above the Tennessee state averages of 97.5% promotion rate and 94.2% attendance rate (Tennessee Department of Education, 2005).

Little River Middle School. Little River Middle School (LRMS) is located in a rural setting and situated at the entrance to the River Mountain National Park located in Eastern Tennessee. It features an 116,000 square foot design. LRMS is comprised of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from three local elementary schools. The information provided by the 2005 Tennessee State Report Card showed that the 2004-2005 enrollment was 711. An enrollment breakdown by grade level shows 225 sixth graders, 259 seventh graders, and 227 eighth graders with a gender profile of 409 male and 302 female students. The ethnic make up of Little River Middle School showed that 97.2% of the students were Caucasian/white, 1.0% African American, 1.0% Hispanic, 0.7% Asian, and 0.1% Pacific Islander. Free and reduced price lunches are provided for 40.7% of the student body. During the 2004-2005 school year there were 92 suspensions and no expulsions. Sixty-seven of these suspensions were male students and 25 were female. LRMS has a safe school standing. The school has a promotion rate of 98.7% and an attendance rate of 93.4%; which are both above the Tennessee state averages of 97.5% promotion rate and 94.2% attendance rate (Tennessee Department of Education, 2005).

Cherokee Middle School. Cherokee Middle School (CMS) is a newly renovated facility situated in a very diverse and transient area of River County, Tennessee (pseudonym). It features a 137,000 square foot design and situated on 11.7 acres. CMS

has a grade configuration of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from three local elementary schools. According to the 2005 Tennessee Report Card, the 2004-2005 enrollment was 407. An enrollment breakdown by grade level shows 152 sixth graders, 128 seventh graders, and 127 eighth graders with a gender profile of 212 male and 185 female students. The ethnic make up of Cherokee Middle School showed that 93.6% of the students were Caucasian/white, 2.5% African American, 3.0% Hispanic, 0.5% Asian, 0.2% Native American, and 0.2% Pacific Islander. Free and reduced price lunches were provided for 49.0% of the student body. During the 2004-2005 school year there were 85 suspensions and two expulsions. Sixty-three of these suspensions were male students and 22 were female. Both of the expulsions were male students. CMS boasts a safe school standing. The school had a promotion rate of 98.0% and an attendance rate of 94.3%; which were both above the Tennessee state averages of 97.5% promotion rate and 94.2% attendance rate (Tennessee Department of Education, 2005).

Sequoyah Middle School. Sequoyah Middle School (SMS) is a newly renovated facility and is the middle school that is located closest to the Cherokee city limits. It features an 113,000 square foot design. SMS has a grade configuration of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from three local elementary schools. According to the 2005 Tennessee Report Card, the 2004-2005 enrollment was 724. An enrollment breakdown by grade level shows 266 sixth graders, 249 seventh graders, and 209 eighth graders with a gender profile of 413 male and 311 female students. The ethnic make up of Cherokee Middle School showed that 97.2% of the students were Caucasian/white, 1.8% African American, 0.8% Hispanic, and 0.1% Pacific Islander. Free and reduced price lunches

were provided for 41.0% of the student body. During the 2004-2005 school year there were 72 suspensions and no expulsions. Forty-eight of these suspensions were male students and 24 were female. SMS has a safe school standing. The school had a promotion rate of 97.6% and an attendance rate of 93.7%; which were both above the Tennessee state averages of 97.5% promotion rate and 94.2% attendance rate (Tennessee Department of Education, 2005).

River County Sheriff's Department. The River County Sheriff's Department employs 21 certified school resource officers. One officer is assigned to each of the elementary and middle schools and two officers are assigned to each high school. The River County School Resource Officer Program is designed to create safe schools, mentor students, provide positive role models, and possibly prevent crime before it occurs. These SROs receive extensive training in the following areas (a) crisis management, (b) counseling, (c) conflict resolution, (d) child development, and (e) lesson planning. In addition to the SRO duties these officers are assigned to the patrol division to work traffic accidents and other incidents that occur close to their assigned schools. Some of the SROs also have extensive training for Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T) teams, Hostage Negotiation Teams, Marine Unit, and Dive Team.

Participants

Participants from each of the four selected sites included two school administrators (1 principal and 1 assistant principal) and the SRO assigned to that particular school. Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of the sample and the total number of participants for each of the four selected sites. All participants were provided with a

Table 2
Breakdown of Sample

School Site	Principal	Assistant Principal	SRO
Indian Grove	1	1	1
Little River	1	1	1
Cherokee	1	1	1
Sequoyah	1	1	1
Total	4	4	4

Project Information Sheet (see Appendix F) and participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form and Statement of Consent (see Appendix G), which ensured confidentiality.

James Gregory has been the principal of Indian Grove Middle School for five years. He is a white male in his mid-forties and has 20 years experience in education. John Greene has been the assistant principal for five years. He is a white male in his early forties and has 18 years experience in education. The school resource officer at IGMS is Jeff Jacobs, who has been employed by the River County Sheriff’s Department for 8 years. He is a white male in his early forties and has been assigned to this school for the past five years.

Jess Dailey is in his first year as principal of Little River Middle School. He is a white male in his late thirties and has 14 years experience in education. Joe Blair has been the assistant principal for six years. He is a white male in his early forties and has

17 years experience in education. The school resource officer at LRMS is Seth Parks, who has been employed by the River County Sheriff's Department for 7 years. He is a white male in his early thirties and has been assigned to this school for 4 years.

Daniel Law has been the principal of Cherokee Middle School for 26 years. He is a white male in his early fifties and has 31 years experience in education. Sean Moore is in his first year as the assistant principal at CMS. He is a white male in his early forties and has 15 years experience in education. The school resource officer at CMS is Karl Rhyne, who has been employed by the River County Sheriff's Department for seven years. He is a white male in his early thirties and has been assigned to this school for the past seven years.

Laura Jones is in her first year as principal at Sequoyah Middle School. She is a white female in her late forties and has 23 years experience in education. Jill Brown is in her first year as an assistant principal. She is a white female in her early fifties and has 27 years experience in education. The school resource officer at SMS is Janet Lewis, who has been employed by the River County Sheriff's Department for five years. She is a white female in her late thirties and has been assigned to this school for one year

Data Collection Procedure

According to Alder and Clark (2003), case studies rely on several data sources. Creswell (2004) wrote that the researcher needs to collect multiple forms of data and spend a considerable amount of time in gathering information. In qualitative research this collection involves the use of observations, interviews, documents, and audio and visual material (Creswell, 2003). Merriam (1998) further stated that field notes recorded

from an observation become raw data for future analysis. In this study I utilized interviews, documents, and field notes.

Table 3 documents specifically how each data source enabled me to answer the proposed research questions. This table was used as a map for ensuring that the use of each data collection tool led to answers for each research question.

Interviews

For the purpose of this study, I utilized a semi-structured interview process with members from each appropriate stakeholder group: principals, assistant principals, and SROs. According to Merriam (1998), a semi-structured interview is guided by a list of questions to be explored. Merriam further explained that the interview process in a qualitative study is more open-ended and less structured, thus allowing the individual being interviewed to define the world in more unique ways. Semi-structured interviews are designed ahead of time, but are modified throughout the interview process to adapt to each interviewee.

I designed the interview protocol for members of each appropriate stakeholder group: school administrators, and SROs (see Appendices H and I). In order to create a sense of continuity between the purpose of this study and the interview process, I created questions that directly corresponded to my research questions (see Table 3). Maxwell (1996) explained the reciprocal process between interview questions and research questions: “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you want to ask people in order to gain that understanding” (p. 74).

Table 3
Matrix of Research Questions and Data Sources

Questions	Documents	Interview Questions	Field Notes
1. What does the School Resource Officer (SRO) do to provide middle school administrators with the necessary law enforcement resources and supports as these relate to (a) legal issues, (b) safety issues, (c) crisis management planning, and (d) crime prevention strategies?	School Resource Officer Program Guide, SROs' weekly activity log, Tennessee Code Annotated, School District Policy Manual	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A13, A15 O1, O2, O3, O4, O5, O6, O10, O16, O17	Direct quotes, Verbal descriptions of sites and participants, and field notes
2. What does the School Resource Officer (SRO) do to encourage collaboration and establish and maintain a working relationship with middle school administrators in order to create and maintain a safe school environment and detect and prevent crime before it occurs?	School Resource Officer Program Guide, and SROs' weekly activity log	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A10, A11, A12, A13, A16 O2, O3, O7, O8, O9, O11, O12, O13, O14, O15, O16, O17	Direct quotes, Verbal descriptions of sites and participants, and field notes
3. What are the similarities in the officers' and administrators' perceptions?	SROs' weekly activity log	A1 – A15 O1 – O17	Direct quotes, Verbal descriptions of sites and participants, and field notes
4. What barriers impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities?	School Resource Officer Program Guide	A1 - A15 O1 - O17	Direct quotes and field notes

Note. O = Officer (SRO); A = Administrator

According to Patton (1990), there are six kinds of interview questions that can be used to obtain different types of information from the interviewees. Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, and Sabshin (1981) described a list of four types of ideal interview questions. I combined both of these types of interview questions as shown in Table 4, so that a variety of questions could be utilized to gather information from respondents in this study.

Researcher bias could be a weakness when using this type of interview process. It is important that I did not impose my own theory on the participants' words but rather allowed the words themselves to create their own theory. I conducted all interviews at the participant's assigned school. Prior to the interview, I provided each individual with a demographic sheet to be completed (see Appendices J and K).

A total of 12 participants were interviewed for this study, including four principals, four assistant principals, and four SROs. I was limited in the number of interviews conducted, due to the fact there were only eight middle school administrators and four SROs assigned to the selected school sites. The interviews were tape recorded and ranged from 45 to 75 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

Documents

Merriam (1998) stated, "documents are a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator" (p. 112). She favors the use of documents for two reasons. First, the collection of documents is a non-intrusive way to gather pertinent information.

Table 4
Types of Interview Questions

Type of Question	Interview Question
Hypothetical	A1 O1
Ideal Position	A16 O15
Interpretive	A2, A4, A15 O6
Experience/Behavior	A5, A8, A9, A10, A12 O2, O7, O8, O11, O12, O15
Opinion/Value	A3, A6, A13, A11, A14 O3, O4, O9, O14, O16, O17
Knowledge	A7 O5, O10, O13, O16

Note. O = Officer; A = Administrator

They do not alter the setting as investigators do when the conduct interviews or observations. Second, Merriam stated, “Nor are documents dependent upon the whims of human beings whose cooperation is essential for collecting good data through interviews and observations” (p. 112). Documents, or artifacts as they are sometimes called, include public records, personal documents, or physical material (Merriam, 1998). They can include minutes from meetings, letters, newspaper articles, or other types of communication prepared by or about the participants. Most of these types of data are already present when the researcher enters the field. However, Merriam argued that there is another type of document generated by the researcher once they are in the field. Research-generated documents could include journal entries prepared by participants or an activity log kept by the participants. However, in gathering any kind of documents it is important to keep the research questions in mind.

For this study, I utilized several types of documents. These documents included a

School Resource Officer Program Guide compiled and edited by Atkinson and Kipper (2004), River County School District Policy Manual, Tennessee Code Annotated, and the SROs' Weekly Activity Log (see Appendix L). The SROs were provided two Weekly Activity Logs to document the activities they completed during a two-week period. These logs were collected and reviewed to further document any additional tasks not previously observed when shadowing the SRO.

Field Notes

Merriam (1998) stated that in order to have an accurate written account of an observation, field notes must be recorded as soon as possible after the conclusion of the observation. Field notes in this study included verbal descriptions of the school campuses, the participants, and observed activities. In addition, throughout the interviews, notes were taken on participant's responses for clarification. Other information included the times and dates of the interviews and occurrences of any interruptions during the process. Merriam further stated that field notes can also portray researcher's feelings, reaction, hunches, initial interpretations, and working hypotheses. These comments helped to raise questions about what I observed or possibly allowed me to speculate about what I was observing. These notes were identified with an "OC" in the margins to set them apart from the actual observation. I utilized tape recordings and note-taking to ensure accurate recollection of information. Recordings as well as written notes were transcribed and included in the data for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Merriam's (1998) constant comparative method. Throughout the reviews of the interviews, documents, and field notes. Codes and themes were then developed through an iterative process. I continually evaluated new insights in light of the previous ones. Then, in turn, I created a deeper understanding of prior perceptions of the data.

The data from all sources were entered into Ethnograph 5.0 for initial coding. Codes were based on key concepts from the review of literature, the conceptual framework, findings from the field notes, and words and phrases that were offered by the participants themselves. During the twelve interviews with the school principals, assistant principals, and SROs assigned to each of the four selected school sites, many patterns or similarities were revealed relative to the four research questions. I coded all of the collected data and noted any similarities or patterns in order to combine the codes into categories.

Coding, according to Adler and Clark (2003), refers to the process of "associating words or labels with passages in one's field notes or transcripts" (p. 503). I used the following process to create the necessary codes. First, I broke down my conceptual framework to create the research questions; second, I broke the questions down into themes that came from the framework. Then I broke these themes down into identifiable parts that served as my codes. I filtered the data collected using these codes in order to guide my discussion of the data in accordance with my research questions. In order to provide a guide through the themes, I used "code maps" to address each research

question. “Code maps” (adapted from Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002) were developed to illustrate these categories and themes and to clearly present and establish their significance. A code map is an attempt to simplify and codify the analysis of the qualitative data. Figure 2 is included to present the reader with a clear picture of how the data categories were formed and consolidated. The first iteration makes public the initial codes used for data analysis. The second iteration demonstrates how those codes were grouped to form categories or themes. The final iteration discloses how those categories were used to develop theory or contribute to theory advancement.

Methods of Verification

Because of the nature of qualitative research, certain "methods of verification" were necessary to "rule out validity threats and increase the credibility of one's conclusions" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 92). I used several practices in order to verify the authenticity and trustworthiness of my data. Creswell (2004) wrote, “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or method of data collection in descriptions of themes in qualitative research” (p. 252).

For the purpose of answering my research questions, I used three types of triangulation. First, I employed multiple types of data including interviews, documents, and field notes collected from observations to verify data collected from the participants (see Figure 3). Next, through triangulation of interviews, documents, and field notes, as well as triangulation of the interviews with one another resulted in a complete understanding of the phenomenon and the developing findings (see Figure 4).

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

Code Mapping for A Case Study of School Resource Officer Roles:

1. **Law Enforcement Resource**
Themes: 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d
2. **Safe and Secure School Environment**
Themes: 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e
3. **Similarities**
Themes: 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e
4. **Barriers to Performing Duties**
Themes: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d

(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables — (Components))

1a. Public Safety Specialist	2a. Shared Ownership	3a. Fulfilled a Double Role	4a. Limits of Authority
1b. Community Liaison/ Problem Solver	2b. Increased Positive Attitude Towards SROs	3b. Maintained Communication With School Administrators	4b. Role Conflict
1c. Law Related Educator	2c. Detected High-Risk Behaviors	3c. Above and Beyond	4c. Time on Campus
1d. Positive Role Model	2d. Collaborative Relationship	3d. Dedicated to Safety 3e. School as a “Community”	

(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)

1a. maintain order on school campus	2a. encourage responsibility	3a. flexible	4a. school regulations not aligned with law enforcement policies 4a. lack on knowledge on school procedures
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Figure 2 Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis

1a. first a sworn law-enforcement officer	2a. become acquainted with all stakeholders	3a. counselor	4a. unclear expectations
			4a. unfamiliar with school policies
			4a. conflicting policies
	2a. solicit help from the stakeholders as needed	3a. friend	4a. lack of training and uncertainty for assigning duties
1b. coordinate efforts of school stakeholders	2b. daily interaction with students	3b. schedule conferences with school administrators	4b. school policy conduct violations vs. criminal acts
1b. problem solving to address concerns	2b. be visible and accessible	3b. maintains an open door	4b. serve as an administrator
			4b. preoccupied with internal procedures
1b. knowledge about school and community	2b. participate in school functions	3b. administrators are active partners to developing solutions	4b. confusion about allowable duties
1b. establish trust	2b. involve students in the SRO program	3b. value sharing as a tool for problem solving	4b. threat of arrest vs. imposing disciplinary actions
			4b. misunderstanding of the SRO program

Figure 2 Continued

1c. reinforce high expectations	2c. create lines of communication	3c. exceeding expectations	4c. creates an inconsistent response to crises
1c. a resource not just a response	2c. provide guidance	3c. tutoring students	4c. responds to community calls
1c. daily interaction with students	2c. innovative and systemic approaches	3c. extra duties not assigned	4c. shortage of available officers in county
1c. communicate consequences to students	2c. role involves prevention and early intervention		
1d. students seek approval, direction, and guidance	2d. respect boundaries of authority	3d. visible	
1d. setting limits	2d. show respect	3d. stays abreast of changing trends	
1d. setting an example	2d. maintain relationship with parents	3d. maintains relationship with community	
1d. being honest	2d. develop and maintain relationships	3d. decreased fear of crime and violence	
1d. being consistent	2d. collaborative problem solving	3d. ongoing school and law-enforcement partnership	
		3e. community's mayor and police chief	

Figure 2 Continued

- 3e. students are the SROs' responsibility
- 3e. consistent placement
- 3e. share a common purpose

DATA: Interviews

DATA: Documents

DATA: Field Notes

Figure 2 Continued

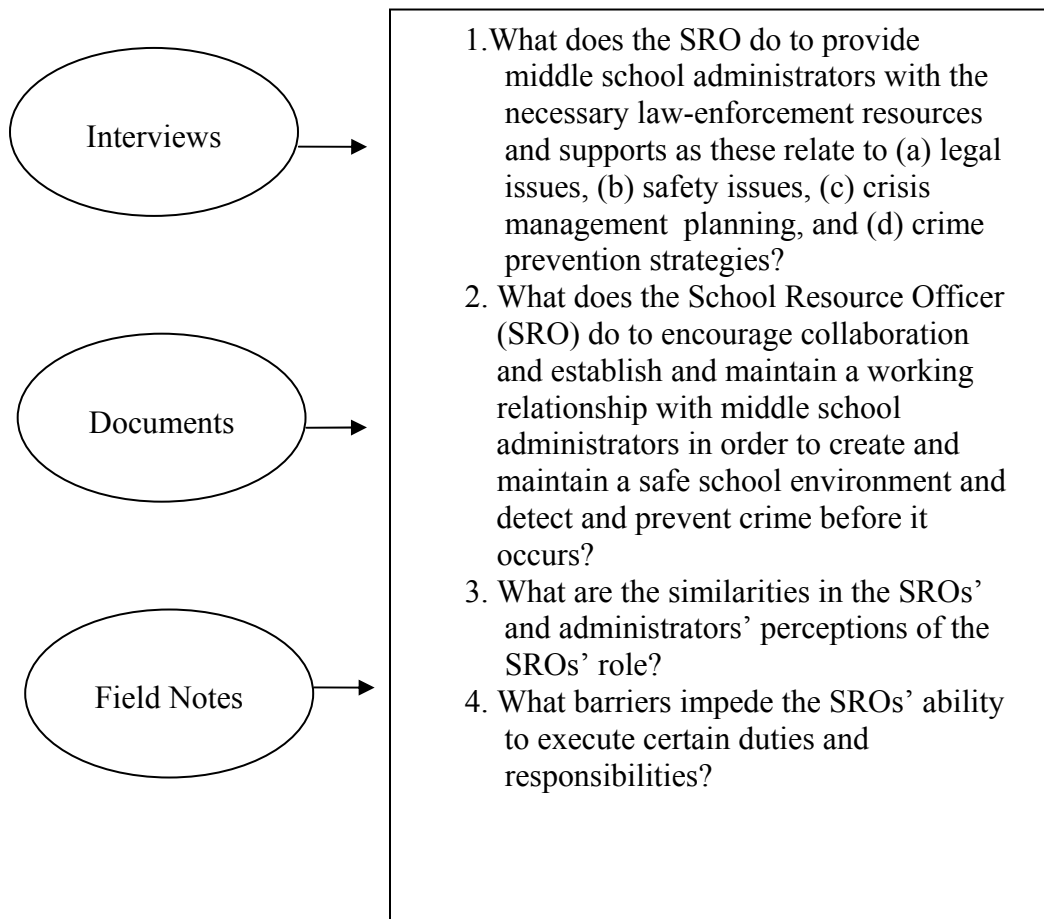


Figure 3. Triangulation Using Various Data Collection Techniques.

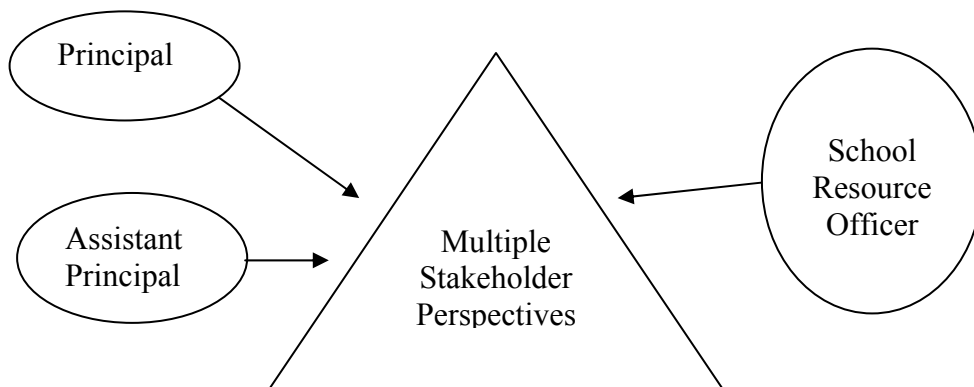


Figure 4. Use of Multiple Participant Groups to Verify Information.

Finally, I employed the Matrix Method to illustrate how the multiple sources of data collection were used to triangulate the data for this study (see Table 5). The sources of data collection in the matrix consisted of individual interviews, various documents, and informal observations. Table 5 shows the interpretation. Several techniques for strengthening the trustworthiness of this study included rich thick description, discrepant data analysis, researcher skill, and field notes that allowed for a credible collection of data. Each finding in Table 5 is corroborated by at least one other source of data. In this study the use of multiple sources of data prevented findings that relied on only one particular data source.

A temporal designation table was used to make transparent that process of category development (see Table 6). This table was adapted from Conostas (1992) in order to assist the qualitative researcher in documenting the process of category development. It has a two-dimensional model that accounts for components of categorization and the temporal designation in order to make public the process of category development. Making public the methods of category development increases the credibility of research. This table, according to Conostas, “may be used to make explicit the configuration of actions and temporal qualities associated with category creation in a given study” (pp. 256-257). The table illustrates the temporal aspects of this study’s category development, with “a priori” meaning before the data were collected, “a posteriori” meaning after the data were collected, and “iterative” meaning that the categories were created at various points in the process (Conostas, p. 261).

Table 5

Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

	Sources of Data		
	I	D	F
Category 1: Law Enforcement Resource			
1. Public Safety Specialist	X	X	X
2. Community Liaison/Problem Solver	X	X	X
3. Law Related Educator	X	X	X
4. Positive Role Model	X	X	X
Category 2: Safe and Secure School Environment			
1. Shared Ownership	X	X	
2. Increased Positive Attitude Towards SROs	X	X	X
3. Detected High-Risk Behaviors	X	X	X
4. Collaborative Relationship	X	X	
Category 3: Similarities			
1. Fulfilled a Double Role	X	X	X
2. Maintained Communication with School Administrators	X	X	X
3. Above and Beyond	X		X
4. Dedicated to Safety	X	X	
5. School as a “Community”	X	X	
Category 4: Barriers to Performing Duties			
1. Time on Campus	X	X	
2. Limits of Authority	X		X
3. Role Conflict	X		X

Note. I = Interview, D = Document, F = Field Notes

Table 6
Components of Categorization/Temporal Designation (Constas, 1992)

Component of Categorization	Temporal Designation		
	A priori	A posteriori	Iterative
<p style="text-align: center;">Origination</p> Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants		AB, TC, SC	
-programs		SO, CL	
-investigative			DR
-literature	PS, LR, PR, IP, DB, CR, MC, DS, LA, RC		
-interpretative			
<p style="text-align: center;">Verification</p> On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		PS, LR	
-referential			
-external			DB,DS, TC, SO, MC
-empirical		PR, IP, CR, DR, AB, SC, LA	
-technical			
-participative		CL, AL, RC	
<p style="text-align: center;">Nomination</p> What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants	AB	PR, DR, SC, TC	
-programs	PS, MC, LA	SO, CR, RC	
-investigative			
-literature	LR, DB, DS	CL, IP	
-interpretive			

Category Label Key:

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1a. Public Safety Specialist (PS) | 2a. Shared Ownership (SO) | 3a. Fulfilled Double Role (DR) | 4a. Limits of Authority (LA) |
| 1b. Community Liaison/Problem Solver (CL) | 2b. Increased Positive Attitude (IP) | 3b. Maintained Communication (MC) | 4b. Role Conflict (RC) |
| 1c. Law Related Educator (LR) | 2c. Detected High-Risk Behaviors (DB) | 3c. Above and Beyond (AB) | 4c. Time on Campus (TC) |
| 1d. Positive Role Model (PR) | 2d. Collaborative Relationship (CR) | 3d. Dedicated to Safety (DS) | |
| | | 3e. School as a "Community" (SC) | |

Apparent in this chart is the fact that most of this study's patterns or similarities had an a posteriori quality to them in that many of the patterns derived from interview questions and observations that produced a pattern of responses obtained from the interview transcripts and field notes. These patterns were developed as a result of rigorous data analysis (see Chapter 4).

Summary

An exploratory, multi-site case study design using qualitative methods allowed me to answer my research questions. The use of multiple data sources including interviews, documents, and field notes ensured triangulation in this study. The sample was purposefully chosen from only one county for policy consistencies and other factors that may have created variables when considering principals and officers from different systems. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the role of the SRO in a middle school setting based on the perceptions of the four principals, four assistant principals, and four SROs assigned to four selected rural middle schools in the River County School District, located in Eastern Tennessee. Because of the importance of providing a safe school environment, school administrators need to understand the SROs' roles in order to effectively utilize them in the school setting. Findings from this study may help to incorporate and refine the training necessary for administrators' preparation programs and also improve any future training for the administrators and SROs already placed in the school setting.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter is organized to answer the following research questions: (1) What does the SRO do to provide middle school administrators with the necessary law enforcement resources and supports as these relate to legal issues, safety issues, crisis management planning, and crime prevention strategies?; (2) What does the SRO do to encourage collaboration and establish and maintain a working relationship with middle school administrators in order to create and maintain a safe middle school environment, and detect and prevent crime before it occurs?; (3) What are the similarities in the SROs' and administrators' perceptions of the SROs' role?; and (4) What barriers impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities? This chapter starts with a description of a typical daily routine for a middle school SRO, and offers qualitative analyses for each of the four research questions.

The findings are based on an analysis of three main data sources. First, interviews were conducted with the four principals, four assistant principals, and four SROs assigned to four rural middle schools in the River County School District. Second, I reviewed a collection of documents (see Chapter 3 for a listing of these documents). Third, I conducted informal observations and collected a series of field notes based on these observations. For a complete description of data collection methods and procedures, see Chapter 3.

Table 7 provides the reader with information for each participant including pseudonym, current position, school assignment, total years experience, as well as years assigned to the selected school, and the age of the participant.

SRO's Daily Schedule

During the interview process I asked each SRO to provide a brief description of a typical day. For the most part these descriptions were very similar. Any differences were due to the variance in school demographics and physical layout for each school campus. A typical day began at 7:30 a.m. The SROs assisted with the unloading of bus and car riders (Field Notes, May 2, 2006). This is an important part of the day because according to Officer Jacobs, "this gives me an opportunity to watch the kids get off the bus and speak to them, give them high-fives, ask them how their weekend was, and mainly just let them see that I am here at school today"(Interview, May 2, 2006). The SROs also stated that they alternated between unloading bus riders and unloading car riders. The SROs were observed unloading the car riders one day and the bus riders the next day (Field Notes, May 2, 2006 and May 3, 2006). According to Officer Parks, "This provides me an opportunity to strike-up conversations, shake hands and build relationships with the parents" (Interview, May 5, 2006). After the students were unloaded and in the school building, the SROs walked to the cafeteria to participate in informal conversations with the teachers and students (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). Officer Parks further added, "this provided another opportunity to informally assess the behavior of the students before they moved into the hallways and classrooms" (Interview, May 5, 2006).

Table 7
Participant Information

Pseudonym	Current Position	School Assignment	Total Years Experience	Years Assigned to this school	Age
Janet Lewis	SRO	Sequoyah Middle School (SMS)	5	1	38
Jeff Jacobs	SRO	Indian Grove Middle School (IGMS)	8	5	45
Karl Rhyne	SRO	Cherokee Middle School (CMS)	7	7	34
Seth Parks	SRO	Little River Middle School (LRMS)	7	4	32
James Gregory	Principal	Indian Grove Middle School (IGMS)	18	5	46
Laura Jones	Principal	Sequoyah Middle School(SMS)	23	5	47
Jess Dailey	Principal	Little River Middle School (LRMS)	14	1	38
Daniel Law	Principal	Cherokee Middle School (CMS)	31	26	54
Sean Moore	Assistant Principal	Cherokee Middle School (CMS)	15	12	43
Joe Blair	Assistant Principal	Little River Middle School (LRMS)	17	6	41
John Greene	Assistant Principal	Indian Grove Middle School (IDMS)	18	5	43
Jill Brown	Assistant Principal	Sequoyah Middle School (SMS)	27	16	53

The SROs reported they follow the students into the hallways to ensure the students' safe movement to their assigned classes. After classes began, the SROs returned to the office area to check voice and e-mails for important messages (Field Notes, May 5, 2006). They checked in with the school administrators and discussed anything that might be happening on that day. Officer Jacobs reported that "there was always a tentative 'game-plan' for each day, but circumstances could change and the day became a 'play it by ear' day" (Interview, May 2, 2006). There is never a "typical" day in the life of a SRO; they handle various duties on a daily basis, such as counseling a troubled student, talking to a parent, directly dealing with a serious discipline issue, and constant monitoring of the hallways and the movement of the students within that school building (Field Notes, May 3, 2006).

The SROs reported they spent most of their day "walking and talking" to staff members and students (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). Officer Rhyne reported "the payback for the time spent 'walking and talking' is relationship building with staff members and students. Rapport is built through these relationships" (Interview, May 4, 2006).

During lunch the SROs were observed staying close to the cafeteria to monitor the students (Field Notes, May 4, 2006). Officer Rhyne reported, "this presence was essential because of the increased potential for fighting and uncontrolled student behavior" (Interview, May 4, 2006). During this time the SROs were observed eating with the staff (Field Notes, May 1, 2006) and eating with the students (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). The remainder of the SROs' day was spent being visible and handling situations as they occurred (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). At the end of the school day, the SROs were

observed loading buses, directing traffic, and loading car riders (Field Notes, May 6, 2006). All SROs reported they stayed at the end of the day until every child had left school or was secured with another staff member. If necessary the SROs were available after school hours to possibly manage a problem with a parent or to assist with any last minute emergencies. (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). Officer Jacobs reported, “school administrators can reach an SRO after the day is over and the SRO would either return to the school or send another officer to assist” (Interview, May 2, 2006).

Research Question #1: Law Enforcement Resource

Data analysis in this chapter begins with the qualitative data associated with Research Questions #1: What does the River County SROs do to provide the school administrators at the selected River County middle schools with the necessary law enforcement resources and supports as these relate to legal issues, safety issues, crisis management planning, and crime prevention strategies? The data from the interviews, documents, and field notes of the 12 participants documented events, behaviors, and opinions that served to support the theory that the SRO serves as a law enforcement resource for the school administrators. In focusing on this law enforcement resource function, the following codes were entered into Ethnograph 5.0 for initial coding (1) maintain order on campus, (2) authority to arrest, (3) first a sworn law-enforcement officer, (4) positive role model, (5) coordinate efforts of school stakeholders, (6) problem solving to address concerns, (7) knowledge about school and community, (8) establish trust, (9) reinforce high expectations, (10) a resource not just a response, (11) daily interaction with students, (12) communicate consequences to students, (13) students seek

approval, direction, and guidance, (14) setting limits, (15) setting an example, (16) being honest, and (17) being consistent (see Figure 2, Code Map, pp. 61-64).

To better analyze the data and answer this research question, I grouped these codes into broader themes. These themes are: (1) Public Safety Specialist, (2) Community Liaison and Problem Solver, (3) Law Related Educator, and (4) Positive Role Model. In the sections that follow, supporting data for each of these themes are provided.

Public Safety Specialist

According to Atkinson (2000), SROs offer schools the expertise of a public safety specialist. They are trained to provide an immediate response to crisis situations and ensure that laws are enforced. The SROs are responsible for conducting school safety assessments and to assist school personnel, 100% of the SROs (4 out of 4 respondents indicated that they play an integral part in designing and maintaining safety on the school campus (Field Notes, May 5, 2006). For example:

Officer Parks said:

I am here to provide assistance with Crisis Plans and for providing feedback to school administrators to improve these plans and to offer suggestions as situations surface (Interview, May 5, 2006).

Officer Lewis reflected these same feelings by sharing:

My duties here are to assist the school administrators and teachers in any way I can, we do not have a set guideline of what is expected of us but we do have set guidelines on how to handle situations as they occur. The SRO is here to assist in any other way with any situation that may or may not be of a criminal nature. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Rhyne expressed his understanding for being an added resource for school administrators and staff by commenting:

The way I understand it is my role is to basically be a resource for the school. I am support for the staff and I am here as a resource for them when they need me and also to enforce the laws of our community. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Atkinson and Kipper (2004) provided the following explanation for the SRO being used as a public safety specialist:

School resource officers are, first of all, sworn law-enforcement officers. Their central mission is to keep order on campus with the legal authority to arrest, if necessary. Order is necessary for learning to occur. When necessary, the School Resource Officer has the ability to intervene as a law-enforcement officer. Once order is restored, however, the SRO's other roles as law-related educator, community liaison, and positive role model are the more typical roles on a day-to-day basis. An important first step in establishing the law enforcement responsibilities is to differentiate what incidents constitute crimes and what incidents are school conduct violations. Some incidents may be conduct violations but not criminal violations; virtually all criminal incidents will also be school conduct violations. The SRO should take the lead on criminal violations; educators should take the lead on school conduct violations. (p. 29)

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Rhyne documented:

- 10 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities
- 10 incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed

- 2 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

- 8 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities
- 6 incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed
- 1 incident of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis provided the following

- 6 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities
- 4 incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed
- 2 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks recorded the following:

- 7 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities
- 4 incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed
- 1 incident of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

My own observations confirmed the degree to which the SROs are utilized as safety resource specialists. For example, I observed a discussion between Principal Law and Officer Rhyne concerning a serious discipline issue involving a safety threat. They discussed discipline possibilities and the procedures each of them would have to follow to be in accordance with both the school board policy and the confines of the law. Principal Law had gathered all the necessary evidence and presented it to the SRO. The SRO was willing to take the evidence and complete the necessary paperwork to facilitate punishment according to the law. There was evidence of expertise from both Principal Law and Officer Rhyne to ensure that the punishment being administered concurred with the policies and procedures of both entities (Field Notes, May 5, 2006). I further observed Officer Jacobs conferring with Assistant Principal Greene about a situation concerning the correct distance all students need to be away from the school building in the event of an emergency evacuation (Field Notes, May 4, 2006). Officer Lewis offered advice to Principal Jones on improving fire drill procedures to ensure the safety of the staff and students (Field Notes, May 3, 2006).

It was without question that placing an armed uniformed police officer in the middle school setting would have an impact on the safety and security of the school. It was unclear as to what extent the school administrators would benefit by placing this uniformed SRO in the school for not only safety and security purposes but also a provider of knowledge about law-related issues.

Principal Jones stated:

The initial role of the SRO as we understood it was to assist us in providing a safe and secure school environment, but with the bomb recent bomb threats our SRO is utilized as a consultant to provide technical assistance to the school administrators and staff to ensure that evacuations are executed properly. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Assistant Principal Blair further added:

The SRO provides technical assistance and advice in handling custody issues, orders of protection, and addressing discipline issues problems that they are having with their children at home. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Principal Jones stated:

The teachers utilize the SROs to explain to students the proper procedures for search and seizures. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Assistant Principal Greene further added:

Our SRO goes to the eighth grade social studies classes and talk about citizen rights, Miranda rights, and search and seizure policies. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

While the initial goal of the school district was to assist the schools in creating a safe school environment, this was an additional benefit to school administrators struggling to assist with other legal issues they experience on a daily basis.

Community Liaison and Problem Solver

According to Atkinson (2000), law enforcement officers provide leadership in law enforcement and safety matters within the school. Community policing allows the SRO to serve as a liaison between the school and the local sheriff's department and also provide information to the school community about law enforcement matters. School administrators often believe they lack adequate knowledge of the laws necessary to

address the problems that exist within the school setting (Atkinson). Laws change and so do problems associated with these changes and this leaves the school administrator unprepared to answer law-related questions and possibly unable to resolve or handle potentially dangerous situations. Crimes and student discipline issues can be better addressed with tailored responses directly related to each school setting. The SRO program utilizes community policing which recognizes the effectiveness of this problem-solving approach for not only situations which occur during school hours but also family problems occurring at home. One-Hundred percent of the SROs (4 out of 4 total respondents) indicated that they had served as a resource for teachers, parents, school administrators, and students on a variety of law-related issues (Field Notes, May 4).

The SROs offered the following:

Officer Jacobs said:

I am available to explain the process of obtaining restraining orders or to explain the terms of visitation to parents going through a divorce. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Rhyne stated:

Occasionally a parent has a problem and they will come to me asking for assistance. I am a liaison for these parents to help them with their problem. This problem could be that they are having a hard time getting their child out of bed or that the child will not do what they are told to do. I explain their options to them and assist them if needed. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Parks agreed:

I have had several incidents that I had to provide information for obtaining an order of protection. The parents did not understand the process and they came to the school for advice and guidance. I may have an assault incident that has occurred on the school

campus (but not in my presence) and the parents or school administrators want to know the process for filing a juvenile petition. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Officer Lewis stated:

This job extends past the students to the families of the students. I have had parents come to me and tell me what is going on with their child and they do not know what to do. I will sit down with them and discuss their options and offer advice as to what would be the best for their particular child and their situation. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

School administrators often asked the SRO for assistance with custody issues and explanations for legal documents. I observed an incident where a non-custodial parent attempted to withdraw a child from school. The school administrator asked the SRO to explain to the parent why this could not occur and the legal ramifications for the school administrator and the school system if it was allowed to happen. The SRO appeared more knowledgeable on the legalities of the situation and the parent appeared to be more receptive to the SRO than they were to the school administrator (Field Notes, May 2, 2006). Some of the comments from the school administrators were:

Principal Law further added:

Our SRO helps deal with custody issues and when one parent does not want another parent to see the children. He will give advice to those parents as to whether they have correct documentation or not, and he will further explain parental rights that are necessary to pick up the children. Because these laws and procedures frequently change, I do not feel adequately trained or qualified to provide these parents with the advice necessary to resolve their problems. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Assistant Principal Greene agreed:

Parents contact our SRO to find out proper procedures for obtaining custody for their children and possibly restraining the other parent from picking up the children from school. A problem fairly new for our SRO is grandparents who have suddenly been left with grandchildren to care for. They have no proof of custody and have no idea where the biological parents are and the students need to be enrolled in school. Officer Jacobs is always eager to assist these grandparents with the information to acquire the necessary legal documents, and will also follow up with a phone call to see if they were successful in obtaining the legal documents and see if they need further assistance. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Atkinson and Kipper (2004), offered the following explanation for SROs involvement with parents:

A central principle of community policing involves the creation of partnerships between law enforcement and members of the community. SROs can help establish links to community resources. They can be part of a school's efforts to increase parent involvement, for example, by being willing to talk to parents about concerns they may have about their children's safety and security. By being a willing participant in the school community, the SROs can help plan and then carry out strategies which will create a sense of community ownership of the school and will increase community involvement in the school. (p. 41)

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Rhyne recorded:

- 4 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 9 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 4 incidents for making referrals to community agencies. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis documented:

- 3 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 6 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 2 incidents for making referrals to community agencies.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

- 9 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 5 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 3 incidents for making referrals to community agencies.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks documented:

- 6 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 4 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 3 incidents for making referrals to community agencies.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

When school administrators and SROs work together to creatively solve problems, a number of positive outcomes can be achieved. Some of these outcomes could result in an increased ability to gather and analyze information about specific crime and discipline problems; an increased ability for the SRO, school, and community to

work together to develop approaches to reduce and prevent crimes; and a decrease in the fear of crime and violence among students, school staff, and community members.

Together the school administrators' and the SROs' abilities can compliment each other to meet the growing and diverse needs of the students and parents they serve.

Law-Related Educator

Another contribution I observed the SRO making involved classroom instruction on legal issues and speaking to classes on particular topics associated with school safety and security (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). According to Scheffer (1997), the SRO spends a great deal of time in the classroom addressing topics such as vandalism, theft, smoking, drug use, and the use of alcohol. River County School District utilizes the SROs to address groups of students about various safety issues and hazards (Field Notes, May 5, 2006). Some of these topics included bicycle safety, internet safety, and drug and alcohol abuse (Field Notes, May 6, 2006). The SROs further reported they are used by the school staff on an as-needed basis to enhance classroom instruction. One-Hundred percent of the SROs documented that they were asked to address a class on topics relating to personal safety or law-related issues (Field Notes, May 5, 2006). According to Dorn (2002), educational programs taught by SROs should reflect the most significant problems faced in the school system and the community. SROs instruct on many different topics such as drug abuse, gang activity, weapons, and Internet safety. The following verbatim quotes supported this theme:

Officer Parks stated:

I teach DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) which includes topics covering drug abuse and tobacco abuse. It further breaks down drug abuse to include inhalants, narcotics, cigarettes, and tobacco. Because this is a middle school setting, we hit on drug and alcohol abuse very, very hard. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Officer Lewis provided this example:

Teachers use me to explain to students the process of search and seizure. History teachers will use me to discuss the Miranda rights and citizen rights. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Rhyne stated:

The teachers and I utilize student tragedies to guide our classroom instruction. Last year we had a student hit by a car while riding his bicycle, so I taught classes on bicycle safety. We also had a student hit by a car while riding a skateboard, so I taught a lesson on skateboard safety. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Jacobs added:

I talk to students about the dangers of using the Internet and I caution them about putting personal information out there for people to see.

Principal Jones stated:

Our teachers will ask the SRO to come to their classroom and talk about the search and seizure process. In the last two years, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) has been offered to our 7th graders. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Assistant Principal Greene further added:

Our SRO goes to the 8th grade Social Studies classes and talks about the Miranda rights and citizen's rights. Teachers approach the SRO and tell him what they are teaching and ask if he can help out. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Principal Gregory added:

Our SRO approaches me with concerns he would like to discuss with the students, we then look for a way to get that done. Sometime our teachers will ask him to come to their rooms and talk about different things. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

According to Atkinson and Kipper (2004):

Law-Related Education (LRE) is an educational program for the development of citizenship in a constitutional democracy. It is designed to teach students the fundamental principles and skills needed to become responsible participants in a democracy. Programs are characterized by relevant, interesting course materials; the extensive use of volunteers from the justice system; field experiences (community service projects, court tours, police ride-alongs, internships, etc.); participatory classroom teaching methods; and co-curricular activities (mock trials and other public performances). (p. 32)

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Lewis documented:

- 5 occurrences of providing guidance and instruction on ethical issues in the school setting and explaining law enforcement
- 3 occurrences for providing individual counseling to students relating to law enforcement issues or crime prevention. (SRO Weekly Log. May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks recorded:

- 4 occurrences of providing guidance and instruction on ethical issues in the school setting and explaining law enforcement
- 3 occurrences for providing individual counseling to students relating to law enforcement issues or crime prevention. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs documented:

- 3 occurrences of providing guidance and instruction on ethical issues in the school setting and explaining law enforcement
- 5 occurrences for providing individual counseling to students relating to law enforcement issues or crime prevention. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

- 2 occurrences of providing guidance and instruction on ethical issues in the school setting and explaining law enforcement
- 3 occurrences for providing individual counseling to students relating to law enforcement issues or crime prevention. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Atkinson (2000) stated that through law-related education, students can learn the rights and responsibilities for becoming responsible citizens in a democratic society. She further states that problem-solving and instruction in crime prevention techniques provide opportunities for students to take a meaningful role in addressing problems within the school setting. A current problem is safety while using the Internet. Students need to be made aware of the potential hidden dangers associated with using the Internet and receive instruction on how to not become a victim.

Officer Jacobs expressed this concern:

I am worried about these kids putting all this personal information on the Internet and the teachers ask me to talk to the students about the dangers associated with doing this. There is not enough time to be able to teach them about things they really need to know. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

The school administrators and the SROs have a vested interest in assisting students to become safe, productive, and law-abiding citizens. The SRO plays an

important role in assisting the school administrators in reinforcing expectations for appropriate behaviors in the school setting. These expectations carry over into the SRO effectively teaching students the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the conditions necessary to ensure their safety.

Positive Role Model

Being a positive role model is probably the most powerful role that the SRO can fulfill. These interactions are very subtle but yet the paybacks can be enormous. The SRO can be provided with many opportunities to have informal interactions with students and it is through these interaction that the SRO can influence student's decisions and attitudes. According to Atkinson (2000), the SRO can serve as a role model by (1) setting limits, (2) setting an example, (3) being honest, (4) being consistent, (5) encouraging responsibility, and (6) showing respect.

According to Atkinson and Kipper (2004):

One of the greatest challenges facing the youth of America is the selection of positive role models. A law enforcement agency can provide needed support to this challenge by placing officers within the school community. With an effective personnel selection process, law enforcement officers provide a source of positive community modeling for youth, particularly in areas of citizenship, decision making skills, and assuming responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. (p. 2)

All SROs (100%) interviewed indicated the importance of providing opportunities for the SRO to be a positive role model.

Officer Rhyne expressed it best by stating:

My ultimate goal is to be a positive role model for the students. there are not a lot of role models out there for them and I have to

make sure I am there for them. This is our future society we are shaping and molding and if we can reach them now then when they become adults they will have a firm foundation to be productive and create a better community. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Lewis stated:

These students need to know they have your approval and that they meet your expectations. I am constantly giving them positive feedback for good behavior and this helps me establish a good relationship with them. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Jacobs said:

Students respond to discipline when there is consistency. Students need limits set and consequences established when rules are not followed. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Parks added:

The SRO needs to be a positive role model for the students. This includes being honest with them and setting an example for appropriate behavior by providing direction and guidance for success. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

During informal conversation the school administrators further added the parents were more supportive with discipline issues when the SRO had this positive rapport with the students and is supported by the following:

Assistant Principal Blair stated:

Parents appear to be more accepting of discipline actions when the SRO is present and this presence reminds them that there are other options outside of the school that could possibly happen if the problem is not resolved and the behavior changed. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Principal Law said:

When the SRO is present for a parent conference it provides an

opportunity to talk to the parent on a more even playing field. This presence helps to deescalate the parents and provides me an opportunity to full fully explain the situation. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Principal Gregory reflected on this situation:

I remember the afternoon I had angry parents coming in. I asked our SRO for help. He did a super job of greeting them at the door, making them feel comfortable, and staying with us until 5:30. That was way past his time to get off, but he stayed to make sure everything was fine. These parents were upset about my disciplining their child. The problem was not resolved to their satisfaction, but the presence of the SRO kept them calm enough to listen to the situation including my rationale for the discipline. This presence keeps order in the room so all parties can at least hear all of the details and keep anger under control. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Summary of Law Enforcement Resource

When answering the research question, “What does the SRO do to provide middle school administrators with the necessary law enforcement resources and supports as these relate to legal issues, safety issues, crisis management planning, and crime prevention strategies?,” data revealed that the SROs served as a Law Enforcement Resource by acting as a (1) Public Safety Specialist, (2) Community Liaison and Problem Solver, (3) Law-Related Educator, and (4) Positive Role Model. The data from this research indicated schools dealt with specific law-related issues and the school administrators lacked sufficient training to address these issues. Having an SRO on the school campus provided someone to handle situations not related to curriculum and academic issues and further freed the school administrators to function as instructional leaders and concentrate on other educational demands of the school.

Research Question #2: Safe and Secure School Environment

This section of the findings reveals the qualitative data associated with Research Question #2: What does the SRO do to encourage collaboration and establish and maintain a working relationship with middle school administrators in order to create and maintain a safe middle school environment, detect and prevent crime before it occurs, and use data on crime and school discipline to address problem areas within the school? The data from the interviews, documents, and field notes of the 12 participants documented events, behaviors, and opinions that served to support the theory that the SROs provide the necessary assistance to create a safe and secure school environment. These data were initially coded as: (1) encourage responsibility, (2) participates as a member of the school staff, (3) becomes acquainted with all stakeholders, (4) solicits help from the stakeholders as needed, (5) interacts daily with students, (6) is visible and accessible, (7) participates in school functions, (8) involves students in the SRO program, (9) creates lines of communication, (10) provides guidance, (11) innovative and systemic approaches, (12) role involves prevention and early intervention, (13) respects boundaries of authority, (14) shows respect, (15) maintains relationships with parents, (16) develops and maintains relationships, (17) collaborative problem solving, (18) creatively tackles problems, (19) problem oriented, (20) responds to the school's specific needs, and (21) be an active listener.

To better analyze the data and answer this research question, I grouped these surface codes into broader themes (see Figure 2, Chapter 3, pp.61-64). These themes are: (1) Shared Ownership, (2) Increased Positive Attitude Towards SROs, (3) Detected High-

Risk Behaviors, and (4) Collaborative Relationships. In the analysis that follows these themes are supported by the following data sources: interviews, documents, and observations.

Shared Ownership

Shared ownership for the problems associated with school violence and further helping to design solutions, including possible interventions, is one way of effectively addressing violence. Schools alone do not create school violence or violent children; nor do the police department, family unit, or the community at large.

According to Flaherty (2001), schools are considered a part of a larger community and they reflect the characteristics of that community. This translates into the fact that the school administrators and the community are responsible for working together and must address violent situations that may occur in the school settings. None of these entities can control the situation by themselves and will quickly realize frustration and an increased political liability because the community is looking to them for answers. According to Trump (1998), it is essential that the key stakeholders must acknowledge the problem of school violence as a community problem. And according to National Middle School Association (2003), middle schools also search for appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, and other organizations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission. None of these alone created the problem of school violence and none of these can decrease or eliminate the problem without this sense of shared ownership.

Atkinson and Kipper (2004) provided the following explanation for the program's viewpoint on sharing ownership for school violence and how the problems that occur within the community carry over into the school:

The school is simply an extension of the overall community. Crime that affects the community has an impact on schools, while offenses occurring on school property also affect the community. The presence of law enforcement representation within the school community provides for a consistent approach to community public safety. In addition, it provides a model application of community policing principles. (p. 1)

The interviews conducted with the SROs and the school administrators are replete with examples of the importance of building relationship and accomplishing a common goal of creating a safe and secure school environment.

Some of these interviews included the following:

SROs have to deal with not only the school but also the surrounding community. If there is a call close to the school and I am available to respond if needed. This helps the SRO get established with the people living in the school neighborhood. (Officer Lewis, Interview, May 3, 2006)

Even though the SRO is employed by the sheriff's department I still feel a part of the school staff and I believe I need to serve as a resource for them. (Officer Rhyne, Interview, May 4, 2006)

I believe I have an important role as part of this school staff. I feel very comfortable in making suggestions for improvement because I feel I share in the task of educating these students. (Officer Jacobs, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I have a tremendous sense of belonging with the school administrators and the school staff. This sense allows me to share a sense of ownership for the responsibility of educating these young minds. (Officer Parks, Interview, May 5, 2006)

Our SRO is here in case we need her and to help build relationships with the student body and the families within the school community. We could not provide the level of safety and security that we are able to provide if there was not a presence of a uniformed police officer. (Principal Jones, Interview, May 3, 2006)

The ultimate goal for the SRO is to build relationships; we could not have a safe and secure school environment and build school community relationships unless the SRO is involved. (Principal Gregory, Interview, May 2, 2006)

You have to have parents, students, teachers, and community members involved in order to achieve goals. The only way to get them involved is to make them a part of the process, part of the implementation of a program. (Principal Law, Interview, May 4, 2006)

Shared ownership is an essential part of the community policing philosophy which allows the SRO, school, and community to work closely together to solve the problems of crime and physical and social disorder that are present in many school communities and neighborhoods. This philosophy rests on the belief that law-abiding people in the community should be allowed to provide input into the SRO Program. It also rests on the belief that solutions to community problems should allow these people and the police an opportunity to explore creative ways to address neighborhood concerns. Viewing this concept through the framework of the necessity of shared ownership illuminated several important SRO roles, encourage responsibility, become acquainted with the community, solicit help from the stakeholders of the school and neighboring community.

Increased Positive Attitude Towards SRO

According to the NMSA (2003), young adolescents hunger for positive relationships with caring adults and opportunities for informal interactions and conversations with them. Similarly Dorn (2002) noted that through educational programs and positive interaction with students, school resource officers can improve police/community relations and have a more positive impact on community crime problems.

Atkinson and Kipper (2004) stated:

The school community provides excellent opportunities for law enforcement officers to interact with young people. Traditionally, such interaction was limited to school-related enforcement issues where officers were called onto school property to resolve a problem. Today, officers are building relationships outside of the traditional area of enforcement. Through daily interaction with students, law enforcement officers are providing a positive preventive approach to juvenile crime within the community. Students become accustomed to the presence of a law enforcement representative outside an investigative or crisis situation. Experience has taught that positive relationships with youth within the school enhance the law enforcement agency's ability to police youth in the community at large. Students who have come to trust SROs often voluntarily provide information useful in solving crimes in the community. (p. 1)

During the interviews, school administrators and SROs began to describe the importance of a healthy SRO and student relationship and the importance of providing time for SRO and student interaction. Some of the examples revealed were:

The biggest thing is that I need to try to establish a relationship with my kids by helping them to understand that the person in uniform is not a bad person, the SROs are here to help. I think having an SRO in the school had helped establish this

understanding. The students will come and talk to me and they feel they can trust me. (Officer Lewis, Interview, May 3, 2006)

My duty is to try to get them to trust law enforcement officers. (Officer Jacobs, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I have a great relationship with everybody, staff and students. The rapport is built. The students come up to me and play around with me, I am just one of them, but they know I can also be serious and they know when to be serious. (Officer Rhyne, Interview, May 4, 2006)

My goal is to establish a rapport with the students so that they feel ownership and a sense of responsibility for the safety of their school. (Officer Parks, Interview, May 5, 2006)

Our SRO walks the halls, talk to the students, and is very visible throughout the school day. Our SRO greets the students as they unload the school bus and then walks around the cafeteria interacting with them before the day starts. (Principal Jones, Interview, May 3, 2006)

Our SRO takes advantage of every opportunity to visit with the students. He is observed in the hallway talking to a group of students. Many times he will know a student that I am dealing with because he has talked to them in class, the lunchroom, or he has helped them with a problem. This is a tremendous help to me when I am struggling with a discipline issue. (Assistant Principal Greene, Interview, May 2, 2006)

The SRO is very helpful and cooperative. Our SRO tutors a student who needs a positive role model in his life. The SRO has assumed the role of being this role model for this child. (Principal Moore, Interview, May 4, 2006)

Our SRO visits with the children and visiting parents. He takes every opportunity to visit with the students and establish rapport with the students. (Assistant Principal Blair, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Rhyne recorded:

- 5 occurrences of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 10 occurrences of monitoring halls, parking lots, and other areas. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis documented:

- 3 occurrences of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 10 occurrences of monitoring halls, parking lots, and other areas. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

- 4 occurrences of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 10 occurrences of monitoring halls, parking lots, and other areas. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks documented:

- 6 occurrences of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 10 occurrences of monitoring halls, parking lots, and other areas. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

A number of SROs reported that students approach them about qualifications necessary to become a SRO. The SROs stated that they provided the students with a description of police work and what was necessary to prepare them for a law enforcement career (Field Notes, May 4, 2006). Many of the SROs lived in the community or even in close proximity to the school in which they were assigned. This resulted in many of the SROs already being familiar with the students and, in many cases, relationships being formed.

These SROs attended the same churches, lived in the same neighborhood, visited some of the same businesses, and participated in many of the same community activities. This resulted in the SROs already having a positive relationship with some students and this relationship carried over into the school setting.

Detected High-Risk Behaviors

According to NMSA (2003), schools actively promote a safe and welcoming environment by developing school and community-wide initiatives that identify risks and promote protective conditions through a true home-school-community partnership. According to Mohandie (2000), if at risk students, simply had one healthy trusting relationship with somebody they can turn to when the chips are down, hope is lost, and options are perceived as extinguished, could make all the difference in the world. All SROs said that they had an interest in working with young students and is the deciding factor for them to become an SRO. The SROs reported that while they were performing their daily safety checks they were able to get to know the students and developed trusting relationships with them (Field Notes, May 3-4, 2006). On a daily basis, SROs stated that they used this time to listen to students and possibly detect and address potential problems before they had an opportunity to escalate into a potentially violent situation (Field Notes, May 2-5, 2006).

According to Atkinson and Kipper:

SROs can also help address the social environment of a school. By their very presence, SROs add another figure of authority and respect to this environment. They can communicate this to students through the actions they take when dealing with students. Setting high expectations for behavior and making clear that

consequences for inappropriate behavior exist become important. SROs can contribute to a school's efforts in setting high expectations and in making certain that students understand that certain behaviors will not be tolerated. SROs can contribute to the development of codes of conduct by relaying to school staff what constitutes unacceptable behavior from a legal standpoint. They can also help measure the school's social environment by employing school climate surveys which measure the safety and security concerns of students and staff. From these surveys, plans which focus upon these concerns can be developed with the ultimate goal being improvement of the social environment of the school. (p. 92)

Officer Lewis stated:

If I can talk to a student about what is going on with them. The preventive maintenance, so to speak, could keep something from happening down the road that may have to be dealt with.
(Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Jacobs said:

I feel my duties are not just to make sure the kids obey the law, but I also need to get them to understand what the law is. I provide them an opportunity to look at what they have done wrong and help them devise a plan to avoid any future problems.
(Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Rhyne stated:

Sometimes the kids see the uniform, gun, and badge and they know there is an officer and they are going to straighten up. I can see a major impact for being out in the hallways. When I am out in the halls I can possibly detect problems before they escalate into something dangerous. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Parks said:

When I am visible in the hallways I can monitor student behavior and possible detect problems before they get out of hand.
(Interview, May 5, 2006)

Principal Dailey said:

The most important role of the SRO is to be seen. The SRO needs to be in close proximity to the classrooms. The more they are seen, the more they are out and about among the students the more they can get a handle on misbehaviors. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Assistant Principal Moore added:

Our SRO patrols the halls on his own initiative; he is out in the hallway when classes are changing. This provides him an opportunity to monitor behaviors and possibly avoid behaviors before they escalate. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Principal Law further added:

Our SRO is visible, his car is out front, so as soon as you pull in you see his car. He is out in the halls so the kids can see him. He is always available so the kids can come to him. They are not scared to approach him about a possible problem so that he can stop something before it escalates into a bigger problem. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Collaborative Relationship

According to Jones (2001), it is essential that there is a collaborative relationship because the responsibility for the safety of the school and the community it serves can be shared. Schools and communities must interact because one cannot be safe unless the other is safe.

According to Atkinson and Kipper (2004) stated:

Law enforcement officers are now welcomed on school campuses where they are becoming a critical factor in overall student safety. Through the school-based community policing model, officers are involved in proactive areas of crisis planning, school safety assessment, and the important areas of prevention, intervention, and enforcement. (p. 7)

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Rhyne recorded:

3 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis documented:

4 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

6 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks documented:

2 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis stated:

I assist my principals in a lot of things and I think that is because we are on a level that they know I am here if they need me at they have to do is ask. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Jacobs said:

I discuss problems with the school administrators and we discuss possible solutions and come to a safe and effective compromise. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Rhyne added:

The principal and I have a great relationship. We have worked together for four school years and it ultimately comes down to us to make decisions together. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Parks further added:

I am here to be a resource for the school administrators and to offer support and advice as situations arise. Decisions need to be based on this input and become a collaborative decision. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

During the interviews, school administrators described the importance establishing collaborative relationship. Some of the examples revealed were:

We do not operate independently of one another until we get to a point that obviously our SRO has a job to do and he has certain guidelines from the sheriff's department that have to be followed. But for the most part we try to work together to solve problems. (Principal Gregory, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I ask our SRO what needs to be done. Every time our school completes a safety drill, we talk about issues that might come up and compare notes. Our SRO had a lot of input in our recent bomb threats. I had questions about how far away to evacuate the children from the school building. (Assistant Principal Greene, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I have a good relationship with the SRO. Anything that is done is done by a mutual decision. (Assistant Principal Moore, Interview, May 4, 2006)

In the school setting school administrators can find out the SRO can help and how the SRO can gain a better understanding for school policies and procedures. This collaborative partnership generates mutual goals and provides necessary information to assist with crisis situations.

Summary of Safe and Secure School Environment

When answering the research question, “What does the SRO do to encourage collaboration and establish and maintain a working relationship with middle school administrators in order to create and maintain a safe middle school environment, detect and prevent crime before it occurs, and use data on crime and school discipline to address problem areas within the school?” The SRO roles for creating and maintaining a safe and secure school environment can be grouped into the following themes: (1) Created Shared Ownership, (2) Increased the Positive Attitude Towards the SROs, (3) Detected High-Risk Behavior, (4) Established Collaborative Relationships. The data from this research indicated the SRO played an important role in the creation and maintenance of a safe and secure school environment. Many times the school administrators lacked adequate knowledge to establish and maintain this and having an SRO can create a relationship that provided school administrators with the necessary expertise to ensure that the school learning environment was safe, secure and conducive to learning.

Research Question #3: Similarities

This section of the data analysis discusses the similarities in the school administrator's and SRO's perceptions. I did not believe it would have benefited the reader to only present perceptions without making this comparison. It is essential to reveal similarities in order to illustrate collaboration, and collaboration does not occur without similar beliefs, missions, and goals. The data for this section were grouped into a broad category to answer the question of, "What are the similarities in the officers' and administrators' perceptions of the SROs' role?"

Even though this study investigated two separate governing entities with two very distinct sets of policies and procedures there were many similarities in the perceptions for the role of an SRO in the middle school setting. The data from the interviews, documents, and field notes of the 12 participants documented events, behaviors, and opinions that served to support the theory that the SRO serves as a law enforcement resource for the school administrators. These similarities were initially recorded as: (1) flexible (2) law-enforcer, (3) counselor, (4) friend, (5) schedule conferences with school administrators, (6) maintains an open door, (7) administrators are active partners to developing solutions, (8) value sharing as a tool for problem solving, (9) exceeding expectations, (10) tutoring students, (11) extra duties not assigned, (12) visible, (13) stays abreast of changing trends, (14) maintains relationship with community, (15) decreased fear of crime and violence, (16) ongoing school and law-enforcement partnership, (17) community's mayor and police chief, (18) consistent placement, and (19) share a common purpose.

To better analyze the data and answer this research question I grouped these codes into broader themes. These themes are: (1) Fulfills a Double Role, (2) Maintain Communication with School Administrators, (3) Above and Beyond, (4) Dedicated to Safety, and (5) School as a “Community”. These themes were supported by the following data sources interviews, documents, and field notes. In the sections to follow I will provide supporting data for each of these themes.

Fulfills a Double Role

The job of an SRO allowed the officer to experience two separate roles. Some examples of these included providing assistance to the students and school staff, counseling individuals as needed, and tutoring students all while maintaining a commitment to the policies as mandated by the local sheriff’s department. During informal conversations, both the SROs and the school administrators agreed that having to obey two governing policies requires the SRO to complete a double role (Field Notes, May 5, 2006).

Officer Lewis stated:

You have to have that relationship with the students, I do not want any of the students here feeling like they have to be afraid of me or afraid of any law enforcement officer. If they are in trouble, whether they are at home or at school and they see a uniform they know they can get help. But I also try not to cross that line and become their best friend. I still want them to remember that I can still put them in the back of my car and take them to juvenile. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Rhyne said:

I have told parents that I have heard out in public tell their children, ‘you better be good or I will have that policeman arrest

you'. I have make it a point to always go over and have a conversation with that child and tell them I would not do that and have a nice heart to heart with the parent and advise them that we do not do that. It is hard to build trust and rapport when a sense of fear is being instilled in the children. So I have a double role of developing that trust and also maintaining that element of respect that they can be punished it necessary. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Jacobs stated:

Usually when I have to investigate a crime it is easily solved because I have developed a good relationship with the students. They are usually forthcoming with information. So I may have to enforce the law with a student that has developed a relationship with me. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Parks provided this example:

I have had a recent problem with a student that has been physical with his mom and I actually was dispatched to the home. When I got to the home, I realized I knew the kid and I was familiar with the situation. I went out there and the kid was very upset, but when I got out there and he knew me, he calmed down. I was able to talk to him and calm him down and also ease the situation. This would not have been possible had I not had become familiar with him as an SRO. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Atkinson and Kipper (2004) supplied this information:

School Resource Officers are, first of all, sworn law-enforcement officers. Their central mission is to keep order on campus with the legal authority to arrest, if necessary. Order is necessary for learning to occur. When necessary, the School Resource Officer has the ability to intervene as a law-enforcement officer. Once order is restored, however, the SRO's other roles as law-related educator, community liaison, and positive role model are the more typical roles on a day to day basis (p. 30).

Principal Gregory stated:

It takes someone special to be an SRO. The SRO has to be a police officer that is assertive and forceful on one hand, but on the other hand they have to be kind, gentle, compassionate, and

understanding. It takes someone special to develop a relationship with middle school students. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Assistant Principal Greene:

Our SRO will know the kids and that makes my job easier because he will know the ones I have not come in contact with yet. Students may have shared something with him that may play into something I am dealing with at the moment. Many times the students will come to our SRO because they do not want to get a school administrator involved. The students know if they come to me I may have to action on it. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Principal Law explained it by stating:

The SRO receives his guidelines from the Sheriff's Office and the umbrella. The SRO and I sit down together and I explain to him what I need to be done and then he tells me what they need me to do for them. If necessary we involve supervisors to be sure we are not overstepping boundaries. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Middle school students are more likely to test the presence of authority. The ideal middle school SRO has a double role to fill in that they have to be tough, fair, and firm. But they also have to be flexible and practice leniency when needed. The SRO demonstrates firm authority when patrolling the school campus and providing security in the hallways. But in a less intrusive way, the SRO conveys the same authority in a more subtle way by building trust and rapport with them.

Maintain Communication with School Administrators

There is a significant benefit obtained from the continuous interaction between the SRO and the school administrators. This benefit includes the school administrators developing an increased understanding of law and police procedures and further developing a level of trust that can prove invaluable in the event of a crisis. This requires

SROs to become acquainted with school procedures, collaborative relationship building, and developing a broader understanding of community concerns. The data supported the fact that the SROs and the school administrators recognized the importance of maintaining open communication with each other.

Atkinson and Kipper (2004) provided these guidelines:

The guidelines for providing ongoing communication include the following: (1) Good communications between the officer and the administration of the school is essential in providing a safe learning environment, (2) The School Resource Officer assigned to a school is considered a member of the school's staff and should attend all meetings, contributing their knowledge and expertise toward the solution of matters affecting the operation of the school, (3) The School Resource Officer should schedule 10 to 15 minute conferences daily with the school principal and administrators to keep them abreast of police related matters and to receive input and any advice in dealing with such matters, (4) Every officer should earn the trust and confidence of the school administration, and (5) The officer's presence should not affect administrative responsibilities. (p. 51)

The SRO's door was always open and available for the school administrator to come in and discuss issues. If the officer was not in the office, the SRO could be reached by two way radio (Field Notes, May 4, 2006).

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Rhyne recorded:

3 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis documented:

4 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

6 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks documented:

2 occurrences of working closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures and consulting with school administrators in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

The following interview quotes supported this theme:

If the school administrators have a good relationship with the SROs then the school functions best. If there is animosity between the school administrator and the SRO and the SRO is feeling like they are only needed to talk to the students. The administrators know their school inside and out, they know where the SRO needs to be and they know their problem areas. It is essential that constant communication be a part of the established SRO program at every school site. (Officer Lewis, Interview, May 3, 2006)

I have specific guidelines for developing Crisis Plans that come from the sheriff's department. I come back and sit down with the school administrators. I ask them how I can make their school safer. I make recommendations based on my expertise and they

respond to the recommendations. It is a compromise when decisions are made. (Officer Jacobs, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I think rapport is important when establishing communication with the school administrators. It is just human nature for some personalities to clash and it is really important for this to not happen. I think if both parties are satisfied then the results are going to be better and the SRO program benefits because there is happiness and fulfillment. It is nice to have that relationship between the school administrators and the SRO. (Officer Rhyne, Interview, May 4, 2006)

I help coordinate the crisis plan. I review it and add information as needed. The school administrators and I have open communication to discuss potential problems and modify the plan as needed. (Officer Parks, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The SRO is part of my staff. He helps with our Crisis Plans, evacuation plans, traffic control, and developing relationships. His job is to help me do my job better. I am constantly seeking his advice on security items. (Principal Law, Interview, May 4, 2006)

We meet with our SRO at the beginning of the school year to talk about things that we would like to do. We have now included him in our School Improvement Plan. We wrote goals that included our SRO. We had some things that we needed him to be doing and he has the expertise to do this. We had some behavioral issues and safety issues that we needed him to address. (Assistant Principal Greene, Interview, May 2, 2006)

We use our SRO for our crisis management plans as needed. As situations arise we will debrief each other about how we should handle things in the future. We have had a bomb threat and needed to evacuate, the SRO came to us and told us how it had been done in the past, we discuss any new special circumstances and together we work out a plan. (Principal Dailey, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The whole complexion of working with middle school students can offer school administrators and SROs unpredictable situations. Just the nature of working with students in that age range can produce an inconsistency in behaviors, emotions, and

reactions. With this said it is essential that school administrators and SROs maintain communication at all times during the school day. These inconsistencies could force a change in plans and communication is essential to facilitate this change.

Above and Beyond

Each school administrator provided evidence of the SRO assigned to their school going “above and beyond” the required roles and responsibilities. The SROs did not reveal any information for this topic, but the school administrators were very eager to provide examples. I felt it was important to note these incidents to help document the commitment the SROs have to the schools in which they are assigned

The school administrators provided the following examples:

In the mornings, our SRO helps us deal with the kids that are experiencing some separation anxiety, if a counselor is not available, our SRO will go and help. A new family that is dealing with that now will ask for the SRO to help with their child. (Assistant Principal Brown, Interview, May 3, 2006)

We had a parent come to school one day and it was revealed that this parent was struggling with an illness, having a hard time financially and had no money. I saw our SRO reach into his own pocket and give this parent some money. (Principal Gregory, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I have observed our SRO tutoring a child each morning before school starts. (Assistant Principal Moore, Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Lewis provided this example:

I have heard of one SRO that came in on an off day to help one of the schools build a garden in the back of the school. This required them to take the day off and use their own truck to help load and unload mulch. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

Officer Rhyne recorded:

- 4 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 9 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 4 incidents for making referrals to community agencies. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis documented:

- 3 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 6 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 2 incidents for making referrals to community agencies. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

- 9 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention
- 5 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 3 incidents for making referrals to community agencies. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks documented:

- 6 incidents of providing individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention

- 4 incidents of serving as a resource for teachers, parents, and students
- 3 incidents for making referrals to community agencies.
(SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

During the observations, the SROs were performing various duties, including fixing computers, tutoring a student, consoling a crying student, and spending quality time with any available student (Field Notes May 1, 2, and 3, 2006).

Dedicated to Safety

Before any meaningful educational programs can be effective, students must feel safe. One without the other hinders the teaching and learning process. According to Atkinson and Kipper (2004), the stated purpose of the SRO program is to provide a safe school environment that is conducive to learning.

Both the school administrator and the SRO have a pressing interest in and also a responsibility for the safety on the school campus. School administrators operate under *in loco parentis*, which is assuming the rights and responsibilities of the parents of the children while in school. While working in the school setting, the SRO operates under the sworn oath, “to serve and to protect.” This provides the SROs an opportunity to extend responsibilities for public safety into the school setting.

The SRO Weekly Activity Logs (see Chapter 3, Data Collection) documented the following:

- 10 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities
- 10 incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed

- 2 incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Jacobs recorded:

Eight incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities, six incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed, and one incident of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Lewis provided the following

Six incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities, four incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed, and two incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

Officer Parks recorded the following:

Seven incidents of assisting school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities, four incidents of taking law enforcement action as needed, and one incident of assisting school administrators with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations. (SRO Weekly Log, May 1-12, 2006)

The following interviews provided documentation to support this dedication to safety:

When the SRO comes to work they need to have the sense of taking care of their own home and it is their kids they are taking care of. When I walk through that door, these are my babies that I am taking care of and these teachers are my friends and this is my family. I am going to do what I have to do to protect them. (Officer Lewis, Interview, May 3, 2006)

I let people see me and let them know that I am around. I want kids seeing me in the hallways. I monitor them with the cameras in the hallway, I visit them in the classrooms, and I check the

restrooms. During lunch I eat with the kids and talk to the teachers. I am seen all around the school building and in the parking lots. I try to maintain order in the afternoon by directing traffic between the buses and cars. (Officer Jacobs, Interview, May 2, 2006)

I help to create a safe and orderly school environment by being aware and being seen throughout the school. I try to get out during lunch to spend time with the students and staff. (Officer Parks, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The SRO Program Guide confirmed this by stating:

For a number of years schools have prepared to deal with crisis situations at both the school district and school campus level. Inclusion of a law enforcement presence strengthens the capacity of the school and community to deal effectively with crises which arise within the school community. Law enforcement officers are community crisis responders with specific training to address the crisis situation; they are crisis management experts by trade (p.1).

The following verbatim quotes supported this theme:

Our SRO is visible, has an outgoing personality, and non-threatening presence. The SRO is available for all of our dances, ballgames, and after-school activities. (Assistant Principal Brown, Interview, May 3, 2006)

Our SROs car is visible at all times. This serves as a deterrent for any outsider to come in and cause problems. Visibility is the key for establishing a safe and secure school environment. (Assistant Principal Blair, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The presence of the SRO helps to maintain order. Our SRO patrols the halls on his own initiative. He is out when classes are changing and he has not set pattern to his patrol. I have tried to suggest he establish a pattern and he responds that his effectiveness is determined by not establishing a routine or a pattern to his visibility. (Assistant Principal Moore, Interview, May 4, 2006)

School as a “Community”

A “community” school has members that come together in a designated setting on a daily basis for a set period of time. This process relies on its members having insight and expertise to make the necessary contributions to the problem-solving process. In order to create an effective problem-solving relationship there must be a development of trust and the presence of a shared vision.

Atkinson and Kipper (2004) provided this explanation:

The school is simply an extension of the overall community. Crime that affects the community has an impact on schools, while offenses occurring on school property also affect the community. The presence of law enforcement representation within the school community provides for a consistent approach to community public safety. In addition, it provides a model application of community policing principles (p. 1).

The interviews elaborated on this by providing the following analogies for the SRO creating a sense of community with the school setting:

Officer Lewis stated:

When the SRO comes to work they need to have the sense of taking care of their own home and it is their kids they are taking care. When I walk through that door these are my babies that I am taking care of and these teachers are my friends. This is my family and I am going to do what I have to do to protect them. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Jacobs said:

When I am working in the school I believe I have an obligation to provide the students and staff the safest school environment that I can. I feel that I am very much part of the school staff and I have a duty to ensure their safety while they are at school. We are a small community within the larger community. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Rhyne added:

I am here to help enforce the rules of the school community and also enforce the laws of the community. The school is a community within a community. I have an obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for both communities. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Officer Parks further added:

I help to create a sense of community by being visible. I get out and talk to the kids during lunch and when classes change. My office is in front as you enter the building and I am also in the main office. Parents see me and know there is an SRO here today. My car is visible out front. I am very much part of this school community. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

The following verbatim quotes supported this theme:

The school administrator is the mayor of the school and the SRO is the chief of police and so anything that the mayor needs done can be assigned to the chief of police. (Assistant Principal Moore, Interview, May 4, 2006)

The principal is sort of the mayor of the town the police chief is your SRO and you work together to solve problems and to create community within your school. We do not operate separately of one another until it gets to a point that the SRO has a job to do and has certain guidelines from the sheriff's department to follow. (Principal Gregory, Interview, May 2, 2006)

Our SRO will come to school activities even when he is not assigned to come. He will come in and mingle with the students and the community. He does patrol and often asks for this area. He responds to calls and sometimes he is familiar with the circumstances and can offer assistance based on that prior knowledge. When he is on patrol, he sees kids playing and he stops to talk to them. This serves to combine the school setting with their home setting and provides a common link. (Principal Law, Interview, May 4, 2006)

Atkinson and Kipper summed it up by stating:

Imagine a community within a city or county that did not have policing resources assigned to it every day. While families leave their homes each day to go to work and school, police officers patrol their neighborhoods in an effort to protect their property. At the same time these neighborhoods are being patrolled, most secondary schools house more citizens at any given moment than any other public setting in our localities. To not have police resources routinely assigned to the school setting is to leave without protection the most populous community – our schools⁶ (p. 6)

Summary of Similarities

When answering the research question, “What are the similarities in the officers’ and administrators’ perceptions of the SROs’ role?”, data revealed that the SROs served as a Law Enforcement Resource by acting as a (1) Public Safety Specialist, (2) Community Liaison and Problem Solver, (3) Law Related Educator, and (4) Positive Role Model. The data from this research indicated that although there was the presence of two separately trained individuals, there were similarities in the perceptions and roles could be defined based on these perceptions. Collaboration could be established based on similar beliefs, missions, and goals.

Research Question #4: Barriers to Performing Duties

The last research question attempts to identify barriers that may inhibit the SRO from completing tasks requested by the school administrators. The data from the interviews, documents, and field notes of the 12 participants documented events, behaviors, and opinions that served to answer research question #4: “What barriers impede the SROs’ ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities?” These barriers

were initially recorded as: (1) school regulations not aligned with police policies (2) obligations to act on shared information, (3) unclear expectations, (4) lack of training and uncertainty for assigning duties, (5) conduct violations vs. criminal acts, (6) serve as an administrator, (7) confusion about allowable duties, (8) threat of arrest vs. imposing disciplinary actions, (9) creates an inconsistent response to crises, (10) responds to community calls, (11) shortage of available officers in the county, (12) unfamiliar with school policies, (13) misunderstanding of the SRO program, (14) preoccupied with internal procedures, (15) conflicting policies, and (16) lack of knowledge on school procedures. To better analyze the data and answer this research question I grouped these codes into broader themes. These themes are: (1) Limits of Authority, (2) Role Conflict, (3) Time on Campus. These themes were supported by the following data sources interviews, documents, and observations. In the sections to follow I will provide supporting data for each of these themes.

Limits of Authority

The data provided the following information to help identify the limit of authority. These include (1) school regulations are not aligned with the police policies, (2) obligations to act when information is shared with the SRO, (3) unclear expectations, and (4) lack of training and uncertainty for assigning duties.

According to Officer Rhyne:

My first couple of years, I was unsure of what I was doing. I felt I was constantly picking up the phone and asking for assistance. Now the way I understand it is that I am basically school support.
(Interview, May 4, 2006)

According to Officer Lewis:

We are limited in how we discipline these students. We are not to be involved in the questioning, especially if it involves a legal matter. We are limited on the search and seizure process too. The school administrators have the authority to search at any time. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Jacobs said:

The two different policies present us with challenged as disciplining students. We cannot be involved in the questioning of a student if legal action could be a result. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Parks added:

We have to be cautious about student's rights and how they apply to law enforcement. There are so many differences in school administrator's and SROs' discipline procedure discipline. (Interview, May5, 2006)

According to Atkinson and Kipper (2004):

An important first step in establishing the law enforcement responsibilities is to differentiate what incidents constitute crimes and what incidents are school conduct violations. Some incidents may be conduct violations but not criminal violations; virtually all criminal incidents will also be school conduct violations. The SRO should take the lead on criminal violations; educators should take the lead on school conduct violations. (p. 30)

The interviews provided the following information:

We do not have set guidelines of what is expected of us other than to handle anything that is a criminal matter. (Officer Parks, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The SROs have different standards when dealing with criminal acts. (Assistant Principal Moore, Interview, May 4, 2006)

The SRO has a good relationship with teachers. Sometimes he has to discuss with them about probable cause because they want to

pull him to deal with a student acting up in class. He walks a fine line, he explains to the teachers he can talk to them but by talking to them it cannot lead to a discipline matter or charges filed. (Principal Law, Interview, May 4, 2006)

When questioning a student, there is a fine line there for the SRO to follow. If the principal or school personnel are doing the search or they are doing the questioning about an incident, then the SRO can be present but cannot be a part of the questioning. And if the SRO is viewed as an intimidating presence, then you as an administrator and SRO have crossed that line. (Principal Dailey, Interview, May 5, 2006)

The role of the SRO requires them to work under two separate governing policies. They are employees of the sheriff's department but are assigned to work in a building that is managed by a school administrator. It is possibly and highly likely that the SRO could receive orders that conflict with different policies. The SRO then has to work out a compromise that does not conflict with either set of policies.

Role Conflict

Schools and law enforcement agencies have often times been at odds. According to Holden (2000), tension between public schools and justice agencies is an ongoing problem that cannot be overlooked. The roots of the conflict are found in the competing philosophies of the separate entities. One of the interventions of the juvenile system is to get troubled students back into school and this is a contradiction in the beliefs of many school administrators, which is to remove problem students from the school setting. The juvenile system has the belief that providing inclusion with other stable students offers a possibility solution to the problem. Schools on the other hand have an obligation to the larger number of students. Sometimes this process is viewed as

possible sacrificing the entire group for one individual that has already shown an unwillingness to conform to the school's social environment.

The interviews provided the following support for this theme:

According to Officer Lewis:

The school administrators are trying to establish their place in life and find where they are needed. They are trying to find out what needs to be done and they may come into the position with a preconceived notion of what an SRO is supposed to be doing. Rather than sitting down with the SRO and asking for role clarifications, they come in and assign responsibilities. Sometimes the school administrator needs to understand some things we cannot do. It is not that we do not want to do them, but policies prevent us from doing them. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

According to Officer Parks:

If the principal has something for me to do and I cannot do it, I will tell him. I explain to the school administrator my rules and regulations and we try to work out a compromise that will work. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

These school administrator interviews revealed the following information:

The only part of assigning the SRO specific duties would be if it was contrary to what he was allowed to do. I am talking about probable cause and reasonable suspicion. I expect the SRO to help me in this regard. The SRO is not an assistant principal to deal with the normal discipline in our school. (Principal Law, Interview, May 4, 2006)

There is a fine line when it comes to the questioning of students. The SRO cannot be present if the principal is doing the questioning. If the principal or school personnel are doing any searches or they are doing the questioning involving an incident, then the SRO can be present but he cannot be a part of the questioning. If that SRO is seen as an intimidating presence then you have crossed that line. (Principal Dailey, Interview, May 5, 2006)

In recent years there were issues with the school administrators having the authority to assign duties to the SRO. Those experiences have impressed upon me that, while the SRO is open to requests and suggestions, the SRO is ultimately not my employee. Our working relationship has been such that in past events when I have requested something that conflicts with departmental orders, then the SRO lets me know. (Assistant Principal Greene, Interview, May 2, 2006)

The SRO presence is allowed when a student is being questioned as long as the SRO is conducting the questioning (Field Notes, May 3, 2006). SROs are not present for searches, school administrators can search without reasonable suspicion (Field Notes, May 5, 2006).

Time on Campus

The SROs assigned to schools are still employees of the River County Sheriff's Department and when they are needed on patrol they are called and removed from the school campus. They could be gone for a short time or for the rest of the school day. If there is a crisis at another school location, then they are all called to respond and assist with the situation.

Officer Lewis said:

Our first priority is to the Sheriff's Department because we work for them and not the school system so our priority is to respond to the Sheriff's orders. If he needs us on the road we have to leave the school and respond. (Interview, May 3, 2006)

Officer Parks added:

Sometimes the school administrators have a hard time with us being gone. This is not an issue with the Sheriff's office or the SRO, but rather they have come to depend on the SRO and the idea of them not being there is scary. (Interview, May 5, 2006)

Officer Jacobs stated:

My first obligation is to the sheriff's department and if I am needed on patrol to handle a crisis within the county, I have to respond. I check with the school administrators about leaving the school campus to ensure everything is secure with them and then I answer the call. (Interview, May 2, 2006)

Officer Rhyne said:

I have an obligation to the sheriff's office to respond as needed to any calls coming in during the school day. If I am called to respond I have to leave the school campus and answer the call. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Interviews provided the following:

It is difficult to create relationships and establish routines when the SROs are called out by the Sheriff's Department on such short notice. (Principal Dailey. Interview, May 5, 2006)

The SROs do work for the Sheriff's Department and not the school system, so their first priority is to the safety and security of the community and they are on call to respond to any emergencies whether they are on school campus or not. This could mean they are pulled off campus to answer calls as needed. (Assistant Principal Blair, Interview, May 5, 2006)

It is my understanding that the SROs are employees of the sheriff's department and they answer to them first and foremost. (Assistant Principal Greene, Interview, May 2, 2006)

According to Atkinson and Kipper (2004):

School Resource Officers are, first of all, sworn law-enforcement officers. Their central mission is to keep order on campus with the legal authority to arrest, if necessary. Order is necessary for learning to occur. When necessary, the School Resource Officer has the ability to intervene as a law-enforcement officer. (p. 30)

An SRO received a call and had to leave the school and assumed the role of patrol officer (Field Notes, May 4, 2006). Bomb threats at other county schools forced the SROs to leave assigned school and respond and assist as needed (Field Notes, May 3, 2006).

Summary of Barriers to Performing Duties

When answering the research question, “What barriers impede the SROs’ ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities?” data revealed that the barriers included (1) Limits of Authority, (2) Role Conflict, and (3) Time on Campus. The data from this research indicated that the SROs and school administrators were cautious to address issues due to the fact that the resulting action needed to comply with two very distinct sets of policies and procedures. Having an SRO on the school campus provided someone to handle situations that could not be handled by the school administrator, but at the same time it also created a sense of role confusion and hesitancy to act which could be critical in an emergency situation.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Chapter Introduction

I began my research for developing an understanding for the roles of an SRO in the middle school setting by establishing a specific purpose for the study. This purpose was to develop an understanding of the role of the SRO in a middle school setting based on the perceptions of four principals, four assistant principals, and four SROs assigned to four selected rural middle schools in the River County School District, located in Eastern Tennessee. Additionally this study was designed to identify any similarities in these perceptions. And finally this study was designed to identify barriers that impede the SROs' ability to execute certain duties and responsibilities.

I designed this research using the work of Atkinson (2000) as a framework. Atkinson adapted the Correlates of Effective Schools and identified appropriate roles for the SROs. Violence is a major concern for all school stakeholders. It is essential that school administrators effectively utilize the SROs in order to assure a safe and secure school environment that enhances learning. I gathered data from four SROs, four assistant principals, and four principals all assigned to the four selected rural middle schools in one school district in Eastern Tennessee.

When I asked myself why school administrators might have an unclear understanding of roles of the SRO, the first answer that I came up with is that when I assumed the role of a school administrator I lacked a sufficient understanding of the roles for a middle school SRO. Data from this study indicated that there are other school

administrators that also lack a full understanding of the roles for an SRO. Furthermore, the data from this research indicated the extent to which the school administrators and SROs have an understanding of the role for the SRO in the school setting. This study further identified barriers that impede the SRO from fulfilling duties and responsibilities assigned by the school administrators.

Conclusions

There are three major conclusions that we can be derived from this study of understanding SRO's roles and identifying barriers that impede them from performing specific duties. First, the roles associated with the SRO are very complex and limited by conflicting policies of two separate governing entities. Second, the roles of the SRO are designed to provide a safe and secure school environment. Finally, there are barriers present that may impede the SRO in carrying out certain duties and responsibilities.

Complex Roles and Two Separate Policies

The first conclusion that can be made from this study is that the roles associated with the SRO are very complex limited by conflicting policies of two separate governing entities. The River County School Board has set discipline policies and procedures for the school administrator and the River County Sheriff's Department has established policies and procedures for the SRO to enforce laws. The two policies are different and mandate appropriate actions for specific situations. The school administrators have to exercise caution in that they do not ask the SRO to do something that is in violation of the SROs' policies and procedures. This is especially true if criminal or legal charges are imminent.

What I found coincided with literature that stated that in order for the SRO to be effective there must be a clear understanding of the SRO roles and a further understanding of the limitations associated with complying with two separate policies (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson, 2002; Atkinson & Kipper, 2004; Bond, 2001; Dorn, 2002; Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998; Garrett, 2001, and Humphrey, 2001). The theoretical framework for this study comes from the work of Atkinson (2000), which further expands these characteristics to include specific duties and responsibilities the SRO should complete in order to assist the school in achieving this end. With each duty and responsibility, Atkinson identified the SRO's behaviors or roles necessary to accomplish these expectations. This study identified the following roles for an SRO serving as a law-enforcement resource (1) being a public safety specialist, (2) serving as a community liaison and problem solver, (3) providing classroom instruction as a law related educator, and (4) being a positive role model for the staff and the students.

Lack of Understanding Could Impact Effectiveness and Impede Implementation

The second conclusion that can be made from this study is that a lack of understanding for the SRO roles can have seriously impact the effectiveness of the SRO in the school setting and further impact implementation of a successful SRO program. What I found coincided with literature which supported the importance for creating a safe and secure learning environment so teachers can teach and students can learn. According to Dorn (2002), an active SRO program can improve grades and reduce truancy among students. This program can also help reduce stress, absenteeism, and turnover among

staff. As these SROs are placed in the school building an increasing number of specific challenges are to be expected.

This study identified the following roles necessary for an SRO to provide a safe and secure school environment (1) create a sense of shared ownership for the safety of the school, (2) increase the positive attitude for the presence of an SRO, (3) adequately detect high-behavior to possibly avoid crisis situations, and (4) establish a collaborative relationship with school administrators. These identified roles need to be discussed by the SROs and the school administrators who share the responsibility of keeping children safe. Each school system and sheriff's department must make decisions regarding the actual role for the SRO to ensure the optimal effectiveness to achieve a safe and secure school learning environment.

Barriers

The third conclusion that can be made from this study is that although there is a sense of commonality among the SROs and the school administrators, there are barriers present that can prevent duties and responsibilities from being executed. This study identified the following barriers (1) the SRO has limited authority to perform certain duties; (2) there is presence of a role conflict created by the presence of two governing policies for the SRO to follow; and (3) because the SROs' first obligation is the sheriff's department, they are sometimes forced to work patrol, which pulls them from the school campus. These barriers present a problem not easily addressed. They present the SRO and the school administrator procedural issues and could decrease the time that is available for communication and relationship building. These are two essential

components for a successful SRO program in the school setting and until some of these barriers are addressed, the program will not be allowed to operate at its optimal level.

Implications

The River County SRO Program is a collaborative and innovative effort by the River County School District and the River County Sheriff's Department. This relationship has sought to implement preventative measures designed to reduce the incidence and severity of violent acts on the school campus.

This study was able to clarify how the SRO program works and to define exactly how the SRO is utilized in four middle schools in rural, east Tennessee.

Officer Rhyne the SRO at Cherokee Middle School summed it up best by stating:

The ultimate goal of a SRO is to be a friend. That is what they need someone they can lean on and be there for them. Be a positive role model for students because there are not a lot of role models out there today. This also helps to build relationships with the community. I can see how this program affects how students go out into society and become adults. I know a couple of officers that were DARE students in school and now they are SROs. This is our society that we are shaping and molding right now and if we can reach them and help to teach them some morals and values, maybe when they get out and become an adult they will be productive and it will be better for the community. If we can reach one child it will be all worth it. (Interview, May 4, 2006)

Recommendations

Based on evidence presented in this study, I suggest the following for school administrators and SROs to aid in the understanding of SRO roles and ultimately improve the school resource officer program.

1. The training for SROs needs to be expanded to include issues related to school policies and procedures,
2. The training for school administrators needs to be expanded to include new information related to legal issues that could impact school decisions.
3. School administrators and SROs must work together to create a common understanding of roles and expectations. Principals must express their needs to the SRO and work collaboratively to design a plan for the SRO to meet those needs.
4. There must be clear and consistent communication concerning the SROs position in the school community along with a description of the specific roles necessary for the SRO working in the school community.
5. School administrators need training to include specifics of the School Resource Officer Program and suggestions for working collaboratively to create a common understanding of the SRO's roles.

In River County, SROs receive training before being assigned to the schools.

School administrators receive no training. School administrators and SROs would benefit from joint training opportunities. This training should include issues related to school policies and procedures and law-related issues not addressed in school policies. This training should be sustained throughout the school year to allow school administrators and SROs throughout the county to meet and discuss potential problems and brainstorm solutions.

Areas for Future Research

According to Elliott, Hamburg, and Williams (1998), the fear and trauma in the nation's schools is having an impact on the entire school context and all students in these contexts: on teaching practices; children's readiness and capacity for learning; hiring and retention of teachers, administrators, and other school staff; the openness and accessibility of the campus; student rights to privacy; the physical building and grounds; and the quality of the learning environment more generally. While the findings from this study address some of these issues and are useful for implementing and improving the SRO program in River County, they are not generalizable. Studies in other locations may not produce similar results. Some of the factors that make these results unique include the school demographics, the culture of the community, and professional experience of the school administrators and the SROs. River County is a large rural school system. It would be interesting to know if the size or location of a system would have any impact on the perceptions. Also, there is a significant difference in the results of mandated test, percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches, and transient rates among the four middle schools selected for this study. It would be interesting to determine if these factors would affect the perceptions.

In the present study I developed an understanding of the SROs' roles based on the perceptions of SROs and school administrators. I wonder how perceptions from other stakeholder groups, including teachers, parents, community leaders, and students, would compare to the perceptions revealed in this study. It is possible that these perceptions would be different based on the possible difference in expectations and priorities.

This study was designed to research how certain roles and responsibilities of the SRO are beneficial in the school setting. However, it was not designed to determine to what extent the presence of an SRO actually reduces the incidents or severity of crime among students. Further research is needed to determine the long-term effect the SRO program has on school violence prevention programs by possibly comparing the frequencies of suspensions and violent incidents from year to year.

This study developed an understanding of SRO roles based on perceptions provided by school administrators and SROs. As the No Child Left Behind legislation is bringing accountability to the forefront, there is a need to research what impacts the creation a safe and secure school environment has on student achievement.

The River County SRO program is funded by Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants and funding by the local sheriff's department. This leaves this program vulnerable to possible budget cuts and political agendas. It would be interesting to see if there is any difference in the level of safety and security in a school with an SRO as opposed to a school that has an SRO.

Closing Thoughts

I was a young and inexperienced school administrator during the time that the concern for school violence was at an all time high. In order to protect our schools the school district and local sheriff's department placed SROs in the schools with little or no training for their specific roles. This journey began seven years ago when I was a new assistant principal in a K-8 school setting. I knew very little about law enforcement procedures. I did know that it was essential to provide a safe and secure school

environment. It was even more critical because of the range of ages present in a K-8 school. Having grades 6-8 in a school presents many different behaviors not usually associated with a K-5 setting. These behaviors included frequent fights and inappropriate language that were witnessed by younger students. I felt compelled to address and attempt to change these behaviors and had to rely on assistance from the SRO.

Along this learning continuum, I experienced the limitations of a law enforcement officer in the school setting by trial and error. I read safety journals, attended law enforcement conferences, and asked many questions to acquire the knowledge necessary to successfully implement and utilize a SRO within my K-8 school. Over the years, my school converted to a K-5 configuration. This new grade arrangement offered me a decrease in the incidents of violent behaviors, but presented me with a new set of challenges associated with working with younger children. Some of these new challenges consisted of separation anxiety, increased number of parents on the school campus, hostile custody issues and restraining orders, and the increased presence of children living in neglectful situations.

It was during these formative years that I discovered that having an effective SRO partnership could provide me a different perspective on situations and also offer me a variety of solutions not possible within the school system. I tapped this resource, but I felt my lack of law enforcement knowledge hampered my ability to fully implement and utilize the SRO. Based on comments from other school administrators, my lack of knowledge is not unique. It is based on this that I realized the critical need to establish an understanding for the roles of a SRO in a school setting. There is a serious lack of

literature that addresses this issue, which limits the opportunities for school administrators to acquire necessary knowledge about law enforcement issues.

What I wanted to know when I began this study was how SROs are utilized in the middle school setting. I wanted to examine the activities, behaviors, and benefits of an SRO. Next, I further wanted to compare the perceptions revealed by the SROs with the perceptions revealed by the school administrators to identify any similarities in the perceived role for the SROs. Finally, I wanted to identify any barriers that might prevent the implementation of a quality program. Until school administrators have an adequate knowledge of crime prevention and intervention, their understanding of SRO roles will be limited. Consequently, the use of the SRO and their effectiveness will be minimized. Since school administrators are the school leaders, they control whether the SRO program is fully implemented or is merely utilized for law enforcement matters. These school administrators also have influence on the SROs' sense of belonging within the school setting and their level of job satisfaction. School administrators and SROs need training on what the officers are expected to do and how the schools can successfully utilize this resource. There is also a need to communicate expectations. This is a relationship with shared responsibilities, but the reality is that the SROs are working in school administrators' buildings. It is essential that the principals and SROs have a clear understanding of each others roles in order jointly lead the way to providing a safe and secure school setting.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

History of Violent School Incidents 1996 – 2006

February 2, 1996: Moses Lake, Washington

A 14 year-old shoots a teacher and two students with a rifle.

February 19, 1997: Bethel, Alaska

A 16 year-old shoots and kills his principal and a student. Two other students are injured.

October 1, 1997: Pearl, Mississippi

A 16 year-old kills his mother, then goes to school and shoots nine others. Two die.

December 1, 1997: West Paducah, Kentucky

A 14 year-old shoots eight students as they pray in school. Three die and one student is left paralyzed.

December 15, 1997: Stamps, Arkansas

An eighth grader is arrested and charged as an adult after he confessed to shooting and wounding two of his fellow students as he hid in the woods outside of a high school.

March 24, 1998: Jonesboro, Arkansas

Two boys, aged 11 and 13, shoot fourteen students and one teacher. The teacher and four of the students die.

April 24, 1998: Edinboro, Pennsylvania

A 14 year-old student shoots a teacher to death at a graduation dance.

May 19, 1998: Fayetteville, Tennessee

An 18 year-old shoots and kills a classmate just three days before graduation.

May 21, 1998: Houston, Texas

A 17 year-old student's gun goes off accidentally in his backpack. One girl is shot and wounded.

May 21, 1998: Springfield, Oregon

A 15 year-old shoots and kills both parents before going to school and opening fire in the cafeteria. Two students are killed.

June 6, 1998: Columbia, South Carolina

A 14 year-old student is arrested after a school shooting that wounded a teacher and elderly volunteer aide.

June 15, 1998: Richmond, Virginia

A 14 year-old student is charged as an adult for opening fire in a crowded high school hallway wounding a 45 year-old social studies teacher and a 74 year-old volunteer.

April 20, 1999: Littleton, Colorado

Two boys, aged 16 and 17, shoot 35 students and one teacher before committing suicide. Twelve students and the teacher die.

April 28, 1999: Taber, Alberta, Canada

A fourteen year-old opens fire at Myers High School

May 20, 1999: Conyers, Georgia

A 15 year-old wounds six classmates. They all survive.

September 29, 1999: East Point, Georgia

A 44-year-old school police officer died after breaking up a high school fight.

October 4, 1999: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A 17 year-old shoots and wounds an assistant principal.

October 26, 1999: Houston, Texas

A 13-year-old student was stabbed in the head with a screwdriver during a gang-related fight at a middle school. He later died from his injuries.

November 1, 1999: Cleveland, Ohio

Authorities uncover a school violence plot involving guns and explosives.

November 17, 1999: Springfield, Massachusetts

A 32-year-old classroom aide was kicked in the upper chest while attempting to subdue a disruptive 5th grade student who hit, kicked, and spit on the victim. The aide, died two hours later after being taken to the hospital.

November 19, 1999: Deming, New Mexico

A 12 year-old shoots a classmate in the back of her head. She dies the next day.

November 19, 1999: Palmdale, California

A 13-year-old male student died for injuries related to a fight with a 14 year old classmate.

December 6, 1999: Fort Gibson, Oklahoma

A seventh grader brings a handgun to school and open fire. Four students are wounded.

January 3, 2000: Michigan

A fifteen year-old is sentenced to probation for plotting a Columbine-like massacre.

February 1, 2000: Delaware

A student is arrested for making a cyber threat regarding school violence.

February 4, 2000: Florida

A teenager is held for allegedly planning “another Columbine.”

February 11, 2000: New Jersey

Armed students hold a teacher hostage.

February 29, 2000: Mount Morris Township, Michigan

A six year-old boy brings a .32 semi-automatic handgun to school and kills a first grader.

March 3, 2000: Wyoming

A student is jailed for an alleged bomb threat.

March 10, 2000: Savannah, Georgia

Two students are killed by a 19 year-old student while leaving a Beach High School dance.

May 26, 2000: Lake Worth, Florida

A 13 year-old sent home from school returns with a handgun and kills a teacher.

September 26, 2000: New Orleans, Louisiana

A student fights with another student, goes home, returns with a gun and kills the student he had fought with in the high school gym.

October 24, 2000: Glendale, Arizona

A teenager holds a teacher and 32 students hostage for an hour before surrendering.

January 10, 2000: Oxnard, California

A 17 year-old enters school and takes a girl hostage in an attempt to persuade police to shoot him. After SWAT team arrives, he is shot to death.

January 17, 2001: Baltimore, California

One student is shot and killed in front of Lake Clifton Eastern High School.

March 5, 2001: Santee, California

A 15 year-old opens fire from inside a school bathroom, shooting fifteen and killing two.

March 7, 2001: Williamsport, Pennsylvania

A 14 year-old brings his father's handgun to school and shoots a classmate in the shoulder.

March 22, 2001: El Cajon

Three teens and two teachers at Granite Hills High School are wounded by gunfire.

March 30, 2001: Gary, Indiana

A student is shot in the head while waiting for a class to begin.

January 15, 2002: New York, New York

A teenager wounds two students at Martin Luther King Jr. High.

October 4, 2002: San Antonio, Texas

A 13 year-old female middle school student fatally shoots herself in the left temple with a 9mm handgun in front of a group of friends in the school parking lot.

November 19, 2002: Hoover, Alabama

Two 17 year-old males are reportedly fighting in a hallway when one student pulls a knife and stabs the other to death.

November 22, 2002: Dallas, Texas

A 15 year-old male high school student is shot as he and fellow students try to wrestle a gun away from another 14 year-old student.

December 12, 2002: Seattle, Washington

A 13 year-old male fires a rifle in a middle school, injuring two students with broken glass, and then uses the gun to kill himself.

December 16, 2002: Chicago, Illinois

An 18 year-old male high school student is fatally shot outside of Englewood High School, while trying to protect his sister from two other male students.

January 22, 2003: Providence, Rhode Island

A 12th grade male student is arrested for allegedly firing a .22 caliber gun inside the school cafeteria after an assistant principal had broken up a fight. The shot is fired toward the ceiling and no one is injured.

January 30, 2003: St. Paul, Minnesota

A 14 year-old female middle school student is stabbed in the shoulder and two teenager males are taken into custody following a confrontation at the school.

February 5, 2003: Westminster, Colorado

A 14 year-old male freshman is taken into custody after several shots are fired in a high school courtyard.

March 17, 2003: Guttenberg, Iowa

A 17 year-old walks into his high school principal's office, thanks the principal for listening to his problems, stating that "talking would no longer help," pulls a .22 caliber rifle from underneath his coat, and shoots himself in the stomach.

April 1, 2003: Washington, DC

A 16 year-old male high school student is shot in the leg during a lunchtime argument with another 15 year-old student who flees, but later turns himself into police.

April 16, 2003: Addison, Texas

A 12 year-old female student commits suicide by shooting herself in a private school restroom.

April 23, 2003: Houston, Texas

A 16 year-old male high school student receives a six-to-seven-inch slash wound in the chest during a fight with other students outside his high school during lunch period.

April 24, 2003: Red Lion, Pennsylvania

A 14 year-old male junior high school student shoots and kills his principal inside a crowded cafeteria, and then kills himself with a second gun.

September 24, 2003: Cold Spring, Minnesota

One student is dead and another hospitalized after a shooting in a Minnesota high school. A physical education teacher talks the student into surrendering.

August 3, 2004: Birmingham, Alabama

A 17 year-old boy shoots and kills another boy during a break in band practice.

September 28, 2004: Austin, Texas

Two students are in custody after plotting a "Columbine" shooting at Vista Ridge High School.

October 7, 2004: Marshfield, Massachusetts

A student plans to kill other students including football players and also to blow up the school.

November 22, 2004: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A 16 year-old is shot to death. Three other students are injured.

November 23, 2004: Valparaiso, Indiana.

Five students are stabbed by another student. The student is tackled by teachers and held until police arrived.

December 8, 2004: Charlotte, North Carolina

A 15 year-old student is stabbed by his 14 year-old girlfriend.

December 10, 2004: Spokane, Washington

A 17 year-old boy smuggles a gun into school and shoots himself in the hallway.

December 14, 2004: Haines City, Florida

A 14 year-old student has been charged with shooting a fellow student with a BB gun while on the school bus.

December 17, 2004: Brookville, Ohio

Brookville High School is placed in "lock down" after several shots are fired in front of the school.

December 21, 2004: Jerome, Idaho

A 12 year-old student stabs a fellow student as they walk home from school.

January 4, 2005: Denver, Colorado

A 17-year-old male high school student is stabbed to death in a high school cafeteria fight around 1:30pm. A 16-year-old male student suspect is arrested, according to reports.

January 5, 2005: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

An 18-year-old, non-student male is shot in the head outside of a Philadelphia vocational high school as students are dismissed from school. The victim dies the next day.

January 27, 2005: Highland Falls, New York

A 7-year-old Catholic elementary school student is found stabbed to death in the school's restroom.

February 22, 2005: Hartford, Connecticut

A 15-year-old male honor student is shot and later dies while walking home from a high school basketball game.

February 24, 2005: Long Beach, California

One student is killed and another student shot while walking from their high school around 1:15pm toward an area with a collection of restaurants.

February 26, 2005: Delray Beach, Florida

A police officer reportedly shoots and kills a 16-year-old male outside of a school dance at a secondary school for students with behavior problems. Reports indicate that the male was driving erratically and drove onto campus.

February 28, 2005: Prentiss, Mississippi

A 16-year-old male alternative school student is found shot to death on a street about 3 miles from his school. The superintendent indicates that he had taken the bus to school but never showed up inside the school building.

March 2, 2005: Cumberland City, Tennessee

A 47-year-old female school bus driver is shot and killed around 6:15am while driving a school bus carrying approximately 20 students ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade.

March 16, 2005: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A 16-year-old male 9th grade high school student is shot in the head and torso, and killed in a drive-by shooting while sitting in a Geo Tracker vehicle outside of his school around 2:00pm. Two other students in the car are injured and run into the school after the attack.

March 18, 2005: Los Angeles, California

A 15-year-old female high school student is shot in the head while awaiting a ride home from her aunt near the gates at her high school. The girl later dies.

March 21, 2005: Red Lake, Minnesota

A 16-year-old male high school student allegedly shoots and kills five students, a teacher, a security guard, and himself at his high school. Seven others are reportedly wounded. The student is believed to have killed his grandfather and grandfather's female companion.

September 23, 2005: Sandy Spring, Maryland

A 15-year-old female student was stabbed and dies during a fight between two groups of females in a high school parking lot following a school football game.

September 30, 2005: New York, New York

Four students suffered stab wounds and a 15-year-old male was stabbed to death in a fight with another group of students. The 15 year old died from his injuries.

November 8, 2005: Jacksboro, Tennessee

A 15-year-old male high school student shot and killed an assistant principal. The principal and another assistant principal were also shot and hospitalized.

January 3, 2006: Jersey City, New Jersey

A 10th-grade female student was shot in the buttocks and an 11th-grade male student was shot in the right arm as gunfire erupted during a large fight involving over 40 people outside of a high school around 3:20pm at the school's dismissal. Both victims were taken to the hospital and were reportedly in good condition.

March 10, 2006: Charlotte, North Carolina

Two 15-year-old female high school students got into a fight around 8:45am and one stabbed the other in the stomach, forehead and back of the head

March 10, 2006: Los Angeles, California

A 12-year-old female elementary school student was raped in a restroom around 9:00am by a man with a knife. The male reportedly followed her into a restroom, knocked her to the ground, sexually assaulted her, and then ran from the building.

March 14, 2006: Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Two 15-year-olds and one 13-year-old were arrested in connection with an acid bomb that exploded on a sidewalk outside of a middle school in the morning.

March 22, 2006: Duluth, Georgia

A 6th-grade male middle school student stabbed a 7th-grade middle school student in the back of the head with a 4-inch knife while on the school bus.

March 22, 2006: Reno, Nevada

Eight middle school students were arrested after approaching three other students in a gang-related fight at a middle school. One of the three males was stabbed in the forearm.

March 22, 2006: Crystal City, Texas

A 17-year-old female high school student was stabbed several times by her ex-boyfriend while the two were walking down the hallway. The victim reportedly suffered injuries to her face and body, and one stab wound which punctured her lung.

March 24, 2006: Foley, Alabama

Two male high school students, ages 15 and 16, were arrested and charged with planning to carry out a shooting plot at their high school on the 7th anniversary of the Columbine High School attack this upcoming April 20th.

March 28, 2006: Fircrest, Washington

A kindergarten student was expelled for 10 days after he brought a .22-caliber gun to school.

March 29, 2006: Cleveland, Ohio

Police arrested 15 adults and juveniles outside of a west side high school after four to five carloads of individuals showed up at the school's dismissal and starting scuffling with students. At least 10 police officers responded. Reports stated that conflict stemmed from "neighborhood and school rivalries."

March 30, 2006: Carmel, Indiana

A high school freshman was stabbed in the arm during a fight with another freshman in a high school locker room. The student with the knife fled the area when a teacher broke up the fight but was apprehended outside walking down a path and with a knife in his possession

April 5, 2006: Atco, New Jersey

Four teenagers, ages 14 to 16, were arrested and charged in connection with a plot to kill 25 people in their high school lunchroom on the anniversary of the Columbine attack. Students reported the information to school administrators, who notified police.

April 5, 2006: Buna, Texas

A high school student wrote a 10-name list of "people to kill" on an athletic field house restroom wall. No weapons were found and no one was injured. The student was later arrested.

April 7, 2006: Pierce County, Washington

Three male middle school students, ages 12, 13, and 14, were arrested in connection with a plot where they planned to steal guns, force their school into a lockdown, set fire to the school, and kill an administrator, group of teachers, and "preppy" students. They then planned to blend in with the other students to escape the building and avoid police, with a back-up plan involving stealing a teacher's car to get away. Police were seeking a 14-year-old female who may also have been involved in the plot.

April 11, 2006: Pinellas Park, Florida

Three middle school students, ages 13, 14, and 15, were arrested in connection with a plot to explode acid bombs in an administrative building, in a locker, and by a bus stop. The students had reportedly been expelled from that school.

April 22, 2006: North Pole, Arkansas

Six students were arrested in connection with a reportedly elaborate plot by a group of seventh-graders to shut off power and phone service at their school, and to kill students and faculty members with guns and knives before escaping their small town of about 1,600 people. A parent reportedly notified police of the planned attack.

April 25, 2006: South Plainfield, New Jersey

A fight between two female students escalated into a brawl with over a dozen women, resulting in the arrest of four individuals outside of a high school. An assistant principal who attempted to break up the fight was struck in the back of the head, possibly with an object, and was hospitalized. The incident occurred around 2:15pm.

April 25, 2006: Red Lake, Maine

Extra security was provided and a ninth-grader was reportedly taken into custody amid rumors that a group of students planned an assault upon the school, which was the scene of a school shooting over a year prior.

April 28, 2006: Newhall, California

As many as 50 students were reportedly involved in a racial brawl that resulted in the school being locked down and then later evacuated, with four persons being arrested for failing to disperse. The incident reportedly stemmed from a fight the prior day.

May 2, 2006: Jacksonville, Florida

A middle school male special needs student was arrested and police came near to using a Taser to subdue him after he assaulted several students, kicked a window out of the back of the bus, and kicked out the windshield of the bus.

May 12, 2006: Fayetteville, North Carolina

An elementary school was put on lockdown around 11:00am after police responded to a call for three adults in the building who may have been armed. The subjects were located by police. No weapons were found, but one subject was arrested on a pending warrant. Reports indicate one of the males was chased into the school by another who indicated the one individual had broken into his home earlier in the week.

May 18, 2006: Racine, Wisconsin

A shot was fired into the window of a fourth-grade elementary school class around 12:20pm. No one was injured. No suspects were immediately found.

May 22, 2006: Irmo, South Carolina

A 19-year-old male non-student suspect pulled a 9mm gun and pointed it at a school resource officer in the school parking lot. The officer fired at the suspect, striking the hood of the suspect's vehicle. The suspect dropped the weapon and surrendered. The officer had approached the suspect after a female student reported being in fear of the male shooting her.

May 24, 2006: Baltimore, Maryland

A 12-year-old female student was reportedly stabbed by a 10-year-old female classmate during an altercation in a hallway around 7:40am. The knife was a steak knife with a blade around 6 inches long. The victim was wounded in the left arm, shoulder, and upper-chest. The suspect was arrested and charged. Both students are in 4th-grade in a combined elementary/middle school.

June 5, 2006: Grand Rapids, Minnesota

A 17-year-old male was shot in the leg outside of a middle-school graduation ceremony

June 5, 2006: Los Angeles, California

A 17-year-old male high school student was shot and killed in a high school parking lot as school dismissed around 3:00pm. The victim was reportedly shot by a gang member after two males approached the victim's younger brother, called the name of a gang, and tried to rob the victim's younger brother of his diamond necklace. The victim went to help his brother and was shot in the chest, and died.

June 6, 2006: Indianapolis, Indiana

A police officer was attacked by a group of people at a high school graduation ceremony while he was trying to arrest a woman who had been evicted due to yelling and screaming, and then tried to reenter the school.

July 12, 2006: Los Angeles, California

A 16-year-old female was shot and killed about three blocks from her school after 1:00pm. The female reportedly was with a group of friends. Police say the incident may have been gang-related, although the victim was not in a gang. The victim's brother reportedly told the media that the victim had allegedly warned school police before leaving the school that people had been threatening students in the area with guns.

July 14, 2006: Nashville, Tennessee

A 16-year-old was taken into custody for stabbing a 17-year-old male around 7:00am at their high school summer school session.

August 11, 2006: Paragould, Arkansas

A 15-year-old was taken into custody and later admitted for psychological evaluation for allegedly plotting a school shooting. Weapons belonging to the parents were removed from the child's home for safety reasons.

August 15, 2006: Vine Grove, Kentucky

A 13-year-old male middle school student brought a semi-automatic handgun to school and it accidentally fired while he was showing it off in the classroom. No one was injured.

August 16, 2006: Dallas County, Texas

A 9-year-old elementary school student took home a metal can with dark powder instead which was found to be an explosive. The male reportedly had been given it by another student. Police detonated the can.

August 20, 2006: Durham, North Carolina

A male shot out the door glass at an elementary school and walked around the building with a 12-gauge shotgun balanced on his shoulder while the school was closed on a Sunday. The 43-year-old male suspect was subsequently arrested later in the week.

August 21, 2006: Louisville, Kentucky

A middle school female school security officer was taken to the hospital after a surprise attack in the hallway by a sixth-grade female who pushed her against the wall where the officer hit her head, fell to the ground, and continued to be attacked by the student.

August 22, 2006: North Miami Beach, Florida

A 10th-grader was allegedly stabbed in the shoulder blade by a 12th grader during a morning altercation at their high school. The victim was taken to the hospital.

August 24, 2006: Round Rock, Texas

About 30 police officers responded to a high school brawl outside the school's cafeteria around 2:30pm. Police reportedly used pepper spray during the incident. Multiple arrests were made.

August 25, 2006: Essex, Vermont

A 52-year-old female first-grade teacher was shot through a window by a 27-year-old male who was looking for his ex-girlfriend who also taught at the school.

August 28, 2006: Richmond, California

Two shots were fired into an elementary school classroom where students were taking a test during the first day of school around 12:30pm, with one round going through a wall and into a playground where about 280 students were at recess. No one was injured. The shots reportedly came from a car that was chasing another car in the neighborhood.

August 28, 2006: Memphis, Tennessee

A total of 24 students were arrested after a fight over a girl grew out of control at a high school. Officers at the school eventually had to use pepper spray.

August 29, 2006: Augusta, Georgia

A fight on a school bus between two girls, ages 15 and 16, resulted in the 16-year-old stabbing the 15-year-old seven times.

September 5, 2006: Pritchard, Alabama

A female high school student chased a male high school student into a restroom and stabbed him in the chest after the two "had words," according to the school district's superintendent. The incident occurred about 15 minutes after school dismissal. The two were reportedly boyfriend and girlfriend.

September 7, 2006: Memphis, Tennessee

A teen's hand was grazed by a bullet when three shots were fired from a crowd of spectators during an evening junior high football game. Three suspects were later arrested.

September 7, 2006: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A bullet struck the door of a van carrying four students to the school district's special education center around 7:15am. No one was injured.

September 8, 2006: Ft. Worth, Texas

A 21-year veteran police officer assigned to a high school reportedly discharged his firearm at least one time after approaching a group of individuals, some believed to be gang members, in a fight just outside of the school around 1:20pm. The officer and a school monitor reportedly approached the group and individuals became irate, assaulting the officer as he attempted to detain one of the individuals. One 16-year-old male was said to have been shot in the chest.

September 28, 2006: Bailey, Colorado

An armed standoff at a high school in Bailey, Colorado, ended after three hours Wednesday with a hostage and the gunman dead. The gunman walked into the school and took hostages in a classroom, where he later fatally shot a female student and turned the gun on himself as a SWAT team stormed inside.

September 29, 2006: Cazenovia, Wisconsin

A teenager who pried open his family's gun cabinet brought two weapons to his rural school Friday and shot the principal to death after a struggle with adults and other students, authorities said.

October 2, 2006: Paradise, Pennsylvania

A gunman stormed an Amish school where he tied up female students and shot them in the head to avenge an incident 20 years ago. Four pupils and a teenage classroom aide died and one other student is on life support.

Sources:

National School Safety and Security Services. (1996-2005). *School-related deaths, school shootings, & school violence incidents*. Cleveland, OH. Retrieved May 1, 2005, from http://www.schoolsecurity.org/trends/school_violence04-05.html

National School Safety and Security Services. (2005-2006). *School-related deaths, school shootings, & school violence incidents*. Cleveland, OH. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from http://www.schoolsecurity.org/trends/school_violence05-06.html

National School Safety and Security Services. (2005-2006). *School-related deaths, school shootings, & school violence incidents*. Cleveland, OH. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from http://www.schoolsecurity.org/trends/school_violence06-07.html

Appendix B
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being executed by the below listed entities:

- (1). _____ School District, and the
- (2). _____ Sheriff's Department

Nothing in this MOU should be construed as limiting or impeding the basic spirit of cooperation, which exists between the participating entities, listed above.

I. Purpose

This MOU establishes and delineates the mission of the School Resource Officer Program, herein referred to as the SRO Program, as a joint cooperative effort. Additionally, the MOU formalizes relationships between the participating entities in order to foster an efficient and cohesive program that will build a positive relationship between Police Officers and the youth of our community in addition to reducing crime committed by juveniles and young adults.

II. Mission

The mission of the SRO Program is the reduction and prevention of school-related violence and crime committed by juveniles and young adults. This is accomplished by assigning Police Officers to school facilities on a permanent basis. The SRO Program accomplishes this mission by creating and maintaining safe, secure and orderly learning environments for students, teachers and staff. The SRO will establish a trusting channel of communication with students, parents and teachers. SROs will serve as a positive role model to instill in students good moral standards, good judgment and discretion, respect for other students, and a sincere concern for the school community. SROs will promote citizen awareness of the law to enable students to become better-informed and effective citizens, while empowering students with the knowledge of law enforcement efforts and obligations regarding enforcement as well as consequences for violations of the law. SROs will serve as a confidential source of counseling for students and parents concerning problems they face as well as providing information on community resources available to them. Goals and objectives are designed to develop and enhance rapport between youth, police officers, and school administrators and parents.

Goals of the SRO Program are:

- (1) Reduce incidents of school violence
- (2) Reduction of criminal offenses committed by juveniles and young adults
- (3) Establish rapport with the students
- (4) Establish rapport with parents, faculty, staff, administrators, and other adults.
- (5) Create, start, and expand programs with vision and creativity to increase student participation, which will benefit the students, school district, police department, and the community.

(6) Provide safety for students, faculty, staff, and all persons involved with the school district.

III. Organizational Structure

A. Composition

The SRO Program will consist of full time _____ that are certified Peace Officers for the _____ and meet all requirements as set forth by the _____ Sheriff's Department Rules and Regulations.

B. Supervision

The day-to-day operation and administrative control of the SRO Program will be the responsibility of the _____ Sheriff's Department. Responsibility for the conduct of SRO Personnel, both personally and professionally, shall remain with the _____ County Sheriff's Department. The _____ Sheriff's Department shall retain supervisory personnel to oversee the program.

IV. Procedures

A. Concept

The SRO Program shall utilize the SRO Triad concept as set forth by NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers), which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference). The SRO Triad concept generally means that the officers assigned to the program are Law Enforcement Officer, Counselors, and Teachers. SROs are first and foremost Law Enforcement Officer for the _____ County Sheriff's Department SROs shall be responsible for carrying out all duties and responsibilities of a police officer and shall remain at all times under the control, through the chain of command, of the _____ County Sheriff's Department. All acts of commission or omission shall conform to the guidelines of the _____ County Sheriff's Department General Orders Manual. SROs must realize that they are enforcement officers in regards to CRIMINAL matters only. SROs shall not enforce any "school or house rule". SROs are not school disciplinarians and should not assume this role. SROs report directly to the SRO Sergeant in connection with teaching assignments and normal law enforcement duties. SROs will not involve themselves in administrative matters of the AISD, which are not criminal offenses. SROs are not formal counselors, and will not act as such, however, they are to be used as a resource to assist students, faculty, staff, and all persons involved with the school district. SROs are to be used as teachers. SROs can teach a variety of subjects to students and staff ranging from alcohol and drug education to formalized academy classes. SROs may use teaching to build rapport between the students and the staff.

B. Selection

When a SRO position becomes available, notice will be given to all sworn employees through regular postings. Interested persons shall submit a memorandum to the office of the Sheriff's office. The officer will then be interviewed by a board consisting of police department and school district personnel with the final selection being made by the

Sheriff. The SRO Sergeant will make SRO assignments for a school year with an annual review. Selection criteria will include but will not be limited to:

- (1) Oral Presentation
- (2) Performance Reports
- (3) Experience
- (4) Interpersonal skills

C. Duties and Responsibilities

_____ Sheriff Departments responsibilities of the SRO will include but will not be limited to:

- (1) To enforce criminal law and protect the students, staff, and public at large against criminal activity.
- (2) Provide information concerning questions about law enforcement topics to students and staff
- (3) Provide classroom instruction on a variety of topics including, but not limited to, narcotics, safety, public relations, occupational training, leadership, and life skills.
- (4) Coordinate investigative procedures between police and school administrators.
- (5) Provide counseling on a limited basis to students, staff, and faculty.
- (6) Handle initial police reports of crimes committed on campus.
- (7) Take enforcement action on criminal matters when appropriate.
- (8) Wear an approved police uniform at all times or other apparel approved by the _____ Sheriff's Department.
- (9) Attend school special events as needed.
- (10) Prepare lesson plans as necessary for the instruction provided. Basic responsibilities of the SRO Sergeant will include but will not be limited to:
 - (a) Serve as the liaison between AISD, campus administrators, and the _____ Police Department.
 - (b) Coordinate work assignments of the SROs between various campuses.
 - (c) Coordinate scheduling and work hours of the SROs. (Vacation requests, sick leave, rescheduled time, etc.)
 - (d) Approve police reports written by the SROs for school related offenses at their campuses.
 - (e) Ensure SRO compliance of the police department's general orders.
 - (f) Take enforcement action on criminal matters when appropriate.

D. Enforcement

Although SROs have been placed in a formal educational environment, they are not relieved of the official duties as an enforcement officer. Decisions to intervene normally will be made when it is necessary to prevent any criminal act. Citations should be issued and arrests made when appropriate and in accordance with department policy.

V. School District Responsibilities

The AISD shall provide the SRO of each campus and the SRO Sergeant the following

materials and facilities, which are deemed necessary to the performance of the SROs duties:

- (1) Access to an air-conditioned and properly lighted private office, which shall contain a telephone, which may be used for general business purposes.
- (2) A location for files and records, which can be properly locked and secured.
- (3) A desk with drawers, chair, worktable, filing cabinet, and office supplies.
- (4) Access to a computer and secretarial assistance.
- (5) Access to and encourage classroom participation by the SROs.
- (6) The opportunity for SROs to address teachers and school administrators about the SRO program, goals, and objectives.
- (7) Seek input from the SROs regarding criminal justice problems relating to students.
- (8) Provide SROs the opportunity to address teachers and school administrators about criminal justice problems relating to students during in-service workdays.

Agreed to in cooperation with the _____ School District and the _____ Sheriff's Department.

VI. Cost Considerations

The _____ Sheriff's Department and the _____ School District shall equally share expenses that are not grant related for the SRO salary, and necessary training requirements. The Sheriff's Department will pay any expenses that are strictly police related; in turn the _____ School District will pay any expenses that are strictly school related.

As agreed to and in partnership with:

Sheriff

_____ **Sheriff's Department**

Signature

Date _____

Director of Schools

_____ **School District**

signature

Date _____

Appendix C

River County School District Permission Letter

Dear _____,

My name is Teresa Robinson and I am a doctoral student at The University of Tennessee/Knoxville. I am currently working on my dissertation and need to conduct research in the four middle schools located within your school district. The title of my research project is “Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs.” I am writing to ask permission to conduct this research at Indian Grove Middle School, Indian River Middle School, Sequoyah Middle School, and Cherokee Middle School. My methods of data collection will include interviews with the two school administrators and the one School Resource Officer located at each of the selected school sites. I will also be conducting observations and collecting and reviewing documents to complete the study. The identity of the schools as well as the participants will remain confidential. If you are interested in my results, I will be very glad to share these with you at the completion of this study. Please sign below giving me permission to conduct this research on the campus listed above. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 865-856-6312. I have enclosed a copy of this letter for your records. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Director of Schools’ signature _____

Date _____

Appendix D

River County School Site Permission Letter

Dear _____,

My name is Teresa Robinson and I am a Doctoral student at The University of Tennessee/Knoxville. I am currently working on my dissertation and need to conduct research in the middle school setting. Your school has been chosen as one of the sites to conduct this research study. The title of this study is “Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs.” I am writing to ask permission to conduct this research study at your school.

My methods of data collection will include interviews with the two school administrators and the one School Resource Officer located at each of the selected school sites. I will also be conducting observations and collecting and reviewing documents to complete the study. The identity of the school as well as the participants will remain confidential. If you are interested in my results, I will be very glad to share these with you at the completion of this study.

If you are interested in my results, I will be very glad to share these with you at the completion of this study. Please sign below giving me permission to conduct this research on your school campus. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 865-856-6312. I have enclosed a copy of this letter for your records. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Principal’s signature _____

Date _____

Appendix E

River County Sheriff's Department Permission Letter

Dear _____,

My name is Teresa Robinson and I am a Doctoral student at The University of Tennessee/Knoxville. I am currently working on my dissertation and need to conduct research involving the SRO program. Four middle schools in River County have been selected for the sites to conduct this research study. The title of this study is "Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs." I am writing to ask permission to utilize the SROs assigned to these schools in this research study.

My methods of data collection will include interviews with the two school administrators and the one School Resource Officer located at each of the selected school sites. I will also be conducting observations and collecting and reviewing documents to complete the study. The identity of the school as well as the participants will remain confidential.

If you are interested in my results, I will be very glad to share these with you at the completion of this study. Please sign below giving me permission to conduct this research on your school campus. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 865-856-6312. I have enclosed a copy of this letter for your records. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Sheriff's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix F

Project Information Sheet

Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of administrators and officers as they relate to the role of the School Resource Officer in a rural middle school setting in Eastern Tennessee. As more school systems introduce SROs into the school setting, different, and often conflicting views emerge about their roles and how they can develop a sense of commitment to the education of the students and also foster a positive relationships with students

The method I will use is one of conducting and analyzing interviews of the school administrators and the School Resource Officer. This research design is an exploratory, multi-site case study so there is no attempt to test any hypothesis or a particular theory. There is also no type of program evaluation involved. My objective is to obtain a rich and thorough understanding of the duties and responsibilities from the perspective of those mentioned above, who have either observed or have received assistance from the School Resource Officer.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you at a time and a location that is convenient for you. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. I would be asking you to provide feedback about your possible observation or experiences with the SRO assigned to this school. If you would feel more comfortable, I can provide you with a copy of the interview questions prior to the date of the scheduled interview. Later I will

provide you with a transcription of your interview for you to add or delete information if needed.

During the interview, I will ask you to talk about any experiences you may have had with the SRO and also I will ask you to discuss issues that address the impact of having a SRO in the schools setting. You should feel free to disclose as much or as little as you want. You can end the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time. The interview will be audio taped so that I may review and transcribe it for my research. However, the information I obtain and your personal identity will remain confidential. Tapes and transcripts will be letter/number coded and any comments that would identify you will be deleted and not be used in reporting the findings.

If you would like to volunteer for this study, please contact me at the address listed below. Thank you for your time and interest.

Teresa Robinson
2244 Brook Rd.
Greenback, TN 37742
(865)856-6312
robinson2244@bellsouth.net

Appendix G

Informed Consent Form and Statement of Consent

The interview you will be taking part in today will serve as data for my doctoral dissertation, “Understanding the Role of the School Resource Officer (SRO): Perceptions from Middle School Administrators and SROs.”

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of administrators and officers as they relate to the role of the School Resource Officer in a rural middle school setting in Eastern Tennessee. As more school systems introduce SROs into the school setting, different, and often conflicting views emerge about their roles and how they can develop a sense of commitment to the education of the students and also foster a positive relationships with students

If you agree to participate, I will interview you at a time and a location that is convenient for you. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. I will be asking you to provide feedback about your possible observation or experiences with the SRO assigned to this school. If you would feel more comfortable, I can provide you with a copy of the interview questions prior to the date of the scheduled interview. Later I will provide you with a transcription of your interview for you to add or delete information if needed.

Participant’s Initials: _____

During the interview, I will ask you to talk about any experiences you may have had with the SRO and also I will ask you to discuss issues that address the impact of having a SRO in the schools setting. You should feel free to disclose as much or as little as you want. You can end the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time.

Since your participation in this research involves only these confidential interviews between you and me, there should be no risk or discomfort on your part. The benefits you may receive are the chance to discuss your experiences and my sharing of the research outcome with you. You may disclose as much or as little as you like. You may end the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

The information you share and your personal identity will be held in the strictest confidence at all times. The interview will be audio taped so that it can be reviewed and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. However, the information I obtain and your personal identity will remain confidential. Tapes and transcripts will be letter/number coded and any comments that would identify you will be deleted and not be used in reporting the findings. I will also change the names of any people, schools, or towns mentioned. The transcriptions will not include names or other information that might compromise confidentiality.

Participant's Initials: _____

You may review the transcripts to clarify or make deletions if you wish. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Claxton Addition (on the campus of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville). The only people who will be allowed to see the transcripts of the interview are members of my dissertation committee and peer reviewers. One of the peer reviewers may look in on the interview from time to time; to be sure I am not using nonverbal communication to influence your answers. Any findings that result from this research could improve the utilization of a School Resource Officer in the school setting. These findings may also give you a new awareness of your own experiences with the SRO and other school personnel. There is no other payment for participating, or any costs to you.

Participant's Initials: _____

Statement of Consent to Participate in the Research

I understand that this research is being conducted by Teresa R. Robinson and Dr. Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., of the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I have read (or had read to me) the description of the research study as outlined above. The investigator has explained the study to me and has answered all questions I have at this time. I understand the purpose of the study and that I am being asked to participate in an interview which will be audiotaped and transcribed. The potential risks and benefits were discussed.

I freely volunteer to participate in this study. I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of the rights to which I am entitled. I further understand that my consent maybe withdrawn at any time with no penalty and that I may discontinue my participation in this research at any time.

Again thank you for being a participant in this research project. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions now or in the future.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Person Conducting Interview

Date

Again, thank you for being a participant in this research project. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions now or in the future.

Appendix H

School Administrator Interview Questions

Grand Tour Question -

What is it like to be a school administrator at _____ Middle School?

1. What are the duties of the School Resource Officer as you understand them?
2. Who or what determines his/her law enforcement responsibilities?
3. Describe the process you utilize to inform your SRO of your expectations concerning this/her role at your school?
4. Is the SRO used to develop, utilize, and enforce safety and security policies and plans for this school? For example –
 - School crisis plan
 - Security practices for intruders
 - Safety drills
 - Investigating crimes within the school setting
 - Suspected child abuse
 - Truancy

If so, please explain how.

5. Does the SRO help to maintain a safe and orderly school-student community? Please explain.
6. Do you think the presence of a uniformed SRO effects the behavior of the students at _____ Middle School? Please elaborate.
7. Is the SRO ever asked to provide technical assistance with legal issues to the school administrators– either personally or professionally? Please describe some examples of this.
8. Is your SRO ever involved in classroom instruction? Please describe examples
9. Who or what determines these teaching responsibilities?

11. Does the SRO contribute as a liaison for the community? Please tell me more.
12. Does the SRO at _____ Middle School develop and maintain a positive relationship with – Please elaborate.
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Teachers?
13. What issues, if any, have you experienced that may or may not have prevented you from assigning the SRO specific duties within the school setting?
14. Do you consider the SRO as a part of your staff? In what capacity do you allow the SRO to operate?
15. Are there any duties or responsibilities your SRO engages in that we have not discussed?
16. How do you feel at school? Very safe – Safe – Unsafe. Explain
17. Is there anything else you want to add?
18. Would you mind if I contact you later if I need any further clarifications or any additional information?

Appendix I

School Resource Officer Interview Questions

Grand Tour Question –

What is it like being a SRO at _____Middle School?

1. What are the duties of the School Resource Officer as you understand them?
2. Describe your schedule for a typical day.
3. What activity takes up most of your time?
4. What activity do you feel you do not have enough time to adequately do?
5. Who or what determines your law enforcement responsibilities?
6. Are you used to develop, utilize, and enforce safety and security policies and plans for this school? For example –
 - School crisis plan
 - Security practices for intruders
 - Safety drills
 - Investigating crimes within the school setting
 - Suspected child abuse
 - Truancy

If so, please elaborate.

7. Do you help to maintain a safe and orderly school-student community? Please explain how you determine this.
8. Are you used to patrol the halls, cafeteria, parking lots, and other areas where teachers and students use? If so, please explain.
9. Do you think the presence of a uniformed SRO effects the behavior of the students at _____Middle School? Please explain in what ways.
10. Are you ever asked to provide technical assistance with legal issues to the school administrators– either personally or professionally? Please describe some examples of this.
11. Are you involved in classroom instruction? If so, please explain how.

12. Are you ever provided opportunities for law enforcement related instruction? For example –

- Bicycle safety
- Bus safety
- Drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- School safety
- Gang activity

If so, please explain.

13. Who or what determines these teaching responsibilities?

14. Do you contribute as a liaison for the community? If so, please explain how.

15. Do you develop and maintain a positive relationship with –

- Parents
- Students
- Teachers?

If so, please explain.

16. What issues, if any, have you experienced that may or may not have prevented you doing something that you felt needed to be done?

17. Do you consider yourself as a part of the school staff? Do you feel comfortable making suggestions or changes in school procedures as you see the need? If not, please tell me what if anything hampers your efforts to implement changes.

18. Are there any duties or responsibilities that you engage in that we have not discussed?

19. Is there anything else you want to add?

20. Would you mind if I contact you later if I need any further clarifications or any additional information?

Appendix J

School Administrator Demographics

Name: _____

Date: _____

Current Position: _____

School Assignment: _____

Birthdate: _____

Gender: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Total Years Experience: _____

Years at this school: _____

Appendix K

School Resource Officer Demographics

Name: _____

Date: _____

Current Position: _____

Years in this position: _____

Birthdate: _____

Total Years Experience: _____

Professional Background:

Additional Training: _____

Additional Certifications: _____

Appendix L

SRO Weekly Log of Activities

SRO Tasks	M	T	W	R	F
Assists school administrators with the investigation of thefts, fights, drug problems, and other criminal activities					
Takes law enforcement action as required.					
Consults with the principal in developing plans and strategies to prevent or minimize dangerous situations, which may occur on campus or during a school event.					
Assists with the investigation of bomb threats and other emergency situations.					
Participates in court proceedings pertaining to law violations on school grounds or at school functions.					
Assists with crowd control at school functions and assists with securing more officers as needed.					
Notifies appropriate law enforcement agencies when violations occur on school grounds or at a school function.					
Serves as a resource for teachers, parents, and students.					
Works closely with other law enforcement agencies to establish security procedures					
Maintains detailed and accurate records of the operation of the School Resource Officer program.					
Monitors halls, parking lots, or other areas assigned by the school administrators.					
Provides individual counseling to students related to law enforcement issues or crime prevention.					
Attends extracurricular activities.					
Provides guidance on ethical issues in a school setting and explains the law enforcement role in society.					
Becomes familiar with all community agencies and makes referrals to agencies when necessary.					
Provides community wide crime preventive presentations.					
Regularly checks school facilities when not in use.					
Assists in locating school age children not enrolled in school and reports attendance violations.					

VITA

Teresa R. Robinson was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on November 19, 1960. She attended elementary, middle, and high schools in Knoxville. She completed her undergraduate studies in 1982 and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary and Secondary Math from The University of Tennessee in Knoxville and in 1988 she earned her Masters in Administration and Supervision from Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee. In 2006, she received her doctorate in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Teresa has worked for 22 years as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal in the Blount County School System in Maryville, Tennessee. She currently holds the position of principal at Lanier Elementary School in Maryville, Tennessee.

Teresa has received a number of awards and recognition during her career in the field of education. In 1994, Teresa received the Tennessee's Outstanding Achievement Award and The Chamber of Commerce Middle School Educator of the Year Award. In 2004, she was selected to represent Maryville, Tennessee in the Metropolitan Registry of Educators, and in 2005 she received the Manchester Who's Who Executive and Professional Women award.