

Summer 2016

## The Perspectives of School Resource Officers on Job Responsibilities and Training

Sarah Parker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>



Part of the [Criminology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Parker, Sarah "The Perspectives of School Resource Officers on Job Responsibilities and Training". July 2016.

This thesis (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

THE PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ON JOB RESPONSIBILITIES  
AND TRAINING

by

SARAH PARKER

(Under the Direction of John Brent)

ABSTRACT

As school security measures are increasing, including the use of school resource officers (SROs) throughout the United States, there is a concern that these officers are being used as disciplinarians rather than being in the schools to ensure student safety. There is very little research that looks at the job expectations for SROs and if the training they receive reflects what is required of them. To address this issue, this study will provide the perspectives that SROs have on their job responsibilities, what they believe their responsibilities should be, and if the training they received reflects those responsibilities. This study used in-depth interviews and observations to gain insight into the roles and the training of SROs in the modern world. The study discovered four major themes that relate to the training and roles of SROs.

INDEX WORDS: School Resource Officer, SRO, School Discipline, School Climate

THE PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ON JOB RESPONSIBILITIES  
AND TRAINING

by

SARAH PARKER

B.S. Georgia Southern University, 2014

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF ARTS

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

© 2016

SARAH PARKER

All Rights Reserved

THE PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ON JOB RESPONSIBILITIES  
AND TRAINING

by

SARAH PARKER

Major Professor: Sarah Parker

Committee: John Brent  
Laura Agnich  
Chad Posick

Electronic Version Approved:

July 2016

## **Acknowledgement**

First, I would like to give a huge thanks to my parents who have supported me these past two years as I used all their printer ink, emptied their freezer, and drank all their coffee.

Secondly, I would like to give a huge thanks to Dr. John Brent for guiding me through this entire thesis process and for putting up with the insane amount of questions and e-mails he got from me. I'd also like to thank the rest of my committee, Dr. Laura Agnich and Dr. Chad Posick, for sticking with me and reading everything.

And finally, a huge shout out to the Wolf Pack, thank you for the games of Cards Against Humanity, the late nights at Gnats, and the unlimited support you all gave me these past two years. I couldn't have survived without it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	2
LIST OF TABLES.....	5
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	6
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
The Rise of a “Criminalized School Discipline”	
Disparities in School Discipline	
Current Reform Trends	
Emergence of School Resource Officers	
SRO Responsibilities	
Training of SROs	
3 METHODOLOGY.....	21
Data Collection	
Sample	
Analytical Strategy	
Reflexivity	
4 JONES.....	32
Learning about Jones	
Job Responsibilities and Expectations	
Perceptions of SRO Work	
Conflicting Mandates	
Job Training	
Summary	
5 ARCHIE.....	48
Learning about Archie	
Job Responsibilities and Expectations	

Perceptions of SRO Work	
Conflicting Mandates	
Job Training	
Summary	
6 DILTON.....	63
Learning about Jones	
Job Responsibilities and Expectations	
Perceptions of SRO Work	
Conflicting Mandates	
Job Training	
Summary	
7 DISCUSSION.....	73
The Expectations of SROs	
Perspective of SROs on the Job	
School vs Law Enforcement: Conflicting Mandates	
Training Received vs Training Needed	
Overall	
Labeling Theory and SROs	
Policy Implications and Recommendations	
Limitations	
Future Research	
REFERENCES.....	95
APPENDIX	
A. Interview Guide.....	90
B. Consent Form.....	102

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Student Population Make-up (2015-2016): Race/Ethnicity & Gender.....	28
Table 2: Official Training Received by Participants.....	79

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Incidents of school violence across the United States during the 1990s, most notably the shooting at Columbine High School, escalated fears concerning the safety of students while they attended school. This led to an increase in security measures including the introduction of zero-tolerance policies, metal detectors, school drug sweeps, and use of surveillance systems (Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011, Addington, 2003). According to the 2014 Indicators of School Crime and Safety report released by National Center for Education Statistics, 88 percent of schools reported that they controlled access to the school through locking or monitoring doors during school hours. The report also showed that 64 percent of schools used security cameras and 24 percent utilized canines to perform random drug searches (Robers, 2014). Further, schools have also steadily increased their use of security personnel or sworn law enforcement officers, 28 percent of whom carried a firearm (Robers, 2014).

Mounting fears regarding school security also led to schools across the nation utilizing school resource officers (SROs). As a result, SROs have largely been seen as the main response to fears concerning student safety (Schlosser, 2014; Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011). This increase of law enforcement officials in schools has grown alongside the implementation of zero-tolerance policies that aimed to keep school campuses drug, gun, and violence free (Gonsoulin, Zablocki & Leone, 2012). In the early 2000s, the country saw an increase in the use of SROs, with 30 percent of local departments employing an estimated 9,100 full-time school resource officers (Finn, 2006). The primary responsibilities of a SRO have often been categorized into three main objectives, which include being a law enforcement officer, teacher, and mentor to students (Finn, 2006; Schlosser, 2014). The U.S. Department of Education (2014) has supported

these objectives and released statements that suggest how an officer's training should be conducted in order to reflect these objectives.

Despite their frequent use, a considerable body of research has focused on the negative aspects of having SROs in educational settings (see Justice Policy Institute, 2011). One unintended consequence for the push for greater school safety was the creation of the school-to-prison pipeline – a national trend in which youth are funneled into the criminal justice system for petty offenses that were previously handled through school channels (Wilson, 2014). The school-to-prison pipeline has resulted in a disproportionate impact on minority students, with African American, American Indian, and Hispanic youth more likely to face exclusionary punishments for violating school rules than their white peers (Aull, 2012; Losen & Martinez, 2013). These disparities, as well as the creation of the pipeline, has placed the presence and responsibilities of SROs under intense examination and reevaluation (Sneed, 2015). Research doing so has primarily examined the number of citations made (May et al., 2015), the views that students have of SROs (Jaikaren, Schubmehl & Atlas, 2014), and how they interfere with the goals of the education system (Gonsoulin et al., 2012).

Despite organizational efforts to remove SROs and remedy their negative consequences, there are organizations that have come out in support of SROs. These include organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) which propose that the presence of law enforcement in schools increases student safety, secures the school, and reduces misconduct. In contrast, the Justice Policy Institute (2011) has challenged the use of SROs given the school-to-prison pipeline and disparities that have emerged from their presence. While the U.S. Department of Education has not taken a position, a recent report focused on how SROs should be utilized as a source of safety, rather than being used as a source of discipline in schools (U.S. Department of

Education, 2014). These conflict propositions, in turn, have created alternative – and oftentimes conflicting – mandates for SROs to achieve.

While research has examined contemporary school discipline practices (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014), their contribution to the school-to-prison pipeline (Justice Policy Institute, 2011), and students' perceptions of these practices (Jaikaren, Schubmehl & Atlas, 2014), relatively little work has focused on SROs. And though scholars have examined SROs, we know little about the mandates given to SROs. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore: (1) what are the expectations of others on the roles of SROs, (2) what are the perspectives of SROs on what role they should play in the school, (3) are there any conflicting mandates regarding differences in expectations, and (4) does the training SROs receive reflect the expectations given to them by the schools and the police departments?

In order to accomplish this and gain officers' viewpoints, this study uses a case study design, focusing on three individuals employed in one school district within a southern rural area. This is done by enlisting ethnographic methods and interviews with SROs that hold a security function within elementary, middle, and high schools. Interviews were used to gain knowledge on what officers believe their roles in schools should be, what the school expects of them, if those expectations conflict with one another, what training they receive on handling youth, and whether that training reflect the expectations had for them. Ethnographic observations were made by shadowing a full-time SRO during school hours as they performed their daily tasks, interacting with students, teachers, and administrators.

In the following pages, I will first discuss the current literature on SROs. Specific attention will be given to their emergence, involvement in the school-to-prison pipeline, current job responsibilities, and reform of school disciplinary actions and training. After this discussion,

the methodology and results of this study will then be provided. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the paper which will discuss the implications of this study and its results.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **The Rise of a “Criminalized School Discipline”**

There can be little doubt that the use of punitive discipline in school has increased over the past two decades (Simmons, 2015; Gonzalez, 2012). Zero tolerance policies, once reserved for the formal justice system, have been incorporated into schools. This has resulted in zero tolerance not only for serious offenses but also for minor offenses such as talking back or being tardy (Gonzalez, 2012). Now, school punishment not only includes detention, suspension, and expulsion, but also judicial transfer, detainment, or referral to the juvenile court system (Simmons, 2015). The presence of punitive discipline has had a negative impact upon students by increasing their risk of future disciplinary issues, as well as an increased risk of having contact with the criminal justice system (Gonzalez, 2012). When school environments implement these policies, there is often no oversight – a reality that often leads to further negative outcomes for students (Simmons, 2015; Addington, 2003).

The methods used to punish students is only one issue with how schools are responding to students. A second issue is the methods used to monitor and control students within the school environment. Following the Columbine shooting in Colorado, the security funds for schools increased with an estimated 35 percent spent towards metal detectors, 30 percent towards surveillance equipment, and 25 percent on controlled access technologies (Simmons, 2015). A surge in the security market focused on face recognition systems, intrusion sensors, security officers, and ID cards that are needed to gain access, not only to the school itself, but rooms within the school (Casella, 2003; Simmons, 2015). The movement toward greater school security also overlapped with law enforcement by expanding into routine search and seizure exercises

being performed in the schools and allowing for easier searching by requiring transparent backpacks and lockers (Simmons, 2015). These various forms of security being used in schools have created a prison-like facility, rather than a safe place to learn.

There are a number of accounts as to why schools have escalated their use of punitive discipline and invasive security measures. The first is that these policies were brought about through societal fear of criminal activities occurring within schools and the need for crime in schools to be controlled (Kupchik et al., 2015). This fear then grew from an individual-level to a societal-level, pressuring the educational institutions to enhance security measures. The second is that it is a part of a greater fear of crime that is rooted in our political and social make up (Simon, 2007). This shift over time has brought about a penal turn in criminal justice (Simon, 2007), which has bled into school discipline. The third addresses how politicians exploit peoples' fear in order to push through policies that are more strict and punitive in nature (Simon, 2007). Finally, Beckett (1997) argues that punitive policies were implemented as a way to maintain pre-Civil Rights arrangements, by creating a new war on the poor. This is important since there is a disproportionate amount of minorities punished by the current disciplinary polices discussed above. The focus was to maintain lines of racial stratification and keep the social welfare state in check so that the structural dynamic that kept socioeconomically classes segregated would be maintained (Beckett, 1997).

### **Disparities in School Discipline**

Throughout the emergence of school criminalization there is the growth of alarming disparities among punishment when it comes to certain groups. This includes students with disabilities and minorities (racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities), who are all removed from schools at a higher rate than their peers (Gowdey, 2015). Research has shown that school

punishment can lead students toward social exclusion, education failure, and lifelong economic hardship (Peguero et al., 2015). For lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) youth, it is more likely for them to be suspended from school and become involved in the juvenile justice system compared to their heterosexual peers (Poteat et al., 2016). This is largely due to LGBT youth protecting themselves from homophobic bullying, which then leads to punishment and being excluded from school through out-of-school suspension (OSS) or expulsion (Snapp et al., 2015). In recent lawsuits filed by sexual minority youth against schools, the results have shown that they are often blamed for their own victimization and are seen as the instigators and because of this they are faced with discrimination from adults as well as school authorities (Poteat et al., 2016).

The same discrimination is seen in racial minority students, mainly African-Americans and Latinos, who are more likely to be punished in schools compared to their White peers (Peguero et al., 2015; Simson, 2013). According to Nance (2016) in the 2011-12 school year, African Americans made up 16 percent of the total student population, however they represented 32 percent of students who received ISS, 33 percent receiving OSS, represented 42 percent of students who received more than one OSS, and represented 34 percent of students who were expelled. In the same year African American students also represented 27 percent of students referred to the criminal justice system and 31 percent of those students who were subject to school-based arrests (Nance, 2016).

Following this trend there is also a disproportionate number of students with disabilities who are punished compared to their peers (Gowdey, 2015). While there are special education laws aimed at protecting this population, they are not adequate when it comes to school

discipline, with laws only kicking in after the school has determined that a student with a disability has committed misconduct (Gowdey, 2015).

### **Labeling Theory**

Howard Becker (1963) developed labeling theory which explains why people become delinquent. The theory states that an individual becomes the label that he/she is given by society. When an individual is labeled as a criminal, they might feel obligated to act out the role that society has given them, in this case the label of delinquent (Ascani, 2012). The use of labeling theory on juvenile delinquents looks at their peer association as part of the reason juveniles offend. When a deviant is labeled as such they build their lives around this status which gives them a higher risk of associating with more deviant peers, withdraw from conventional pursuits, and engage in criminal acts at an increased rate than those juveniles not labeled “deviant” (Lieberman, et al., 2014).

Juveniles that enter into the juvenile justice system through these double punishments, or outside punishment, are given the label by society as “criminal.” Research has suggested that juveniles who are arrested, go through court processing, and more receive a severe sentence are more likely to participate in future delinquency (Bernburg and Krohn, 2003; Bernburg, Krohn, and Rivera, 2006; Lopes et al., 2012; McAra and McVie, 2007; Wiley and Esbensen, 2013). The courts have attempted to try and limit the stigma attached to court involvement, however the label remains attached to the youth until they can show that they are no longer that label (Mahoney, 1974). Because of this the youth is pushed towards deviant behavior and pushed outside of the community by the same people who are trying to help him escape a life of criminal activity (Mahoney, 1974). Wiley and Esbensen (2013) found that juveniles who have interaction

with police are associated with decreased school commitment, worse grades, less involvement in activities, and a higher exclusion from prosocial peers.

Recently, labeling theory is being related to school punishment in that rule-breaking students are more likely to be labeled as criminals, and are treated as such in the policy and in practice of the school (Hirschfield, 2008). Research has found that for students who are part of a marginalized group in society, the labeling of the student as a delinquent can have a more dangerous effect on the youth's actions once they have received that label (Buckingham, 2013). There is also a double punishment in schools today, where the student is punished by the school system and then sent to the courts to be punished a second time (Buckingham, 2013). This type of double punishment stigmatize children and they internalize that they are "bad", "criminal", or "less-than", when a student feels this way they are more likely to become these labels and act out the roles given to them (Buckingham, 2013). This acting out then becomes a cycle, where the juvenile is acting out in school and administrators continue to label the student as deviant (Buckingham, 2013).

### **Current Reform Trends**

In the effort to ensure students are in a safe learning environment, harsh policies were passed that have been highly ineffective and instead have resulted in racial disproportionality in discipline, academic failure, a high dropout rate, and a clear school-to-prison pipeline (Armour, 2016). As mentioned before, Columbine High School lead to an era of zero-tolerance policies towards alcohol, drugs, and violence. This can be credited to the continuous news reporting on the event as well as the methods used to commit such events. Recently, we have seen the same kind of policy action following Sandy Hook Elementary School where bills were introduced in

serval states that would allow teachers to be armed in the classroom as a way to add protection (Armour, 2016).

There has been a change in how discipline is handled, resulting in an improved school climate and this change has shown that improving school climate could help reduce racial disparities seen in current policies. Strategies such as relationship building, social-emotional learning, and structural interventions are the three main strategies that have shown promise when implemented in schools (Skiba & Losen, 2016). Many states have started making strides in reforming the discipline actions in schools: (1) California passed legislation that limited the use of suspension, (2) Colorado passed a bill that was aimed at minimizing law enforcement referrals for minor infractions and also passed legislation that promoted the use and training on restorative justice, (3) Georgia in 2014 established a school climate management program that aims to promote research-based practices and positive interventions, (4) Maryland released a new discipline framework where OSS was a last resort and have made strides in moving away from zero-tolerance policies, (5) Massachusetts made changes that required schools to provide students with educational services when they were suspended or expelled, and discouraged the use of long-term suspensions unless other types of interventions had failed, and finally (6) Oregon passed legislation in 2014 that required school districts to implement policies that focused on reducing any unnecessary suspensions and expulsions. (Skiba & Losen, 2016)

In terms of SROs, the reform discussed above has less to do with removing their presence and more to do with ensuring that SROs are educated on how to handle situations that involve students. This includes the training of administrators and SROs together, which is recommended by the National Association of School Resource Officers and that SROs should not be a part of school discipline unless it is crime related (DeNisco, 2016). There is also a push for SROs to be

in compliance with federal special education laws and other federal mandates that teachers and school administrators are required to follow (Merkwae, 2015).

The current movement of school discipline reform is a wide net with every aspect of school discipline under review. The need for students to be safe in school is beyond just the physical, but also keeping them safe from the court system and a safe learning environment expands into making sure that students are disciplined by administrators rather than the court system, unless absolutely necessary.

### **Emergence of School Resource Officers**

While SROs are now more visible in schools, the concept of a school officer has been around since the 1950s (Weiler and Cray, 2011). Lavarello and Trump (2001) define SROs as “Certified peace officers employed by local or county law enforcement agencies and assigned to a particular school or schools” (p. 32). However, following a string of violent acts in the 1990s, their presence in schools has increased (Weiler and Cray, 2011). In 1999, 30 percent of local police departments employed 62 percent of all school resource officers. This was an increase from 1997 when local departments employed only 38 percent of school officers (Finn, 2006). In 2011, the national data reported that 65 percent of American schools had at least one SRO, regardless of the grade level, urbanity or the school’s enrollment size (Robers, 2012). More recently, the rise of SROs, and the school-to-prison pipeline more broadly, has been associated with the use of zero-tolerance policies in schools. SROs are now found in almost every level of education, from elementary to high schools. (Weiler and Cray, 2011; Lavarello and Trump, 2001).

Though there is no set definition of zero-tolerance policies, they are commonly defined as “strict, uncompromising, automatic punishment to eliminate undesirable behavior.” (Wilson, 2014). These policies originated during the 1980s in conjunction with the war on drugs; however, they have recently extended into schools as a way to combat (mis)perceptions of school violence (Morton, 2013). This began the trend in which students were being arrested or referred to law enforcement for trivial forms of misconduct. As such, conduct violations that were once dealt with by school officials were now grounds for arrest (Heitzag, 2009). This type of action has created what many term the school-to-prison pipeline – a link between “educational exclusion and criminalization of youth” (Wilson, 2014). Given the emergence of punitive policies, SROs are now often used as a way to discipline students rather than securing safety. Consequently, this has contributed to more than half of incarcerated persons entering prison without a high school diploma (Wilson, 2014). The American Psychological Association (2008) created a task force report on the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies, in which the results showed that zero-tolerance policies were counterproductive and not achieving the goal of effective school discipline.

### **SRO Responsibilities**

School resource officers serve as “Police officers with arrest powers, counselors of law related issues, helping guide children to appropriate community services, and teachers of the law, either teaching their own classes or visiting classes to give talks and presentations.” (Weiler and Cray, 2011, p.161; Mulqueen, 1997, S17). This definition can be used to help shape the role of SROs and build training based on the definition provided. As such, the duties of a SRO consist of a combination of three main job categories. According to Finn (2006) and Schlosser (2014) an SRO must play the role of law enforcement officer, teacher, and mentor/counselor to students.

Weiler and Cray (2011) also say that an SRO must achieve two things in order to be successful in their job: (1) they must be the right officer for this type of assignment dealing with minors and (2) the officer should participate in training that includes specifics on educational settings, juvenile laws, special education laws, and how to properly give classroom instructions.

Though seemingly expansive, there have been efforts to reign in SROs responsibilities. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education released “Guiding Principles” a report for improving school climate and discipline. In the report, the DOE suggests that schools using SROs need to ensure that officers are focused on “protecting the physical safety of the school and preventing the criminal conduct of persons other than students, while aiming to reduce inappropriate student referrals to law enforcement.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2014; pg. 19). This mandate discourages schools from allowing SROs to use typical law enforcement tactics to discipline students. Further, this suggest that SROs should focus on being informal counselors and educators, which goes along with what Finn (2006) and Schlosser (2014) suggest in their writings. This method is often referred to as the triad model and is used by most schools and training centers when defining the policies for SROs.

Overall, SROs have been tasked with ensuring that students are in a safe learning environment. This includes solving crimes that occur within the school, helping investigate deviant conduct, and responding to serious threats before they even occur (Schlosser, 2014; Finn, 2006). The law enforcement training that an officer previously has allows for them to help develop a school crisis management plan for any emergency that may arise during the school day (Finn, 2006). This is followed by the role of mentor or counselor to the students they serve, which can have a huge impact in gaining the respect and trust of students (Schlosser, 2014). The final role in the triad model is educator. This includes drug education, bullying education, anti-

gang education and other subjects that might arise (Schlosser, 2014; Canady et. al., 2012). This role also allows officers to build a relationship with the students which can then be taken outside the classroom and contribute to school safety.

### **Training of SROs**

In the previously mentioned “Guiding Principles” report, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) gave a list of the training objectives SROs should receive before working in schools. First, training should mirror the school’s written policies and cover how to distinguish between simple infractions and serious threats. Second, schools should tailor the training of personnel to the specifics of the particular job. Third, the Department of Education suggests that school security and law enforcement officers receive training in strategies such as: de-escalation techniques, conflict resolution, developmentally appropriate responses, and crisis management. Forth, broader topics should be discussed, including: civil rights laws, child and adolescent development, disability and special education issues, cultural responsiveness and institutional bias, needs of students with disabilities and student and family engagement (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Fifth, officers should be given information on restorative justice practices and how to refer students who have experienced trauma or violence to helpful services such as support groups or organizations. Finally, officers should also be given information on the negative effects that the involvement with the criminal justice system can have on youth. These can include a higher chance of dropping out of school and an increased risk of staying in the system.

In line with the Department of Education’s suggestions, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) holds training courses that focus on the criteria given above as well as other topics that can help an officer build relationships with the students they might

interact with (National Association of School Resource Officers, 2015). The NASRO executive director, Mo Canady, gave a statement in November 2015 that said the organization supports a national standard for school resource officer training (Kelley, 2015). Recalling the work above, the NASRO bases their training courses on the triad concept which separates the responsibilities of SROs into three sections; educator-educating students on drugs and alcohol and other topics asked of them, informal counselor or mentor for the students to come to if they have an issue, and a law enforcement officer for when a statute is broken. The organization focuses on officers being in schools for safety and not being used as a way to discipline students or contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Canady, James, & Nease, 2012).

The current literature on school discipline has focused on the production of inequalities and disparities (Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchez, 2013), if policies support a safe school climate, and the negative effects of discipline on student's academic achievement (Perry & Morris, 2014). Despite this mounting focus on school discipline and security, there are very few studies that focus on SROs. That is, the literature largely overlooks four main concepts; (1) the conflicting demands placed on SROs, (2) what SROs think their job responsibilities should be, (3) how they think they should handle school incidents, and (4) if they feel their training reflects these various expectations. The purpose of this project is to shed empirical light on each of these areas.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Taking stock, there has been a lack research examining the functions, mandates, training resources, and experiences of SROs. To address this void, the purpose of this study is to explore what SROs think of the expectations placed on them and whether their training equips them to handle those expectations. The four research questions this study pursued include: (1) What are the expectations of others on the roles of SROs, (2) What are the perspectives of SROs on what role they should play in the school, (3) Are there any conflicting mandates regarding differences in expectations, and (4) Does the training SROs receive reflect the expectations given to them by the school sand the police departments?

#### **Epistemology and Approach**

Given the exploratory and subjective nature of these research questions, this study adopted an interpretive epistemology and qualitative methods to gain knowledge on the job responsibilities and training resources of SROs (Kraska & Neuman, 2008, pg. 18-19). Specifically, case studies of three SROs in a rural Southeastern school district were conducted. Data were collected using ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with these SROs. These methods are well suited to capture in-depth data on individuals' perspectives and reactions to a certain phenomenon in natural settings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study will be focusing on SROs perspectives and reactions to their expectations and training, within the school setting.

Yin (2003) suggests that case studies are used when the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions. Since this study asks *how* SROs view their job responsibilities and *why* those expectations for them are put into place, the use of a case study fits into this

parameter. Further, the use of case studies are beneficial because it allows for an insight into a phenomenon [SROs training and expectations] with the researcher having little effect on the events that occur during the study (Yin, 2013). A case study also allows for both specific and general circumstances to be studied. This approach then works well with this topic since the focus is on two rather broad but subjective topics, SRO job responsibilities and SRO training. The subject is broken into four research questions: (1) What are the expectations of others on the roles of SROs, (2) What are the perspectives of SROs on what role they should play in the school, (3) Are there any conflicting mandates regarding differences in expectations, and (4) Does the training SROs receive reflect the expectations given to them by the school and the police departments? Finally, the benefit of conducting three separate case studies is that each individual has a different background that influences how they see the issues that are discussed. Using an in-depth case study method allows data to be compared across individuals while allowing dominant themes to emerge (Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

## **Sample**

In qualitative research the sample is often selected gradually throughout the study itself, with the researcher selecting cases that help answer the question being asked (Kraska & Neuman, 2008). Following this principle, recruitment enlisted snowball sampling techniques, where selected participants identify others who were eligible to assist in the study (Emerson, 2015). An initial contact, or “gatekeeper,” secured through a mutual contact, agreed to both participate and facilitate the recruitment of two others. For this study the initial gatekeeper was Archie, who agreed not only to participate in the study, but also to assist in finding other possible participants. Archie referred me to the full-time SRO and then through a mutual friend I was referred to Dilton. All

three of the officers meet the requirements for the study by being either a full-time SRO or a traveling SRO within the district.

As mentioned above, the sample for this study consisted of three SROs in a southeastern rural community, and were classified as either a full-time or traveling SRO. A full-time SRO is defined as a law enforcement officer who is present in the school every school day, where as a traveling SRO is defined as a law enforcement officer who is present in the school for via walk-throughs or when called regarding an incident requiring law enforcement assistance. These could include when fights break out, thefts occur, vandalism occurs, drugs are found, or a weapon is brought into the school. In order to participate in this study the individual had to be a law enforcement officer who fell under one of these two categories. The two categories were designed based off of how the school district utilizes officers in the schools. The names of officers, schools, and counties are all given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Within Cooper County there is one full-time SRO and 5 traveling- SROs, who are day shift road deputies conducting routine school walk-throughs and safety checks.

The participants all identified as Caucasian males, with law enforcement experience ranging from six to twenty-three years. While Archie has training through drug abuse resistance education (DARE) and SRO school, the remaining two SROs do not have any specialized training. These individuals were selected because their background and job descriptions fit the definition of a full-time SRO or a traveling SRO. All three individuals were enthusiastic about participating in the study and allowed for a diverse sample; the range of law enforcement experience, SRO experience, and personal backgrounds allowed for the study to have a sample where participants had similarities in their job but were different in their backgrounds.

## **Methods**

To begin, I conducted direct observations with Jones, the full-time SRO in the school he worked in, Riverdale High School. These observations consisted of seven days of following him through the school as he conducted door checks, hallway changes, lunch duty, talked with faculty and students, and routine hallway walk-through. Observations were set up so that I could view Jones at various times in the day as he went about his daily routine. The observations allowed for me to understand Jones's routine, which gave the opportunity for everyday incidents to occur and the reactions to those incidents observed. In accomplishing this, data was collected as the SRO moved through his daily interactions with students and staff, on how he handled certain situations, how the faculty and students utilized his presence, and how he spent their time. Throughout shadowing, notes were taken on-site on what he did, how he spent his time, and any notable comments. There were also notes taken once I returned to my car, in cases where I did not have time to jot a note down, or as I reviewed notes taken during the day. Further, shadowing Jones afforded insight into whether his responsibilities correspond with the training he has received. These observations were then triangulated with interviews to help identify recurring themes (discussed further below).

In addition to these ethnographic methods, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with SROs in Cooper County. These interviews included both open- and closed-ended questions that focused on the expectations of their job and training they received in relation to those expectations. Specific guiding questions within the interviews included, but were not limited to: what do SROs perceive their responsibility to be; what are the expectations of SROs by others; do SROs think these expectations conflict with one another; what training do SROs receive in handling school matters, and does that training reflect the expectations placed on SROs? The questions were written to allow the individual to express their opinions on the focus points, with

the ability to explain why it is that they believe that (Appendix A). Overall, interviews took place at Riverdale High School in Jones's office, Archie's patrol car, and the researcher's personal office. The participants each picked the interview location based on what was the most convenient for them and their schedules. Archie invited me to ride-along with him while I interviewed him on record and then discussed the research questions off record, with jot notes being taken down. Jones utilized his own personal office for the interview, which was conducted during the school day during his down time. The final interview with Dilton was conducted in the researcher's personal office and consisted of a recorded interview and jot notes. The official interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and follow-up questions were proposed when needed via text message, phone call, or email. Each participant signed a consent form that outlined that they were voluntarily participating and they were able to stop at any time during the study (Appendix B). The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by the researcher once the interview was complete.

Each interview and observation time included various methods of notetaking. Throughout observations with Jones I took notes in a notebook during the time spent with him, as well as make notes once I returned to my car. During other interviews notes were taken when the participant said something deemed significant.

### **Analytical Strategy**

Enlisting the work of grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), all ethnographic and interview data were analyzed to explore concepts, themes, and theoretical frameworks. The idea of grounded theory is that the developed themes are grounded within the data collected, meaning they emerge throughout the course of the study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Specifically, this focused on job responsibilities given to the SROs by the departments and schools, the perspectives of the SROs on their job responsibilities, any conflicting mandates between

responsibilities, and the training received by officers. This approach focused on direct researcher involvement, the use of memo-writing to elaborate on SRO job responsibilities, expectations, and training. All of which are specific to defining relationships between these categories, advancing theories during each step of the process, and developing organizing concepts that are grounded in the data that has been collected (Charmaz, 2006). Following these principles, data analysis for this study used multiple forms of coding and analysis. The first was the use of *open coding*. This type of analysis allows for comparison by asking the same questions within the interviews and then comparing the answers across the three individual case studies (Pandit, 1996). This allowed for common incidents to be grouped and given a category or allow for a theme to emerge throughout all the data collected (Pandit, 1996). Charmez (2006) refers to this as *focused coding* where large amounts of data are grouped into emerging themes among the individualized case studies. Finally, theoretical coding was used to help construct relationships among identified categories of the initial case study data (Glaser, 1978).

### **Contextualizing the Research Site**

Currently, there are school districts seeking to implement, revise, or revamp their disciplinary policies – especially the use of SROs. In one of the larger school districts within Georgia, they are creating their own police force of SROs that is to be run separately from the Board of Education and the city police department. While the state has no requirements in regards to SRO training, the counties and cities that implement SRO programs set the standards for their officers in regards to duties and training requirements. In the state, most SRO programs follow the Triad Model discussed above. The county for this study, Cooper County, was selected due to it being a rural area, which allows for an insight into a school environment that is studied in contrast to school environments such as urban. The way the county utilized two different types of SROs

gave a chance for a unique insight into how expectations can differ between departments and schools, as well as if training varied by the category that an SRO fell into, full-time or traveling.

In the county selected as the site for this study, the Student Handbook and Code of Conduct is available online, as well as distributed to students at the start of the year. The handbook outlines the use of law enforcement within the schools, as well as the disciplinary actions that can be taken should a student violate the code of conduct. It begins by outlining that law enforcement officials will be notified when a criminal offense under state law occurs, the state law also allows for law enforcement personnel to enter onto school property for the purpose of questioning or arresting an individual. The handbook outlines the process and procedures of search and seizures while on school property, as well as letting it be known that if a student resist a search then they are subject to disciplinary action.

In the handbook, students and parents are also informed of the types of disciplinary actions there are and the difference between different acts. The acts of physical violence are broken into two categories, Type I: Without Harm explained as, intentionally making physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another and Type II: With Harm, described as, intentionally making physical contact which causes physical harm to another unless the physical contact was in self-defense. It is outlined what the punishment should be if certain violations are committed, the process should a student be subjected to expulsion. The handbook has broken down every act into a chart, giving a description of each violation, the punishment associated with the violation, and if that violation is a mandatory law enforcement report.

The county in the past had two full-time SROs however, one of the SROs was a younger man with little law enforcement experience and the individual was fired after an incident where an

unprofessional but non-sexual, relationship was developed with a student. After this individual was let go, the county never implemented a new SRO in the school.

Currently, within the district there is one full-time SRO at Riverdale High who is supported through the Riverdale city police department and the remaining schools utilizing Cooper County sheriff's deputies to make regular walk-throughs of the schools and give educational presentations. The full-time SRO is currently funded by the Riverdale Police Department and the Cooper County Board of Education. However, in the past year the Cooper County Sheriff's Office and the Cooper County Board of Education have begun a partnership which will place two new SROs in two schools within the county. The Cooper County Sheriff's Department is spearheading the project, with the approval of the Board of Education. In an outlined job description, provided by the county and the Board of Education, the SROs will be charged with providing classroom instruction on law enforcement matters, conduct meetings in regards to the federal drug abuse resistance education (DARE) program and the gang resistance education and training (GREAT) program, as well as having a main focus of building positive relationships between students and law enforcement officials. The SROs will be there to protect both people and property on school grounds, attend extracurricular activities, and investigate any crime that should occur on the school campus.

The funding for this new program will be split between the Board of Education and the Cooper County Sheriff's office. The school district will provide the salary for officers while they work in the schools and the sheriff's office will provide the salary for officers when school is not in session. The Board of Education will provide the officers with a work space, supplies, and school resources, while the Sheriff's office will provide vehicles, uniforms, and law enforcement equipment. This type of funding is usual for an SRO program, usually the initial funding comes

from a three year grant and then after that time it is jointly funded by local, county, state, school district, and private dollars (Weiler and Cray, 2011). The federal grants come from the Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) which is designed to allow school districts and police departments see the benefits of the SRO program (Weiler and Cray, 2011)

The school in which the current full-time SRO, Jones, works utilizes security measures that include: ensuring all doors are locked, the presence of a law enforcement officer, a buzz-in system at the front entrance, and routine hallway checks. According to Jones the main criminal issue within the school stems from thefts rather than fights or disorderly conduct. He also notes that the issue of drug presence is higher this year compared to previous school years.

The race and sex demographics of the school are outlined below in Table 1. It also includes the percentage of students that receive free and reduced lunch, as well as if the school is a Title 1 school. A Title 1 school indicates that the school receives federal funds due to a high percentage (40 percent) of children from low-income families. These funds can be used to support extra math and reading instructions, preschools, after-school programs, and summer programs aimed to reinforce the school curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Table 1: Student Population Make-Up by School for the 2014-2015 School Year

School	Total Students	Student/Teacher Ratio	Male Students	Female Students	Black Students	White Students	Other*	Free/Reduced Lunch	Title 1	Discipline Action	Discipline Incidents
Lane ES	644	18	53%	47%	13%	79%	8%	86%	Yes	73	102
Moose ES	873	17	54%	46%	43%	50%	7%	52%	Yes	39	53
Horace ES	758	47	52%	48%	53%	24%	23%	89%	Yes	107	106
Andrews ES	596	14	55%	45%	51%	36%	13%	73%	Yes	31	68
Lodge ES	677	16	52%	48%	56%	33%	11%	76%	Yes	143	230
Mantle ES	417	16	53%	47%	12%	78%	10%	61%	Yes	7	20
Muggs ES	372	14	42%	58%	34%	58%	8%	72%	Yes	67	91
Glibb ES	510	16	47%	53%	40%	49%	11%	48%	Yes	84	111
Betty C. ES	358	15	51%	49%	1%	88%	11%	64%	Yes	98	99
Clayton MS	662	17	51%	49%	56%	29%	15%	78%	Yes	658	645
Crown MS/HS	450	15	50%	50%	36%	56%	8%	67%	Yes	153	143
Tamms MS	660	17	51%	49%	1%	82%	17%	53%	Yes	625	669
Cooper MS	612	17	57%	43%	42%	50%	8%	52%	Yes	499	577
Central HS	911	20	50%	50%	12%	80%	8%	46%	No	716	380
Riverdale HS	1,491	21	50%	50%	50%	41%	9%	60%	No	1005	979

\*Other includes American Indian/Alaskan, Asian/Pacific Islander, and two or more races

## Reflexivity

Growing up in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia my family can be described as middle-class. I attended a high school that, at the time of my attendance, was known for its AP courses and its students' academic success. All through high school I played sports and never got in trouble that involved the police. After high school I attended college and developed a pro-law enforcement stance. In my junior year of college I interned with my home town police department and this enhanced my positive views of law enforcement.

In regards to my experience with SROs, it is very limited. There were occasional fights at my school, however I never saw anything serious enough that led to the SROs getting physical with a student. I personally only had one official encounter with our SRO, which both principle and him handled professionally, calling me down to the office and making sure I was okay. Beyond that one encounter I only knew our SRO as the person in charge of senior parking, the person who had the same last name as me, and the person who gave everyone high-fives during class change.

In my school the officers were respected and well-liked by both students and faculty, attending the majority of student functions, from sporting events to the orchestra concerts.

The fact that I am a female could have also played a role in the way the officers answered the questions I asked. At the beginning of my ride-along with Archie, I met some of the other deputies and they all kept apologizing for using profanity around me. This type of view on women and how to act around them could have kept Archie, and the others, from giving information that they would give a male. This could be because they view some things not polite to say to a female or that they were just personally uncomfortable giving answers in such a way. This would influence the data collected because some information could have been left out, or examples that could have added to the data not being told out of respect for being female.

My personal views on police and knowing the participants outside of the study, could skew how I interpreted the answers given to me by the participants. Since I have a positive outlook on police I could have misinterpreted tone and been a little too comfortable around them as officers. In addition since I have never had a negative experience with an SRO, I may not have been able to recognize negative attributes of the full-time SRO that I shadowed. This could have also influenced my thought process going into the project by expecting to find “good officers” and viewing “bad officers” as just a selective few. This thought process could have hindered my perception of certain actions done by the SROs I talked to.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **JONES**

This chapter provides a case study of Jones who is the only full-time SRO working within Cooper County school district. Specifically, this chapter first begins by providing background information about Jones, noting both professional and personal factors that help contextualize later information. Afterward, greater focus is dedicated to examining his perspective of what role SROs should play in the school, if the police department and schools are on the same page in terms of expectations, and about the training he received to be a SRO. As outlined above, data were collected through in-depth interviews as well as through direct observations gathered while shadowing Jones as he went about his daily routine. The official interview lasted twenty-eight and half minutes, with unofficial and unrecorded interviews occurring throughout the observations portion. The observations occurred over a five day period, with the length of each observation period ranging from four to five hours. During observations notes were taken throughout, as well as notes jotted down once returning to me car.

#### **Learning about Jones**

Jones is a white male who has worked in law enforcement for 23 years and has been the school resource officer at Riverdale High School for the last five years. He is married and is a father to two children, one a graduate of Riverdale High School and one still attending the school. Jones claimed that he originally wanted to be a school teacher but indicated it did not work out resulting in him entering law enforcement after graduating college with a Bachelor of Science in Cultural Geography and a minor in Biology. Since then, Jones has also acquired a Master's in Public Administration. Between being a parent and having a few courses in college relating to education, Jones believes he has a good understanding of the public education system.

When asked why he wanted to go into law enforcement, Jones informed me of his original drive to be a teacher. Despite these initial plans, he pursued a career in law enforcement and became fully involved in the profession. Specifically, he stated, “Well, I had two goals, one of them was to be a teacher and that kinda didn’t work out, so I went into law enforcement and I’ve been stuck ever since.” While he did not elaborate on what happened with becoming a teacher, he is glad he got into law enforcement. In regards to working with youth as an officer, Jones first let me know he has worked with them since day one of being a police officer. Although occurring by default due to job demands, his assignment in schools occurred primarily due to scheduling:

Sarah: And why did you chose to work with juveniles directly?

Jones: Oh, here at the high school? Uh, at first, Monday through Friday basically, I would be on day shift, uh, about 7-3:30 every day, and there’s a, at the time there was a lot of overtime to be made because of ball games and stuff, so I feel like my pay would go up dramatically, which it did. But mostly because of the Monday through Friday and, and being home with my family.

Aside from scheduling and the chance for overtime pay, his response better highlights how family-oriented he is. Later on in the interview, it became evident that his focus on family strongly influences his views about being a SRO. As illustrated below, he took the role as an SRO seriously and wanted the position to mean something beyond handling occasional situations. In having children at the school, he empathized with what a parent would want an SRO to do. Therefore, he strove to make sure his role was more than just a police officer, stating, “I’ve tried to make this job mean more than just than being here and handling a fight and handling someone who gets caught with cigarettes or marijuana. I think I wanted to be much more than that.” This references his idea for a pamphlet stand in the lobby that gives students information on topics such as drugs and alcohol, college admissions, sexual assault, and mental health. Jones also is involved in the

classrooms through making presentations when requested by the teachers and writing up a lesson plan for the government courses on topics such as students' right and search and seizure laws.

### **Job Responsibilities and Expectations**

Jones' job responsibilities and expectations were discussed during interviews and then observed through direct observations while shadowing him within schools. The interview started out by asking him what the county expects from him as an SRO. Originally, the department expected him to be a "liaison between the schools and the police department" and to handle the law enforcement side of situations that occur within schools – fights, investigating thefts or acts of vandalism, drug violations, and incase a weapon is brought into the school. However, he described that the department now sees the advantage of having SROs in schools due to the possibility of building a positive rapport with the students and teachers:

...it is one of the best ways to be seen by as many students as possible, and to let them know that I am here for positive reasons too, not just to handle negative situations, but I'm trying to be here and be positive, and to form (pause) a more of a relationship with them, um, I guess a professional relationship to tell them that you know, just what you see on TV isn't what police are really all about.

Building a positive rapport is something the U.S. Department of Education (2014) discusses in their *Guiding Principles*. Specifically, they propose that officers should strive to be a mentor to students, which requires them to establish positive working and collaborative relationships. Certainly, this also echoes the National Association for School Resource Officers (NASRO) which focuses on building positive and respectful relationships between officers, students, and staff. These relationships can allow for students to be more comfortable with the officers, allowing the officer to notice a significant change in a student's behavior or allow for students to come forward with information that could prevent a unlawful event.

In examining his views about the expectations placed on him by the school and police department, he first offered three reference points – two professional and the other personal. For the former, he learned the expectations in contrast to what the SRO immediately preceding him accomplished. Jones believes that the difference between him and the past SRO is noticeable. During an interview, he stated “I know that the principal and the assistant principal has seen the value of how the students interact with me compared to the other SRO that was here before me.” This difference is seen through Jones taking the initiative to conduct traffic, ensuring that he is in the hallways more than his office, and by implementing education programs such as the classroom visits mentioned earlier.

Similarly, Jones also spoke about how the principal expects him to have a presence in the school by walking the hallways and being a part of the students’ day, not just sit in the office all day. This has influenced him to walk the halls, check in with the in-school suspension (ISS), talk to the coaches and support staff, and drive the grounds. Given that he goes above and beyond what was previously expected from the prior SRO, Jones stated that his police department’s expectations have also expanded beyond “handling business” to keep students and staff safe. The changes that Jones implemented changed the expectations that were previously expected from the school’s SRO. Jones believes that whomever succeeds him, the police department will expect him or her to continue with what Jones has started.

From his personal perspective, he discussed that having two kids within the school district and at the same school that he works in, expanded any personal existing expectations of what a SRO should be doing within a school. His family-orientation and role of a father becomes more salient here; with his daughter enrolled in the school, he saw the duties assigned to the past SRO and not only matched those duties but worked to “go the extra mile” beyond what the school and

police department expected from him. Further, being a parent provided knowledge of the school policies and procedures, however SROs can also gain this knowledge from the school's code of conduct. For instance, when his eldest daughter entered high school he first read the student handbook – something he did once again upon becoming the SRO. Jones's role as a parent and father also presented itself as he made sure to be visible and available to both the students and parents, a function he as a parent would want. He fulfills this role by being visible to parents during morning traffic control, attending school events, and having an open-door policy.

### **Perceptions of SRO Work**

Later during the interview, we discussed what he believed his role as an SRO in the school should be. His narrative echoed what the county expects from him as well as what is recommended by the U.S. Department of Education (2014). Recalling the “triad model”, which breaks an SRO's job in three duties; a teacher, a mentor, and a law enforcement officer, he discussed working as an educator by helping teachers talk about search and seizures and educating students on drug and alcohol use, as well as giving talks in other classrooms when teachers make a request. Jones furthered that he looks forward to this instructional time because it allows him to use courses he has on teaching while being seen as more than just a law enforcement officer.

During our conversations, Jones also talked about how an officer should handle situations professionally and individually as well as building positive relationship with students. While conducting direct observations, it became evident that he strived to show the positive aspects of police officers, and SROs through talking with students and being available to students for both school related issues and if they wanted to discuss personal issues. One scenario from my time shadowing him demonstrates this point. While Jones and I walked back to his office, a teacher was in the lobby with a young child from the adjoining pre-school. As we walked up she stated, “See,

if you don't behave the police man is gonna take you to jail and lock you up." Jones turned to me and stated that he "hated when they said things like that because I don't want the students to fear me, I want them to know that I am here to help them."

Jones also discussed how his job is not about administering physical and punitive discipline but handling each situation professionally. To better illustrate his stance, he told a story about a student being disruptive in class:

So I just asked coach, I said "Coach do you mind taking your students to the gym for a minute or two?" he goes "Yah, I can do that, thank you." I went to the student and said, "no you can stay here with me." So class left and I went up to the student, like you and me are, and I said "are you ready to leave and go to ISS now?" Cause you know when I did this I removed the show, the show was over. They went to ISS, no one had to get physical and then I went and got coach and told him he could go back to his health room, I appreciate it. It disturbed class for about five minutes and then it was over and done with.

This example shows how his past law enforcement experience had him prepared for different situations and knowing that not everything needs to be handled physically. The experience gained through his years as a law enforcement officer allowed him to know how attempt to de-escalate a situation through talking before resorting to a physical altercation. His response also reflects his background being a father as - during our conversations - he discussed that he reacts the way he would want an adult to handle his child should they be in a situation requiring law enforcement. This includes not instantly resorting to using force, but instead attempting to de-escalate through other avenues first. Overall, his perceptions and views towards the responsibilities of SROs appeared grounded in his experiences as a law enforcement officer and a parent to two daughters.

### **Conflicting Mandates**

As discussed above, Jones places a premium on investing and caring for students. Consider the following:

I want the students to believe that I actually care about them, that I'm not here to put them in jail, I just want to see all of them graduate, that's my goal is to see all of them graduate and for them to be safe and graduate, that's what I am doing. That's what I really want, I'm here for that.

Building on this, he places building positive relationships with students at the core of what he does as an SRO within schools. This sentiment can be found in the following excerpt from an interview:

We had a little guy that plays football and he went to a track meet. And him and a little girl got into a match and he kind of pushed her, and the mother went over there and they got into a fight. Now, the last thing I want to do is arrest this young man, who comes from the inner city. But I had to because you can't have an adult fighting a child. Well he's an 18 year old, he's an adult and so you can't have that happening on school and there are certain things you just can't overlook. That was to me, it wasn't really a conflict, it took me three years to gain this young man's trust because he is one of those who teeter-tottered in being in a gang so I was hoping that wouldn't push him over the edge.

The incident above involved a two students (male and female) arguing and when the mother of the female student went over to the incident the incident escalated and resulted in the male student being arrested due to being 18, while the female student was released to her mother. Even though it was a little shove, it is still assault.

This transcript shows various insight into the conflicting mandates of SROs. Perhaps most evident is Jones's inner struggle, questioning whether he would lose all the time he invested in gaining the young man's trust by punishing him this one time. As he states, this kid was "on the edge" and Jones had fought to build a relationship with him. Therefore, when it came to possibly losing the kid's trust, it really bothered him. This is where the triad model presents conflict between the two pillars of mentor and law enforcement officer, because the officer is expect to be a mentor and build a positive relationships while also playing the role of a law enforcement official. These demands, in essence, create conflicting mandates that can jeopardize one position or the other. The

effort to build a relationship can be wasted when the student's "mentor" now has to play the "bad guy" and the SRO could feel a sense of guilt when they have to be that law enforcement officer to students they have gotten to know.

When examining any conflicting mandates between the school and police department, Jones stated that both are on the same page. That is, both entities communicate the need to ensure that the school is safe for students and that SROs are expected to handle situations professionally. This means following protocol for the situation and doing so in a professional manner. He reveals that when he initially became an SRO, the department did not provide any guidelines. Consequently, he relied on what he would want to see from an SRO as a parent and what the administration would expect. The only conflicting mandates Jones discussed were those above; specifically, between being a mentor and building positive relationships against being the "bad guy" as a law enforcement officer. This is shown in the above story about the boy he had to arrest, however he says the student understood and they still have a positive relationship. This is the type of situation that both the U.S. Department of Education and NASRO want all SROs to aim for.

### **Job Training**

The first time Jones and I talked, he mentioned a conference he used to be able to attend which consisted of teachers, administrators, and SROs. Jones claimed it was one of his favorite event to attend because it allowed him to get the perspective of teachers and administrators on certain situations. Unfortunately, the department no longer provides the funding or resources to go to the yearly conference. His eagerness to expand his knowledge and learn new techniques is a product of his views on education, which certainly reflects his own educational background and initial goal of being an educator.

When asked about the training, Jones mentioned the hours required through the police academy and the state required 20 hours of additional training officers receive yearly. However, he revealed that it was not until his third year at Riverdale High School that he received official SRO training. Aside from highlighting a timing gap, it shows there are SROs who have not received specialized and necessary training, but are in schools. The training he did receive consisted of 40 hours covering searches and seizures, tactics on handling people, gang information, and focused heavily on what administrators can do. He has also gone through DARE training but claims that helps officers deal more with the little kids (elementary school) and drug programming.

Later in the interview, I asked Jones about specific types of training. We started by talking about how to distinguish between a simple infraction and a serious threat. The difference between the two is not discussed in training according to Jones and instead he states that, “a lot of that is gonna be common sense, you know like, like if I catch somebody with, smoking cigarettes, that’s not really an arrestable offense.” He continued on to state how that is something that has to be reported to the school and dealt with via the administration. However, a fight is a serious offense where he would be involved as a law enforcement official because it will not only get you suspended, but is subject to arrest. By Jones acknowledging that he knows the difference between the types of offenses, and what his range of discretion is, we can see where his five years of in-school experience mixed with his law enforcement experience is beneficial.

Next, we discussed any training related to working with and developing relationships with students. Part of the triad model is that an officer is to be a mentor and/or counselor to the students. The Department of Education (2014) also recommends that officers be educated on how to refer students to various forms of helpful services should they acquire about them, or if the officer feels the student could benefit. Jones said while he is not officially trained on this, he is open to students

should they need to talk. This is a start to building a positive relationship with students, and by having specialized training on being a mentor to students, he can know more about how to discuss sensitive topics with students. This can allow him to know how the student can receive help, or who to refer the student to should outside assistance be needed. He also praised the guidance counselors on how situations like this are dealt with:

If they come to me with something like that, I will talk to them, like I said I've been doing this a long time but also, we have uh one of our guidance counselors is kind of trained and she is our official mandated reporter...

However, Jones did mention he is still involved in about seventy-five percent of those cases and he is always there to help in any way that he can. Though Jones has developed his own way to help students, additional training on specific subjects could further enhance working relationships and trust with students.

Jones and I also discussed training on de-escalation techniques that could be used in the school environment. This form of training would enable officers to end altercations before they escalate beyond nonphysical and nonlethal events. Training on how to talk a juvenile down in a situation can help prevent students from being injured or allow for the root of the issue to be discovered. In his response, Jones states no official training is provided, but it is something you learn on the job. For Jones, this occurred through his years on the street as a cop and from the time he has spent within the school. He referred to his training as sort of a “watch and copy”,

I think, watching other officers mess up, and I hate to say it that way, but watching other officers, the mistakes that they've made and then sitting back and figuring out how to handle this in a different situation where it's not so bad

This form of learning is beneficial because he can see what works and does not work. However, this can also lead to learning techniques that are not supported by research or meant to

be enacted. All this ties in with training on conflict resolution, which Jones says they do not receive any formal training on. Just like de-escalation, knowing ways to resolve conflict or triggers before a situation occurs is important to the safety of the school. When Jones did talk about conflict resolution, he referenced his years of being in law enforcement, using “common sense,”- a form of discretion- and his role as a father in handling youth on a daily basis. Though he may have these diverse experiences, another officer may not. If this is something that is discussed in training, it puts everyone on a similar foundation. Allowing the SROs to have an understanding of how to handle juveniles and resolve conflicts between them, in ways that are supported by research. Jones did not expand on what he believes needs to be taught in regards to de-escalation techniques, he referred to it being something that is learned from being on the job.

When Jones and I discussed the topic of crisis management, he gave an answer that seems typical for any law enforcement officer: that yes they do receive training on crisis management with a focus on active shooter situations. He stated that there have been events where the FBI unit has come down and run through active shooter or hostage scenarios and trained officers on how to react. While it is not specific to SROs, or a part of the mandated State SRO training, it is beneficial regardless. All this is important because not only do SROs need to know how to handle a perpetrator of these events, but they need knowledge on how to help students, teachers, and parents should that be required of them.

The school has a plan for every possible scenario which is gone over with the entire faculty at the beginning of the school year. During the school year the schools conduct lockdown drills in case an active shooter incident were to occur. This also gives the SRO a chance to answer any questions a faculty member might have or allow for a more in-depth review of the plan. If the SRO in the school is trained in crisis management, it makes them a resource to faculty members and to

parents should any questions about the school's safety plan need answering or should a crisis arise. While outside law enforcement will still be called in, having someone on scene that is trained to handle these types of situations the moment they arise can help reduce injury and keep the incident under control until help arrives.

As recommended by the U.S. Department of Education, SROs should also be educated on the civil rights of students while at school. Jones credits his civil rights training to the police academy and an online course he took once he became an SRO. When questioned further, he sees pursuing civil rights training as dependent on the personality of the officer:

But a lot of that is just, either you're gonna be that kinda officer that respects people or you're not gonna be that kinda of officer. And by that, I mean, you can say all you want to but it's how you really act and so I'm one of those people that I respect people's civil rights and the right of others.

Given the population SROs serve, and background of students receiving disproportionate discipline discussed in the literature review, training on civil rights would be beneficial. If the SRO is spending eight hours a day in a school, reports suggest that they be trained on the specific civil rights of those they are serving. By not receive this specific form of training, current practices are not matching up with the expectations put forth by emerging national guidelines.

Since SROs are working directly with children and spend the majority of their time with students of various ages, the U.S. Department of Education recommends they receive training on child and adolescent development. When asked about training received on child development, Jones stated that what he has learned comes from a college course he took when studying to be a teacher. Though Jones acknowledges having received training on child abuse and sexual assault investigations, he received nothing specific to adolescent development. Interestingly, he discussed that juveniles are "impressionable" and they "run with their emotions over reason." Therefore,

child development training may provide SROs the means to form a correct response when a situation arises.

Within public schools exist special education programs serving students with disabilities. This is a group that SROs also serves while in the school. Therefore, the U.S. Department of Education encourages that SROs receive training to properly deal with these students. Students with disabilities can have outburst or even get physical if they feel uncomfortable or if they are set off by an individual's action. This could include being touched or someone getting to close to them. By receiving additional training on handling students with disabilities, the officer can further understand how a student is to be dealt with should they have an outburst. The students are going to respond differently than their peers because they might not understand what is being asked of them, or understand the situation they are in. Jones says that he does not receive official training, but he has learned a lot since being in the school through their special education department:

I have learned a lot, that has been a lot on the job-training, but the teachers have been wonderful in working with me on this so I've learned, that's probably my biggest area of growth since I've been here. Is dealing with the special needs children.

As the excerpt highlights, having a foundation of special needs training can be beneficial for both SRO conduct and student outcomes through the SRO understanding how this population of students requires different responses from officers. During direct observations, I saw the relationship he had with special education teachers and it appeared to be positive and constructive. Jones knew the special needs students individually and would stop and talk to them as we made our way through the halls. This is important because it allows the students to be comfortable with him, which is helpful should a situation arise where he has to come in contact with the student for any reason. Further, he was able to point out each student by name and told me the persons "tick" or what you can and cannot do with certain students. He explained how one student is calm as long

as you do not touch him and he has a bowl of rice to stick his hands in and how another student has different animals that he constantly has with him as a form of comfort. This relationship was similar to the one he had with the other students in the school, whether he knew them on a personal level or simply by face.

A school is an environment that incorporates various types of races, ethnicities, religions and sexual orientations. These various cultural attributes is something that SROs should be educated on (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). This type of cultural competency education is important for SROs because building a positive relationship with students involves understanding where that individual comes from and the customs they abide by. If officers were to receive training on cultural responsiveness, it could help SROs demonstrate respect and avoid any known or unknown biases. When asked if he received any type of training on institutional bias or cultural responsiveness, Jones says he did not receive any official or formal training. However, he noted an introductory hour-and-a-half online course on cultural diversity he took during his own time. Through his department he is allowed to request funding to take courses to continue his education, and so Jones often request to take courses on topics that he believes will benefit him in his role as a SRO. Interestingly, he spoke to how his department wants him building positive relationships and acting as a liaison among diverse racial, ethnic, and religious groups that are in the area. The goal is to help build better relationships with these groups through changing the way they see law enforcement officers. While he might be able to still accomplish this, it could be done better if he had received better training.

The last job training Jones and I discussed was training on student and family engagement. This entails learning how to handle students and family members should a situation arise where the officer has to involve all parties. This includes when a student breaks the code of conduct, has

to be referred to the courts, or if a parent wants to discuss why a certain action was taken against their student. In terms of training, Jones stated it is mostly something you learn as you have to do it. He talked about how it is all about handling each case individually and keeping calm during the encounter – whether the parent is also calm or they come in very hostile. In his words, “The main thing is you try to get them calm, you try to get them to know that you do care that whatever happened to their child it is a concern of yours.” His ideology on handling parents comes from being a parent and how he, himself, would want to be dealt with if he were the parent in the situation.

### **Summary**

Through the interview and observations, themes emerged in this case study that can be used to answer the research questions that were put forth above. It is clear that the expectations of the SROs are consistent between the police department and the school. Jones’s main responsibility is to ensure that the students are in a safe environment while at school. The role that Jones believes he should have goes beyond just safety and includes being a teacher to the students through drug and alcohol education and classroom visits, as well maintaining a positive relationship with the student body. This case study also showed how the training that Jones receives comes mainly from his college education, his police academy training, and the training that he receives through that department yearly. The training is not specialized for the role of a SRO and it does not match up with the recommendations of the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education recommends that the officers receive training on all the subjects previously discussed, however Jones did not receive this training through a specialized course. The training he did receive was not geared towards juveniles, nor does it cover every subject the Department of Education recommends.

Throughout the case study on Jones, there were themes that emerged from data collected that highlight the positive and negative aspects Jones has on his role as an SRO. There are three dominant themes found in this case study: (1) the roles of SROs as seen by the department and the schools match up with the role that Jones believes he should have in the school, (2) between the police department and the school there are no professional conflicting mandates on the expectations of the SRO, and (3) the training that Jones has received is not specialized to the job expectations that the department and schools have for him, instead training stems mainly from law enforcement experience and police academy training. All of these themes allow for a new understanding of the job responsibilities and training of SROs.

## CHAPTER 5

### ARCHIE

#### **Learning about Archie**

Archie is a white male who has worked as a deputy for Cooper County for eleven years. He is also a part-time SRO, who is only in schools periodically as a part of his job responsibilities as a deputy for Cooper County. Archie holds past military experience through the U.S. Marine Corps and is married to a local school teacher, with three children. His wife is a teacher within the district and he has children currently in the Cooper County school district. These background characteristics are important in this study because, as outlined below, they help to shape Archie's perceptions and ideas regarding SRO work. Like Jones, his role as a father and husband influence what he believes an SRO should be doing while in the school. The past experience in the Marines and law enforcement help shape his idea of structure and how expectations are created.

When asked about why he chose to go into law enforcement following his military service, he claims it was all due to this urge to help people. In his words, "I never wanted a desk job I always wanted to go out and help people and not necessarily shoot guns and drive fast, but I wanted to be a helper!" This quote sets the tone for everything that was said throughout the interview, with most of what he says relating back to this desire to help people.

In regards to his prior training, Archie has received military, police, and SWAT team training. Further, he has received much training from the state, as well as being trained by the FBI in crisis management. He is also trained in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program and has been teaching the program in the county schools for roughly four years. This is a federal program that is officer led classroom lessons, that teaches students how to live drug and violence-free lives (D.A.R.E. America). This program educates 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in all public and private schools in Cooper County. In regards to working with juveniles, Archie claims it is something that

begins the instant an individual becomes a deputy. However, when it came to getting involved with juveniles more specifically, within the schools, he discussed the urgency to get to a child before a problem develops:

Sarah: Okay, well in regards to DARE, why did you choose to work with juveniles directly through that?

Archie: Umm, I love tryin to help them before they go down the wrong path, or before they are tempted to go down the wrong path, or maybe not necessarily gangs or drugs, but you know, like bullying or stuff like that, ya know? Some kids aren't told that that's bad, they grow up in an area or lifestyle where they don't know, you know, that drinking's bad or..or, not bad, unhealthy..umm they don't know picking on people can hurt their feelings, so that..I love knowing that I'm actually trying to help out before they start having some issues.

Archie is also involved heavily in the community outside of being a deputy and DARE officer. He is active member of a non-denominational Christian church, has children involved in the community, and lives within the district. All these elements combined with his eleven years as a deputy in the county have allowed him to have resources and knowledge that others may not have just coming onto the job. This includes where a person can go to receive help should they need assistance:

But I would say that once you become a deputy, you get to know your county and you get to know the people in the county, since I've been in it for eleven years, I know a lot of people in this county and depending on what the situation is, if they're hungry I know who to call to get 'em food or if they need a place to stay I know who to call to get 'em a house

Overall, Archie's stance toward SRO work is heavily influenced by his roles as a husband, a father, and as a law enforcement officer. Throughout the interview these titles all play a part in the answers given and the statements he makes.

The time spent with Archie consisted of an educational event on Georgia Southern University's campus and a ride along during his night shift from 4:30 pm to 2:00 am. During the event, the conversation was unrecorded and the topic was openly discussed, while the ride-along consisted of both recorded and unrecorded discussions, along with the formal interview. There were notes taken on the unrecorded discussion while in the vehicle during the ride along and thoughts were jotted down post ride along when I returned to my car.

### **Job Responsibilities and Expectations**

As discussed in the above, the job responsibilities of SROs are not defined on a national level, but there are recommendations put out by the U.S. Department of Education on what a SRO's job should entail. In this section, those responsibilities are discussed with Archie in terms of his personal beliefs, the school's expectations of him while in on duty, and what his department believes he should be doing while in the schools.

When the topic of a SRO's job responsibilities was brought up, Archie's desire to help people provides the foundation of his viewpoint. The want to help children avoid drugs, gangs, and a dangerous lifestyle is at the forefront and stems from his background as a father. The pull to protect schools from any violence stems from both fatherhood and his marriage to a local school teacher, making his investment in school safety a personal one. These outside factors impact his ideology because he is thinking as a parent what he would want for his kids and as a spouse to an employee of the school. In his statement he references keeping the kids safe and then immediately goes on to discuss how he, as a parent, wants the school environment to be for his children:

Um, again to just keep the kids safe, and why obviously, I'm a parent and I don't want my kids going to a school where I'm going to worry about them being safe or being able to learn in a safe environment. I don't want them to worry about being bullied or about being peer pressured into doing something they don't wanna do.

The focus on an SRO being in a school for safety and not as a form of daily discipline matches up with what the U.S. Department of Education released in their report for a positive school climate. They suggest that an SRO should not be used as a disciplinary tool by the administration, but instead be there for the safety of students and staff, as well as to offer educational help when it is beneficial to the students.

In the interview, Archie is asked what he believes is expected of him as an officer within the school. His discussion focused on ensuring the environment is safe for the students and allows students to learn without fear. He claims the expectations of him as an SRO come from a collaboration between the sheriff (his boss), the school board, and parents. Digging into his law enforcement background, he believes current expectations are influenced by past incidents, whether they happened at that particular school, particular county, or whether it was something on a national level that influenced new policies. In comparing the policies of schools to policies meant for adults, it is a prime example of how schools are not being treated as an individual case and instead the government forgets schools are meant for children, not adults. The law itself treats adults and minors separately, however the school policies do not reflect that separation. Instead the school policies many times do not take into account the consequences of a student being removed from the classroom, entering the juvenile justice system, or how juveniles are not mentally on the same level as an adult offender. His discussion about past events having an impact on current policies reflects the extant empirical literature review on the rise of the criminalization of schools:

Sarah: And why do you think that the expectations that are had [by the school and sheriff's department] are there?

Archie: Um, I would say kinda like in the regular law enforcement field there are a lot of laws out there that are in place because something has, something has happened in the past, whether it be in this town, in this case or, or, the county, um, there

are a lot of expectations or rules at school that are there because has happened at school in the past, maybe not at that school but your there to make sure it doesn't happen here.

### **Perceptions of SRO Work**

From his past years of working within the schools as both a DARE officer and SRO, he sees that the school board and the sheriff's department are on the same page in terms of what the officers need to be doing in the schools. The theme of both departments is that the childrens' safety is the top priority. However, when asked about his opinion on what his role should be, Archie references safety but also includes how law enforcement must also have a presence in the job:

I think, my role as a SRO should not be just to enforce laws. I think my job as a SRO should be to get to know the kids, become friends with the kids, and be there to help them in any shape, form or fashion, some kids only think cops are bad guys, so if I can build a rapport with them than maybe even help the ones that maybe not have any food at home, or, or any issue they have, not just legal issues. I want to help them out any way I can.

His description matches up with the triad model put out by the U.S. Department of Education, in which the SRO should serve as a mentor as part of their job duties. This ideology on SRO duties that Archie has comes from, not only his role as a father, but also from him personal involvement within the community. In the past, Archie has helped students out of bad situations and helped to give them the tools to be successful, which would fall under the "mentor/counselor" role of the triad model. In one incident he used his connections in the community to help a child not only get out a bad situation, but helped set her up for success:

Sarah: Okay, and do you think the school supports this ideology that you have?

Archie: Yes! Yes, Yes. I just helped a kid get out of her house, unfortunately the mom was abusing meth and the house was just terrible. And she is 18, just about to graduate high school and I got her a home, my church provided her a home til she graduates and then goes off to college. We're helping her get into college and everything.

## **Conflicting Mandates**

With two different departments influencing the definition of SRO work and training, one focus of this study was if there were any conflicting mandates between the schools and the police department. A difference in what is expected could lead to an SRO not understanding what s/he is supposed to be focusing on while in the school. In regards to Cooper County, Archie states that from his point of view the schools and the sheriff's office are on the same page when it comes to what is expected of the officers while they are in the schools.

Um, so I think that our expectations are the same, or they're similar if not the same. We want to ensure that the kids are safe also, help out or handle issues that arise that may not be able to be handled in school....Overall the principles', the schools expectations of school resource officers and the department's expectations are similar, or the same because they want both parties want the safety of the children paramount.

By both departments having the same goals and having similar expectations of the officers, it can take away any question when it comes to handling students when the event arises. This also allows for an SRO to ask questions and they know that the answer they receive is supported by their department. The importance of this is big because in order for an individual to do their job properly, they need to first understand what is expected of them from those employing them.

## **Job Training**

As stated in the literature review, there is no national standard for what SROs need to be trained on in order to work within the schools. There are different courses available for SRO training, most noticeably through NASRO, that train SROs based on the triad model and the recommendations put out by the U.S. Department of Education. However, beyond the minimum that the individual state might require, that responsibility lies on the departments or the individual themselves. Archie has training that others might not because of his history with the military,

SWAT, and crisis management team. This is important because his training stems from his law enforcement background, not because the state or U.S. Department of Education required specific training in order to work within schools. The following discussion gives a good example of how the training of a deputy is being used to substitute for SRO training.

This section goes through a variety of training that the U.S. Department of Education has recommended that SROs have before being placed within the schools. The focus is to see whether or not officers are receiving any variation of training on these topics and if they feel that this training is even necessary. In receiving training on the how to determine a simple infraction from a more serious threat, Archie refers back to his law enforcement training that began in the academy, followed by the training you receive on the job:

Uh, yes. Umm...we, we in the police academy itself we learn the laws, what you can and can't do in schools and then its reinforced when you go to school resource officer school, you learn the laws of what can and can't be done at school but, there's also times when you have to use your common sense and not your actual, legal brain.

When Archie references how building that relationship with juveniles in the school allows the individual to learn how to handle a child on an individual level, it is another reminder of the roles that the Cooper County Sheriff's department expects from the officers in schools, as well as the recommendations of the U.S. Department of Education. The triad model is being implemented in many areas as part of the school disciplinary reform movement in this county. His perspective of this could be linked back to his role as a father, since when it comes to having children a parent must learn how to individually handle each of their children. The parent learns that what might not work for the eldest child might work with the younger one, and as they grow, the way to handle them differs as well. Later on in the interview, Archie discusses the desire to have more training on the developmental needs of juveniles.

According to Archie though there are many things that officers are not specifically trained on and instead are topics that an officer gains knowledge on as they gain experience within the field. In regards to being trained on how to supply students with various helpful resources, Archie claims that they do not receive anything but what they learn in the academy about local organizations that can provide help:

Uh, really don't really go through training for it but, I guess uh, well, I take that back. During our field training officer portion of our training to be a law enforcement officer at the county sheriff's office we go through you know, Safe Haven and uh DFACS [Department of Family and Child Services] and all that stuff.....Ehhh, maybe a little because we do have Safe Haven, it's the women's shelter, um, but for the most part its going through the daily routine and, and it's picking up on things and knowing who you can call and when you can call em and stuff like that.

The other way that officers learn about various helpful services is by just being in the community and learning what is available. In the above quote, Archie discussed how he being a part of the community through his job and his personal life has given him the knowledge of where help can be found for various situations. This is also important because the triad model states that the SRO should play a mentor/counselor to students, but if they are not properly trained on help services how much can they really help the student?

The experience of law enforcement was again cited when Archie was asked about training on de-escalation techniques. He brought in experience as well as that relationship with the student, to gauge how a situation needs to be handled:

Sarah: Okay, so back into training on de-escalation techniques.

Archie: Oh, uh, the short answer would be no, um, um, verbally, uh, we uh, you kinda have to get to know the kids, you have to get to know what kids respond to, what type of kid responds in different ways, you know some kids don't have a dad, so you can't really treat them like they're sons because they don't respond to that, so you just have to get to know the children and feel them out, and figure out which, how to treat

each kid because it's different. Now, physically restraining kids, I mean yes we have martial arts classes and stuff, handcuffing techniques, but basically it boils down to doing as little harm to them as possible to get them restrained.

His efforts to do as little harm as possible goes back to his roles as a father and as a law enforcement officer. His role as a parent certainly influences how he would want someone else, especially someone of power, dealing with his child should the situation arise and no parent wants their child to have to be physically handled by an adult. This goes along with the law enforcement mindset, because you are taught to use your words before getting physical, not just for the individual's safety but also your personal safety.

However, when asked about conflict resolution, child and adolescent development and developmentally appropriate response training, Archie credits that to the training he received through the DARE program. The training included the officers receiving scenarios, going into classrooms and discussing with students how they would want an officer to react in that situation. The use of scenario training was also cited when asked about training on crisis management should a large scale event occur on the school campus:

Yes, we do active shooter training all the time. I'm on the SWAT team, so we do training once a month on active shooter, sort of a "what if" scenario. I've also been trained by the FBI... It's not only the tactical side of it but it's also how to deal with parents or how to deal with the kids or how to deal with the teachers in situations like that...Parents started showing up out of nowhere to get their kids and yes, I don't blame them, if I had a kid in the school I'd probably want my kid to, but you have to be able to respond in a respectful, polite manner, "hey, yes we're trying to get everybody out as fast as possible." So I mean do we have training over that, yes the FBI does a lot of training with us.

From his response it is clear that a lot of effort is put into the focus of safety. Further, the training around these types of situations receive a lot more attention. Archie also references how as a parent, he would feel if this occurred at a school his child was at, so the training on how to

control a crowd of parents that will arrive if a crisis does occur, is a very important aspect to him. This training however, is more than some SROs may receive due to Archie's history with the military, the SWAT team, and his eleven years of law enforcement knowledge. In law enforcement, many policies come from past events and Archie used this to explain how the crisis training is conducted, "they go over almost every single school shooting in the past 10 years, they'll go over them with you, or past 20 years, they'll go over them with us and they'll tell us all their data and all that they learned in them, so they tell us that so we can go use it in our schools." This again shows the effort that goes into training not necessarily SROs, but law enforcement officers, on how to control a mass violence situation. The focus is on the aftermath rather than prevention. The use of conflict resolution could be used every day as a preventative measure against violent attacks, whereas mass school shootings are a rare occurrence.

The training on civil rights issues in regards to students is lacking from the training an SRO receives. When asked about if they receive any training on the civil rights of students, Archie responded with a short but effective answer:

Sarah: Okay, so what about civil rights laws? Regarding students.

Archie: Umm, I'd have to say not much, not much training because yah I know it's an issue in some places but, it's not a terrible issue here, I mean...we don't really have black-white problems like we use to 20 years ago so um, we talk about it? But it's not really classes or training."

The belief that there is no "black-white problem" is problematic because as discussed in the literature, the data on school discipline does not support this and there are punishment disparities between minorities and their white peers.

This is opposite of what the U.S. Department of Education recommends SROs receive. The U.S. Department of Education has learning the civil rights of students as one of the topics that needs to be covered in any training the individual receives. Archie's viewpoint on the matter could

come from his past military service mixed with his current law enforcement service, because there is a comradery, or “brotherhood”, in both these professions, the individuals do not see color, they just see their brother in arms having their back or “guarding their six”.

The training on student civil rights goes along with SROs receiving training in the area of cultural responsiveness and institutional biases. This type of training is important because the extant literature illustrates that institutional biases exist and there are various ways that situations need to be dealt with regarding both those biases and making sure cultures are understood to better serve the students:

Sarah: Do you receive any training on, here let me see if I phrase it this way if it works, how to respond to kids of different cultures or anything dealing with institutional bias?

Archie: No. No, we have uh, scenarios where you just go through your day to day job and you learn what some cultures do and don't do, but our big thing is speaking English, um if they don't speak English it's really difficult for us.

Archie's response shows us again the lack of official training on cultural competency, but rather it's more unofficial by simply having to experience it in the field. While experience in the field is a valuable learning tool, official training on various scenarios is important so that the first time the officer experiences a situation they have a foundation at least of how to respond. The U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles* (2014) suggest that bias-free policing and cultural competence are topics that need to be covered.

The suggestions put out by the U.S. Department of Education also include having SROs trained in dealing with those individuals with disabilities. When asked about receiving training related to individuals involved with special education or disabilities, the response was “No”, but followed with a want to receive this type of training:

Not much at all, not much at all. What, we, we rely on the teachers to know all that. Um, we would be there in a scenario where, as law

enforcement, we would be there to help out, if, if the children got out of control, or the special needs kid got out of control. We would rely heavily on the teachers and the special ed teachers to handle the child, UNTIL the child you know needed to be restrained or something like that, we'd help out with that kinda thing...

The reliance on teachers, who are trained to handle students that fall in this category, can be a valuable resource, however the SROs should also have the knowledge on how to interact with these students. The response of not getting physically involved until it is absolutely necessary is positive, but if they had the training themselves they would be able to assist those teachers more and also help de-escalate the situation without having to get physical at all. When Archie was asked about having to handle a child with a disability that has escalated to a point of SRO interference, that need to help people was present:

Sarah: What about training in dealing, um, in say you had an escalation of a student who has a disability, I know you touched on the teachers, but do you receive training on how to deal with the students that have disabilities.

Archie: Uh, no we don't. I wish we did though. Really it's kinda on the job training, really what you learn every day and again that's what I think is good about school resource officer. A good school resource officer will be one that doesn't just walk around the school and stares at the kids. Making sure laws are being abided by, I think a good resource officer gets to know their kids, gets to know the kid that sometimes has the outbreaks and it's hard for him to listen, or pay attention, or causes an outburst. If you get to know that kid and know that he response to a hug or also knows that you can't touch him at all, I mean once you get to know the kids you get to know how to responds appropriately and I learned that on the job.

Archie's aspiration to have more training demonstrates that he understands its importance. Additionally, with his aspirations matching up with the U.S. Department of Education, his statement and Jones's indicate the recommendations are accepted by current SROs in the field.

Another important aspect to being in the schools is having to interact with the parents of students, especially if legal action does have to be taken out against a student. Archie again referred to this being something that is learned on the job and no official training is given on it “Um, no same thing, same exact thing. If we have incidents in mom or dad, parents, uncles, if they get up there that’s how we learn”

### **Summary**

The majority of Archie’s training has be received through his state peace officer training, his training to become a DARE officer, the minimum state SRO training course, and his SWAT training. However, with this particular case, Archie’s ties to community organizations, specifically his church, allowed him to connect students directly to resources. This area is overlooked through the current training he receives, but if specialized training were given on the subject, specific to his area, more resources could emerge beyond his personal connections.

When asked if there was anything that he wished they were trained on, that is not touched on, he had two main ideas. First, he wanted to have more first aid training, possibly EMS training so that he could be more useful should an event occur that required quick medical reaction, such as a mass violent attack or a medical emergency. He says that, due to his military past, he has more training than most but it is not something done across the board. Second, Archie stated that it would be “cool” to go through a psychology course and get certified so that he could better communicate with the kids he is put in charge of helping.

The interview was concluded up by asking if there was anything else he felt was important to be said and he informed me that Cooper County has been on a trial run with SROs and will be expanding their force within the coming year. He then continued on to say that currently he does

not know a principal or a parent that does not love the idea of having an SRO within the school.

Citing his background of a parent and the husband of a school teacher, Archie says that:

Being a DARE officer and having family in the schools I know almost every principle and every single one of them want a DARE officer, I mean want SRO because just having them in the schools, just that alone, it doesn't scare kids into acting right, but they know not to do certain things because the police are here, they act right automatically.

Archie also believes that by having SROs in schools can be a step towards changing the perspectives that kids have towards police officers in general. He mentions the girl he helped this past year and how she made a comment to him about how she did not know that officers were nice and that they could help out with situations like hers. Again, bringing in his want to serve his community, he responded with, "We're not just here to enforce laws about crime, its serve and protect, we are here to serve as well."

This interview with Archie shows that what an officer wants in regards to training is more than what they are receiving. The highlights from this case study are that the majority of the training an SRO receives comes from their time at the academy, what they learn while on the job, and that is all backed up to what they learn from the state minimum requirement training. It is clear from this one case study that what officers are learning do not directly reflect the job that a SRO is supposed to do, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. In this study we see that an individual that wants to do this job and is invested in it, in such a way that Archie is, wants to be educated more, so that they can better serve the students they work with.

The way that Archie views his job responsibilities and how he believes an officer in a school should act, can all stem back to his want to help people. This is then backed up by his eleven years as a deputy and the role he plays in his personal life, a father, husband, and active member of his community. His philosophy matches up with the U.S. Department of Education's

recommendations of the roles that SROs should have in the schools. In Cooper County the sheriff's department is wanting to build a better relationship within the communities they serve and help kids learn that cops are there to protect and serve them, not just arrest them. Through Archie's statements on the job responsibilities of SROs, he matches up with both of these wants and needs of the department, the community, and the school board.

## CHAPTER 6

### DILTON

#### **Learning about Dilton**

The time spent with Dilton included an official interview that lasted 36 minutes along with follow-up questions through e-mail and there was time spent discussing the topic of SROs during an on-campus event that both him and the researcher were in attendance. Also, having a work relationship with Dilton's wife and through that have seen him outside of this study. While the interview was recorded, notes were jotted down afterwards to highlight what stood out the most in terms of his emotion behind a question and his demeanor.

Dilton is a young, white male who was recently married and has been in law enforcement for six years. He has the state post certification and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in public administration. During a follow-up interview, participants were asked if they would identify their political views, and Dilton indicated he was a Republican. Dilton also grew up in a small town inside Cooper County so his ideals are partially rooted within this upbringing. His reasoning for entering law enforcement is based off of family, saying "that's my family's tradition, that's all we've ever done."

All of these characteristics – as illustrated below - influenced his orientation toward SRO work. Being young can mean that he has less experience than someone who is older or who has been in law enforcement longer. In being recently married his responses illustrate that he is no longer seeing things in a one person view, but takes into consideration his newly growing family. By identifying as Republican, data supports that his ideals are based on a more conservative foundation which influences how he believes expectations should be made and who should be in charge of creating them. The characteristic of growing up in a small town, like the county he serves

could allow him to relate to the citizens in a unique way because he understands the dynamics of how a small town works; how the politics of a small town work, the way people talk in a small town and everyone knowing everyone. In coming from a law enforcement family, his ideas of police work and how things should be conducted are influenced heavily by these family ties. He grew up listening to his family members talk about the job and so when he entered law enforcement he already had a developed idea of the profession. This all impacts how he views the roles of officers, which is discussed in the in interview, and how he believes training should be set up.

In regards to working with juveniles, this is something Dilton believes starts from day one as a law enforcement officer. His motivation to be involved with the schools directly, and interact with juveniles is based off the notion that he could possibly impact the life of a student. The motivation to impact a child's life is important because an SRO has to have that drive to make a positive impact on the students and to be that mentor outlined in the triad model.

### **Job Responsibilities and Expectations**

The interview began by asking Dilton the official job description of an SRO as defined by the county. Dilton outlined what they are expected to do while in schools, "Majority of what we do in the school is walk through every day, get to know the staff, talk to the students. If there is an issue with a statute being broken that is when we come in." Even with only being in the schools periodically, there is an emphasis on building a relationship with the staff and students. As discussed above, this positive relationship is consistent with the U.S. Department of Education (2014) which highlights the need for SROs to be mentors to the students. The goal of this is to allow students to be comfortable around police officers. By being comfortable with the officer and having that trust, it could help in a situation where a student might be planning to harm themselves, or others, by having other students bring this information to the officer.

When we moved into the school's expectations he responded by talking about how the presence of officers in the school is a necessity and how the idea behind SROs is officer presence. The department and school administration want the officer to be seen and noticed by students to deter misconduct. As Dilton states, his presence is, "To make sure to get that authority figure and they are gonna act up regardless, but if your presence is there they are less likely to act up." This is a common thought among officers, both Jones and Archie mentioned how having a presence in the school can help with student behavior. This is a viewpoint also shared with policymakers who see officer presence as a way to combat violence

According to Dilton, overall expectations of officers are influenced by the media and the idea that police are viewed as "caregivers;" thus, whenever help is needed it is the police who are called to respond. This connects into how having a SRO in the school full-time allows for deputies to be freed up on the streets. The department has similar expectations for their officers according to Dilton, "Interacting with the schools, attempt to give a good role model, check the school, make sure doors are locked and controlling traffic. Walk through ask if they need anything and ask them questions." The department has referenced the triad model before with their push to add more SROs to the county. This description of their current expectations is a perfect example of the department putting that model into practice. The triad model is supported and backed by the U.S. Department of Education, as well as NASRO.

The current expectations from the department are put out by the sheriff, who according to Dilton, "he is the one who calls up the battle plan, we just do it." The sheriff himself is invested in SROs being available to schools. According to Dilton it is in the sheriff's nature, viewing these kids as the future of society and he wants to ensure that they succeed. This reflection upon the sheriff shows the personal relationship that Dilton has with the individuals he works with and how

knowing the individuals within the law enforcement community shapes his thoughts on the sheriff himself.

The expectations of the department are mirrored to the expectations put on the officers by the school. In the interview, the biggest thing the school expects from the officers is presence and to be there as often as they can. Dilton mentioned that the schools enjoy when the officers come around for their daily walk-throughs. This excitement to see them could be based off fear from what is portrayed in the media as well as stemming from the work these SROs have put into creating a positive relationship between the department and schools.

### **Perceptions of SRO Work and Conflicting Mandates**

Later on in the interview, we discussed what he believed his role in the schools should be. His perception of what a SRO should be is a reflection of his stance of what police officers themselves should be. Dilton believes an SRO's job should be simple, "A caregiver and a role model for the kids." He continued on to express how he wants the students to be comfortable with officers, "Well when they need something I want them to come to us, and if they don't have a male role model we want to be that, they might not have it in their daily life." Not only does this match the expectations of the schools and department, but it continues to follow the recommended triad model.

This is beneficial when it comes to the law enforcement aspect of the triad model, but it can also skew his view of how an SRO should respond to a student offender, versus an adult offender. The U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles* (2014) focuses heavily on how students should be treated by law enforcement agents while at school. They argue that the SRO's law enforcement contribution should be used as a last resort or only when criminal act has occurred.

When it comes to department and school support of SROs in Cooper County, Dilton discussed how the Board of Education in the county is helping to fund the addition of two new SROs and that the department supports officers in schools through the DARE program and daily walk-throughs. Dilton believes that both agencies have the same end goal, which is to “get the kids educated and out of the schools and a better person, a positive to society.” The students are the number one thing and that includes their safety as well as investing in their future. By having the same goal and no conflicting mandates, the SROs are able to complete their tasks with the knowledge that the school and their department have the same expectations of them. They are able to focus on working with the students without having to worry about different goals.

### **Job Training**

Further into the interview, Dilton and I discussed the types of training that are recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. We began with determining a simple infraction from a serious threat. Dilton mentioned the academy and how the training on this starts there and evolves as officers gain experience. He also mentioned how this is something that begins with statutes and knowing what they are, which ones are serious (felonies) and which ones are simple infractions (misdemeanor).

This type of training is important because it is what forms the foundation of how SROs should react in different situations. Dilton’s answer could be good for an officer on the street, however when it comes to dealing with students in schools, the training needs to be specialized for an officer working in a school setting and the U.S. Department of Education supports that. The situations between what happens on the streets and what happens in classrooms are different, with different populations, and that needs to be reflected. The schools and department want the children safe, this is a part of that, ensuring that the situations are being handled with the best interest of

everyone involved. By not receiving this type of training in regards to schools, Dilton is not able to fully meet the expectations put forth by the schools and department as he conducts the routine walk-throughs of the Cooper County schools as part of his day shift. The academy training is being substituted for specialized training in handling altercations with students. Resorting to academy training can prove dangerous, due to the academy training being geared towards adult offenders rather than juvenile offenders.

One part to the triad model is the idea of the SRO being a mentor or counselor to the students. This role requires having knowledge on the resources available to students should they need outside help or support. While discussing this role, Dilton revealed that he personally has never received any training on the subject. However, as he mentioned earlier, he wants to be that role model for the students and wants them to be able to come to him should they need any help. Dilton wants them to feel comfortable coming to them should there be issues at school, such as bullying or violence, or if they have issues outside of school, such as problems at home. With that in mind, having knowledge on various resources would allow for him to fulfill the expectations he has put on himself. The department also wants the students to have this mentality, so providing SROs with this training would be beneficial to achieving their objective as well.

Next, we discussed training on de-escalation techniques, which Dilton claims is something taught through his role as a law enforcement officer. Again this is problematic because law enforcement training is written with an adult perpetrator in mind, not a young juvenile who is mentally still developing. In talking about his training on de-escalation techniques, he stated:

All day, every day. CIT [Crisis Intervention Team] training has to do with mental illness, using your mouth instead of using your hands, but sometimes there is no way to de-escalate a juvenile. They are emotionally driven and haven't learned to control them sometimes.

The discussion on conflict resolution went in a similar direction, with Dilton referencing his law enforcement training. Dilton claims that conflict resolution is their job and that there is no particular training, but it is about “doing the job, going on calls, and learning what does and does not work.” By both subjects being covered in the academy and not through a specialized program, there is again the issue of the differences between juvenile and adult offenders. If an SRO is relying on what they learned on the job instead of specialized training, it is only useful if they have encountered the situation before, since that is how they learn. Dilton discussed how juveniles are emotionally driven, so having knowledge on how to control that emotion so the officer can de-escalate a situation and then resolve the issue is vital to any SRO in a school. The lack of education on these subjects is also not allowing SROs to meet the expectation of being seen as a positive influence to students, because it gives an opportunity for an officer to respond in such a way that results in the loss of student trust. This could be done by reacting to a situation in a hostile or inappropriate way, or by simply not understanding how to relate to the student and what he/she is going through at that point in time.

The Guiding Principles (2014) report recommended SROs receive education on subjects that directly affect the students in the school. These include developmentally appropriate responses to situations, the development of adolescents, education on disabilities and special education issues, cultural responsiveness, institutional biases, and the needs of students who have disabilities. When Dilton and I talked about these school related subjects, it was found that he has not received specialized training in any of these areas. All of these subjects are important to know when working within a school because of the diverse environment that officers encounter while in the school. The issue of developmentally appropriate responses and special education students is covered by the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) that officers receive through the department, but it is not

specialized to juveniles within a school. He credits his training on cultural responsiveness, institutional bias, and the needs of disabled students to on the job repetition and using one's "moral compass".

In order to be a role model and mentor to the students the officers have to understand the students. If they are not trained on how to handle a student with a disability or students from different cultures, it could result in losing any relationship that had been built. It goes against what the school and department have expressed they want from the SROs in schools, as well as being against what Dilton believes his role should be. If the department provided officers with training on these recommended topics, the relationships between officers and students could grow, creating an avenue should police ever need the help of students.

However, when it came to crisis management training Dilton was able to give an answer than included more than one type of training, all done through the sheriff's department, "Policy and procedures, the tactical team, ALERRT [advanced law enforcement rapid response training] training that is how to react to an active shooter." He continued on to inform me this is training that officers receive yearly. The need for training like this has grown in the past years as incidents like the Columbine and Sandy Hook shootings have occurred. However, the training could go on and include more than just the tactical side, but also include how to handle children in these types of situations as well as parents that will show up once word gets out.

Some of the most important education an officer can receive is on the civil rights of the individuals that they serve. The rights of students while on school property have been passed down through the courts and the SROs in the schools need to not only know the ones already in place, but have continuing education on the subject. In Dilton's case he sees this not as something to be trained on, but as part of an officer's job:

Uh, Occasionally. We have what comes from the Supreme Court and it is our duty to keep up with the case law. That is training, if you continue to do that as you should, and it's appropriate to your job.

Dilton viewing case law this way, and seeing it as something that is part of his job to keep up with, could link back to coming from a family of law enforcement. He saw the changes that relatives had to make as laws changed and thus it became part of the job. There is also his identification of a Republican, because the party is known for being big on protecting some individuals' civil rights. His conservative views could help him accept the rulings of the courts as being final and then attempting to implement them into his job without bias.

Serving the students is the most important thing and part of that is ensuring that the SRO understands the difference between the laws outside the school and those within the schools. By not having specialized training geared towards students' civil rights, this creates disconnect between the school and department's expectations and the knowledge of SROs. There are differences in the policies regarding school property and the rights of students while at school and the rights of individuals outside of schools.

### **Summary**

The interview with Dilton helped to answer the research questions that were outlined earlier. In regards to the expectations of others on the SROs, the focus is on them keeping the students safe and building a relationship with the student body and faculty. These matched up with Dilton's own view of the roles of an SRO, which included being a role model for the students and building a positive relationship with students. The conflicting mandates, according to Dilton, do not exist in Cooper County with both the schools and the department expecting the same from each SRO. However, the training that these officers are receiving does not reflect the roles that they are

expected to fill. The training is based on law enforcement practices and does not address juveniles at length.

Throughout the case study, Dilton's interview(s) helped to develop themes on the job responsibilities and the training that is received by officers. The first is that the expectations of the SROs focuses on safety and positive relationships with students. Secondly, there are no conflicting mandates between the department and the schools, which could hinder the job performance of the officers. Finally, there is the problem with training and how the training received by the officers does not reflect the expectations had of them. Instead of the training being specialized towards working with students, officers relay heavily on the training they received through the academy.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCUSSION**

The goal of this project was to gain insight into the job of an SRO, through the perspective of actual SROs. This project started striving to answer four research questions: (1) what are the expectations of others on the roles of SROs, (2) what are the perspectives of SROs on what role they should play in the school, (3) are there any conflicting mandates regarding differences in expectations, and (4) does the training SROs receive reflect the expectations given to them by the school and the police departments? Through conducting case studies of three individuals within a rural county, these questions were answered and themes for each emerged. In the following pages findings for each research question will be discussed and then overall themes of the study will be presented. Afterward, this section will discuss the limitations of this study as well as identify avenues for future research.

#### **The Expectations of SROs**

The expectations of SROs within Cooper County were similar between the departments and the schools. There are two themes that emerged from the SRO case studies. The first being that SROs are expected to maintain a safe school environment for the students. This finding speaks to what the departments and the schools expect the SROs to do while working. Both of the agencies have the same expectation for SROs, the primary goal being to ensure that the school is a safe environment for students. Briefly, this is evident in the job duties that the SROs perform while in schools, such as ensuring that all doors are locked and performing walk-throughs of the school on a regular basis. In knowing what is expected from them, officers can make sure they are focusing on the goal and there are no questions about what is expected of them.

The second theme is that expectations for SROs come from past experiences and events that have occurred. This findings emerged in all three of the case studies, with each individual

referencing that the expectations come from some form of previous occurrence. In Jones's case, his expectations came from what the previous SRO before him had done, which Jones then improved upon to create the new expectations. Archie and Dilton had similar opinions on how laws are created. Both discussed how a lot of policies emerge out of an event (a school shooting, police officer misconduct, drug use on campus etc.), and the expectations of SROs is similar. By knowing where these expectations stem from, it can allow for the participants to understand the reason for each policy, as well as allow them to create change in a similar way.

Both themes are supported by the current reform that is going on in the United States which include policy changes to combat the high rates of juveniles entering the criminal justice system. This includes keeping the school safe by solving crimes, investigating deviant behavior, and working to stop serious threats before they have an opportunity to occur (Schlosser, 2014; Finn, 2006). The second theme is also supported by literature, with most policies being based off of past events, mainly school shootings. This was largely seen beginning with Columbine which led to an increase in school securities and zero-tolerance policies (Simmons, 2015). Following the shooting at Sandy Hook, these policies were revisited.

### **Perspectives of SROs on the Job**

According to Finn (2006) and Schlosser (2014) the role of an SRO is broken into three main roles. These roles are also recommended by the U.S. Department of Education and are referred to as the triad model. Currently in the literature this is the main reference when the roles of an SRO are being defined. The triad model consist of: (1) the SRO should aim to be a role model or mentor to the students, (2) the SRO should be utilized for safety reasons and not be used as a disciplinary, and (3) the departments and the schools support the ideas that SROs have when it comes to their job responsibilities.

When comparing perception-based data of SRO responsibilities across case studies, four themes emerged. The first is that SROs should work to build a positive relationship with the student body in the school(s) they serve. This finding is important because having a positive relationship with the students is paramount to meeting the expectations that are put forth by the departments and the schools. In order to keep the students safe, the officer needs to know the students he serves. All three of the officers believed that being present in the school and building the positive relationship helps the students to trust them and be more willing to come to the officer should an incident arise. The belief also came with the notion that having a positive experience with the SROs can help develop better community relations by giving the students an opportunity to see officers in a positive light. This can be done by officers being able to connect students to resources beneficial to them. This was seen with Archie when he was able to help a student get out of a bad situation at home through his personal resources. The student made a comment that she did not know that officers were able to do this sort of thing, this knowledge could be passed onto other students if officers are able to be educated on more resources available to students within their community.

The second theme is a take-away from the positive relationships built between the SROs and students. The participants all discussed how being a role model to the students is beneficial because it gives students the chance to have a role model in their life, should they not have one at home. This is also important because it fits in with what the U.S. Department of Education recommends, SRO duties should be based off of the triad model which consisting of SROs being a teacher, a mentor/counselor, and a law enforcement officer. Being a role model to students gives them someone to look up to as well as give them someone they can go to if they have any questions

or if problems arise in school or in their personal life. The participants all discussed this job responsibility in terms of an SRO, but also as part of their job as a law enforcement officer in general.

As discussed above, one of the pillars in the triad model is the role of being a mentor or counselor to the students. The term “role model” falls under this pillar as well and again we see it gaining support from the U.S. Department of Education, as well as NASRO. According to NASRO (2012) being a role model includes having a “open-door” policy with students, allowing for counseling sessions when needed, referring students to resources, such as legal-aid, community-services and public health agencies. These were all seen with the officers, Jones had an open-door policy with his students allowing them to talk to him about any issues they needed to (personal and school related) and Archie is connected to community-services and he used that to help a student when she needed to be relieved from a bad situation.

In the third theme the act of discipline is the main point, with participants believing that the SROs should not be used as a disciplinary. The theme emerged throughout the case studies, with all three individuals wanting SROs to use their role as a law enforcement officer, only if a law is being broken. In the case study of Jones we saw how he got upset when a teacher used him as a fear tactic with an unruly child, this all ties into those positive relationships and wanting the students to see them as a resource, not an enemy. This theme also mirrors what the U.S. Department of Education says in regards to when and how SROs should utilize the role of “law enforcement officer.” They recommend that SROs be used as a last resort to discipline or in the most serious offense where a law has been broken.

In the previously discussed literature this is a topic that has been discussed in many states and is being acted upon by creating policies limiting what discipline can be given out and who is

in charge of administering the discipline. The increase in officers in schools and the use of zero-tolerance policies created a system of harsh punishments regardless of the infraction or the reason behind it (Gonzalez, 2012). The literature shows a support for this movement towards decriminalizing the school system and the actions of policy makers are showing an initiative to shut down the school-to-prison pipeline.

The final theme found is the roles officers want to play in the schools are supported by both the departments and the schools. This is important because it opens up the floor for the officers to fill the roles they have laid out without fear of backlash. It also shows there is a trust between the SROs and the schools and departments. By knowing their bosses approve of how they want to do their job, it allows them to actively do the job and be happy in the position. This can also help in when hiring new SROs because it gives the applicants a chance to present the department with their personal thoughts on how they would wish to do their job, if the department can support their ideas than the applicant can be considered.

### **Schools vs. Law Enforcement: Conflicting Mandates**

This section examines any conflicting mandates found between what the school expects and what the departments expect from the SROs. All three case studies discussed this topic and throughout all three only one theme emerged: the schools and the law enforcement departments are in agreement on what the job responsibilities of the SROs should be.

While it is only one theme that emerged on this topic, it is the one of the most important because it is what allows SROs to successfully do their jobs. None of the case studies showed that the departments and schools disagreed on how an SRO should utilize their time while in the schools. In Jones' case study he discussed a personal struggle between being a law enforcement officer and a mentor, however there are no professional struggles. The reason that I argue this is

one of the more important themes found is because by not having any conflicting mandates the SROs are clear on what they should and should not be doing, there is not grey area. If an officer messes up there is no question on what policies he was following, because the policies from the schools are the same at the department.

There were conflicting mandates between what the police department, sheriff's department, and schools ask of the SROs and what the U.S. Department of Education recommends SROs receive training on. The officers complied with the mandates in terms of maintaining a safe learning environment, however the lack of specialized training does not follow the recommendations. The officers did not receive specialized SRO training on: distinguishing simple infractions and serious threats, referring students to helpful services, de-escalation techniques, conflict resolution, developmentally appropriate responses, child and adolescent development, civil rights laws, disability and special education issues, cultural responsiveness and institutional bias, needs of students with disabilities, or student and family engagement. The only officer to receive specialized training was Archie, however training was only received on conflict resolution, developmentally appropriate response, and child and adolescent development. All three officers received law enforcement training on crisis management, which educates them on how to respond to an active shooter, violent situations, or hostage negotiation. This conflicting mandate is further explored in the following section on received training.

### **Training Received vs. Training Needed**

Each case study took a look at the training received by the participants and then examined to see if the training they are receiving reflects the expectations had of them. The training topics discussed are from the Guiding Principles (2014) report on what the U.S. Department of Education

recommends SROs receive training on. While all the officers have been through the police academy as part of their law enforcement training, not all of them have received specialized training to be an SRO. In Table 2 below the training discussed during the interviews are outlined and then identifies if the officer received training on the topic and if so, what avenue the training was received.

Table 2: Training Received By Participants

<b>Type of Training</b>	<b>Jones</b>	<b>Archie</b>	<b>Dilton</b>
Distinguishing Simple infractions and Serious threats	No	LE	LE
Referring Students to Helpful Services	No	LE	No
De-escalation Techniques	No	No	LE
Conflict Resolution	No	SRO	No
Developmentally Appropriate Responses	X	SRO	No
Crisis Management	LE	LE	LE
Civil Rights Laws	LE	No	LE
Child and Adolescent Development	No	SRO	No
Disability and Special Education Issues	No	No	LE
Cultural Responsiveness and Institutional bias	LE	No	No
Needs of Students with Disabilities	No	No	No
Student and Family Engagement	No	No	No

*“Le” Indicates the training was received through the department or while at the academy*

*“SRO” Indicates the training was received through DARE/SRO training*

*“X” indicates an answer that the researcher felt could not be deemed a direct yes or no*

When it came to the training that each participant received there were differences in how and where they received the training, but there were six themes that emerged from the case studies that highlight important points in regards to training.

The first theme is SROs rely on their academy training and law enforcement experience rather than specialized SRO training. This refers to how the participants said they received certain types of training. A lot of the answers were along the lines of, “you just use common sense” or “no formal training, you learn as you do the job.” This is a huge issue because the tactics taught in the academy are not geared towards juvenile offenders, they are designed for adult offenders and by relying on this training they are viewing the students as adults rather than

children. It leaves room for the officer to act inappropriately towards a child and fall back how they were trained in the academy. This could include using an excessive amount of force towards a juvenile, using inappropriate language in the presence of a juvenile, or treating the student like an adult versus a juvenile. The participants also discussed how a lot of the training they receive in terms of students with disabilities comes with just being on the job and getting to know the teachers in the special education department. The problem with this is that not all students with disabilities are going to be in the special education department. If the SROs received training that is designed for working with juveniles they would be better equipped to serve the students.

In the literature discussed previously, the issue of there being not national standard of training was discussed. The Department of Education released the Guiding Principles (2014) report which only outline recommendations for SRO training. The recommendations are based off of the triad model and used by NASRO in their training courses (National Association of School Resource Officers, 2015). The reliance on academy training and on the job experience can be linked to the lack of a national training standard.

The second theme is: all the participants are open to receiving extra training that would enhance their ability to serve the students. Jones puts in for extra training through his department when he finds a course that he finds could benefit his performance in the school and Dilton believes that keeping up with changes in law is a part of the job already. In regards to Archie, he discussed wanting more training on dealing with special needs children and want to gain more knowledge on the psychology of children so that he can better understand how to react in certain situations. This theme is evidence that while the officers are not getting the training to match their job, they want to get the training and it is something they have been active towards.

The third theme is: there is inconsistency in the training that is received. As mentioned earlier, there is no national standard for SROs when it comes to training. The only guidelines are the recommendations put out by the U.S. Department of Education and even then the training varies from state to state and even county to county. Table 2 shows how the training each officer received is vastly different, with the only consistency being the training on crisis management. The consistency of training among SROs in the county is very important because it allows for there to be similarities among the schools. If you have some SROs that are only using their academy training and others that have specialized SRO training, then the way the officer acts within the schools will be vastly different. If an outsider were to look at similar situations that occurred in different schools, the response by the SROs should mirror each other. Just like the schools and the departments are on the same page in regards to expectations, the SROs need to be on the same page in regards to training.

Theme four is: the SROs rely a lot on “on-the-job” experiences, to help them learn how to handle certain types of situations. This goes against the recommended training as discussed in previous literature on the Guiding Principles (2014) report. In this case, it is that SROs are relying a lot on experience and “on-the-job” training to learn how to handle certain situations. This is really apparent when participants discussed training in regards to special education. While there are a lot of situations where the only way to learn is by being on the job, if a foundation is not given to work off of, the officer is going in half blind. In every case study the individual referenced on-the-job training as how they learned to deal with various situations. This finding shows that specialized training needs to be given if anything so that officers have a foundation to stand on should a situation arise. However, if on-the-job training is the preferred method then job shadowing should be considered as part of the SRO training process.

Theme five is: the training that the participants received do not fully reflect the expectations had of them by the schools and departments. The training meets the expectation that involves safety should a physical attack occur, but there are more than just physical attacks that threaten the safety of students. By not having proper training on the civil rights of students in schools, then officers are not keeping students safe from someone violating their rights. The same goes for institutional bias or cultural responsiveness if the officer does not have training to know what the common bias in education are then they are not able to notice it when it occurs. The literature on disparities within the education system were discussed previously, describing how racial minorities, sexual minorities, and students with disabilities are disproportionately punished.

If a student has cultural differences and the officer does not understand that, not only do they stand a chance of offending the individual but they will not be able to recognize if someone else is. A lot of meeting the expectations has to do with being able to relate to students on their level and understanding how they work. If the officer has the proper training than he can do that, but if he does not have the training, he cannot succeed in that area. Which is the case throughout the three case studies analyzed in this project.

In the case studies both Archie and Jones had to ask for clarification on what was meant by “cultural responsiveness and institutional bias”, however once it was explained using examples of disparities between minorities and their white peers, and different cultural traditions the officers were able to answer. As seen in Table 2 only Jones answered that he received training on the subject, however it was through his law enforcement training and not through SRO training.

The final theme is: there is a bigger emphasis on crisis management training, than any other training recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. All three of the participants were able to talk at length about the training they received on how to handle an active shooter or

hostile situation. There is a bigger focus on this type of training than the others that are recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. This could be because it is a sensitive topic and with the recent increase in active shooter incidents it seems to take center stage to the other training subjects. I do not argue that this type of training is not important, but SROs should be given training on the other subjects just as rigorously as they are on crisis management. The argument could even be made that the training on these types of events should be expanded for SROs, beyond what law enforcement personnel learn. A SRO should learn how to handle parents who arrive, how to refer students who experience an attack like this to the proper resources, and how to develop an action plan for their specific school.

In the U.S. Department of Education's Guiding Principles (2014; pg.19) report a vague definition of how SROs should be utilized in the schools, focusing on student safety; "protecting the physical safety of the school and preventing the criminal conduct of persons other than students, while aiming to reduce inappropriate student referrals to law enforcement." Finn (2006) expands this into suggesting that officers be used to help create a crisis management plan for the school in case an emergency should occur. Since SROs began to heavily emerge in the 1990s due to a string of violent acts, the need for officers to be able to handle these types of events became a necessity of the job (Weiler and Cray, 2011).

All of these themes do not match up with the current literature on how schools are becoming criminalized. The findings of this research, and how they do not match with current literature, can be attributed to the study being conducted in a small rural town rather than the traditional urban areas, it being a qualitative study rather than a quantitative study, and how it looks at the job of an SRO from their perspective rather than the students or administrators. By looking specifically at how the SROs view their job and training, the study looks at SROs through a lens

that has not yet been focused on. The study being qualitative gave the study the ability to gather data in a way that allowed SROs to explain in-depth their thoughts and feelings in regards to the roles of SROs. Also, with the study being conducted in a small rural town the way that schools utilize officers is different, there is only one current full-time SRO and the rest are sheriff's deputies who walk-through schools in conjunction with their other duties.

The rise of SROs came about following mass violence in schools and the implementation of zero-tolerance policies (Weiler and Cray, 2011; Lavarello and trump, 2001). This has been linked to the creation of the school-to-prison pipeline, however this study has found that the SROs in school do not want to contribute to juveniles going into the criminal justice system. The research also discussed how there is little oversight into the policies put into place in regards to safety (Simmons, 2015; Addington, 2003). This study found that to be true to an extent; the agencies involved in this county had two goals for the SROs, to keep the students safe and to build positive relationships with students. While there are goals outlined, the SROs are not given much direction beyond that. This is largely seen in the Jones case, where he has created his own job description based off of the original two goals.

### **Overall Themes**

Throughout analyzing each case study individually, then comparing them to find themes that emerged under each research question, large contextual themes emerged. Based off of the previous sections, there are four major themes to take away from this project.

*Theme 1: Belief that the main job of a SRO is safety and should be built around a positive relations with students, and SROs need to be more than a law enforcement officer.* This theme refers to how the officers all had a similar view on their role within the schools. This belief that they are there as a safety precaution and not to play disciplinary is important because it shows that

they understand the impact they have on the students they serve. By wanting to build this positive relationship, the officers are not only matching up with the U.S. Department of Education's (2014) description of an SRO, but they are also showing that SROs share a uniform stance on the job. This uniform stance is positive for the schools and the SROs, because it allows for all schools in the county to be served in the same fashion so there is no large difference between actions taken by SROs.

All this emerged from the discussion on what the SRO believes their role should be and as seen in the above case studies, every participant talked about wanting to build that trust with the students. They all talked about being a role model for the students and wanting them to understand that they, and police officers in general, are not the enemy but they are there to help them. While the media portrays SROs as a contributor to the school-to-prison pipeline and as another form of discipline, these case studies show that the officers do not want to be the stereotypical SRO. If three officers from different backgrounds can all agree on a similar definition of their job description, using terms such as "role model," "safety," and "positive relationship," why are the individuals doing the job not consulted on what their job entails? This bares the question of if it is the officer that is to blame, or is it the policies put in place by the school board or federal government that are the cause of these negative phenomenon.

If this project is any indicator, the biggest problem does not lie with the officers but with those that make the policies that officers have to follow. The policies state that a fight holds certain consequences, including the use of arrest, is that the officer's fault when he has to arrest a student for fighting or is that an individual doing his/her job? When research and the media look at SROs and try to determine if they are a problem or not, the policies that they have to enforce should be

at the foundation of those analysis. While an individual might not agree with a policy, it is not there job to debate it, their job is to enforce it.

In the reform movement currently, these policies are being examined and in some states changed to reflect the issues that current policies have (Skiba and Losen, 2016). The belief of the officers is also consistent with the current literature, discussed above, on how SROs should act in the schools. There is a push back on what SROs can do while in the school and the focus of new policies address the roles of law enforcement in schools, along with the punishments for infractions (Skiba and Losen, 2016).

*Theme 2: The school administrators, sheriff, and police chief all support the stance that the SROs want to take in the schools.* This theme is based around the lack of conflicting mandates in Cooper County as it relates to the jobs of SROs. All the agencies agree that the officers are in the schools to protect the students and they support the excess roles participants discussed in the above case studies. The importance of all agencies being on the same page in regards to the job responsibilities of the SROs, is that it eliminates any grey areas of the job. The officer knows that what he is doing is supported by everyone involved and what is expected from the department is the same thing the school administration is asking of them. Having this consentience also helps with the constancy among the different schools, since all agencies expect the same thing from the officers, the responses to similar situations in different schools should be similar.

As discussed in the above section, the officers believe that they are there as a safety precaution should a major event occur and should be viewed in a positive light by students. This goal lines up with the expectations that departments and schools have of them, as discussed in the case studies. The reason that is important is that it allows for a positive relationship between officers and school administrators as well as a positive relationship between the schools and the

departments. It is also a positive because it means, since in Copper County the SROs are jointly funded through the board of education and the sheriff's department, that there is a lesser chance of one side pulling the funding over a dispute on officer conduct.

*Theme 3: The majority of the training the SROs in this study receive comes from past law enforcement experience.* In Table 2, the training received was shown and for the training that was received, it was indicated whether the training came from an SRO course or from law enforcement training. The table shows that the participants indicated that the training they received came from past law enforcement training or experience. While in some incidents this could be beneficial, if an individual were to enter the school in a hostile manner, the majority of the implications of this are negative. The main point to look at is that law enforcement training is designed with an adult offender in mind, however the officers are not dealing with adults while in the schools. The response that an officer has towards a student is different than the response they should have towards an adult. By creating specialized SRO training that covers all the topics recommended by the U.S. Department of Education, the officers will be equipped to specifically handle a student should the need present itself.

The training received on crisis management is through law enforcement and that is understandable because it will require a law enforcement based reaction, however if the de-escalation techniques are learned in the academy, that is not designed for a child. The training on special needs students is not covered in law enforcement training, because it is not something that is seen in the streets. They might cover mental illness, but again the environment is vastly different and the school has protocol on what to do should a student get unruly to the need for an SRO's assistance. While even though the training in a specialized course geared towards SROs might not

be able to give a response for every situation, it can give them a foundation in which to work off of.

This lack of training is not the fault of the SROs themselves but it is at the hands at the departments that put them in the schools. By not having a set standard for SROs on a national level, it leaves it to the states and counties to decide what they deem sufficient enough. Instead of the training being based off of research and specialized to the job of an SRO, the officers are receiving training that is most likely based off of funding over content. NASRO holds training events as well as conferences for SROs that allows for continuing education that is based off of the recommendations put out by the U.S. Department of Education among other things. The most important investment in an employee is their training, so to not see that in a profession that is in charge of handling a vulnerable population is a disservice.

*Theme 4: The SROs want to receive more training than what the state mandates.* Each participant discussed some sort of training advancement, whether it be a conference or being able to take courses on child psychology, the participants showed an interest in receiving more education as a way to better serve the students. The knowledge that the officers want to receive the training that was discussed throughout the interviews, as well as training beyond those subjects, is nice to hear because it means that they understand the differences between working with juveniles and working with adults. They see that there is disconnect in the expectations had for them and the training that they are receiving. It also means that it would not be a struggle to these officers if the requirements for training were changed to include more relevant topics.

This can also be used as a way to weed out job applicants, because if they are not willing to go through extra training and continuing education in order to get the position, then they are not the type of officer you want in the school. In the academic community juveniles are viewed as a

vulnerable population and the individuals creating training requirements for SROs need to view them in that way as well. They are a population that needs to be protected on a level beyond just the physical aspects and with proper training SROs can help keep a school safe in every aspect, from emotional to home life to ensuring that the students are safe from harm. Another part of this safety is ensuring that they stay in school and are not subjected to harsh penalties, which can occur if the officers are used as a disciplinary instead of a last resort.

### **Labeling Theory and SROs**

The use of labeling theory in schools was discussed in the above literature and this theory can be used to explain the various ideas of the SROs interviewed. All three of the participants mentioned behavior, specifically how the presence of an officer in the school can influence how a student acts. By having this behavior shift, the SROs are helping to eliminate negative actions that could lead the student to being labeled as a delinquent and falling into the cycle of delinquency discussed in the literature. The officers also discussed how their goal is to see the students succeed and not fall into drugs, gangs, or drop out of school. The use of drugs and participating in gang activity on school grounds could possibly result in the double punishment, or being punished by the school and then punished by the courts. This would not only result in a student being labeled a “trouble-maker” by the school, but they would also be labeled a “criminal” by the courts. This increases their risk of recidivism and increases the likelihood of the youth getting involved with more deviant peers because of these labels given to them. As discussed earlier, the students will start acting the role of the label given to them by peers, teachers, administrators, and the courts (Ascani, 2012).

The act of dropping out of school also leads to an increase in delinquent behavior, as was discussed in the above literature. The SROs talked about being there for students, whether it be

school or home related, by letting the students know that there is someone who supports them and sees that they can succeed. This can help counteract the label that society has given them because of their past actions, their race or ethnicity, or their sexual orientation. These labels were discussed above in regards to disparities in the school system and the labels given to them can influence how they act in society. By having the support of someone in their life, the label can become less of an identifier and the officer's support can help the student see that.

The SROs in this study showed hesitation when it comes to intervening in certain situations because they did not want the student to be labeled. The participants talked about how they did not want to be used as a way to discipline students, but as a positive aspect of the school environment. Some criminologist believe that the growing number of SROs in schools is actually criminalizing student behavior and that has led to an increase in arrest (Theriot, 2009). The SRO has the power to attach a negative label to a student by arresting him, double punishment, and by be cautious in how they act towards students, the SROs are influencing the way students are labeled. Jones talked about how he would not arrest a student for having tobacco on campus, but he would report it to the school, it is actions like this that allow the SROs to determine how a student can be labeled. The student can be stigmatized and labeled if they are taken from school in handcuffs, and this can even lead to more scrutiny from school staff and security (Theriot, 2009). AS discussed earlier, this initial labeling can lead to various consequences once the student is released from custody. Allowing discretion with SROs and using them as a law enforcement officer only when a law is broken can help change the way students are currently labeled.

The use of labeling theory can also be attributed to the SROs themselves, all the participants mentioned changing the view that students have of police officers. The label that police officers have is largely negative and by playing the roles in the triad model, the SROs aim to change this

label and show students that officers are “here to help” and “not all cops are bad guys”. The departments encourage officers to build positive relationships with the schools and the students in them, with the hope that it can lead to positive relationships between the community and the police departments.

### **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

This study shows that there is room for improvement when it comes to the SRO profession, mainly in the training that they receive. There are a few ways that the results of this study can be used to impose a change in policy. The first policy implication is that this study shows the need for a national standard of training that is specialized for the role of an SRO. While an individual should have a law enforcement background before being allowed to apply to be an SRO, the training they receive once getting the position needs to be focused on the elements of a school. This standard needs to be created by educators, law enforcement officials, as well as current SROs. It should be based off of best practices of each profession and can start by addressing the recommendations put out by the U.S. Department of Education. The training should be administered through accredited organizations that follow the required mandates put out by the U.S. Department of Education.

The second implication would be to ensure that the funding is available so individuals can receive the training needed to properly equip them to do their job. If the department and school district want to have SROs, however they do not have the funding to get the training required, there should be a way for them to receive this money whether through grants or federal funding. We do not put officers on the street with poor training because of lack of funds and the same should be for officers that we put in schools.

The final policy implication, is there needs to be a concise and standard job description of SROs. This would help get rid of any conflicting mandates because it would be the same job description for every SRO in the country. The description outlines what the officers are allowed to do and what they are not, which would help combat the issue of the officers being used to administer discipline. It would also allow for the schools to know what to expect of the officers when they are in the schools so that they understand the parameter of the job. The U.S. Department of Education suggest that officers be used as a last resort or for when criminal acts occur, such as theft or fighting, however they should not be used as the disciplinary in these events. Other forms of practices need to be used when it comes to discipline students, and the SROs should not be a part of that unless the individual has committed a criminal act.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this research is, being a qualitative study, the results cannot be generalized. These case studies were done on individuals within a southeastern rural community and the answers they gave could be different among individuals of a different environment. The SROs within inner-city schools or charters schools may view their roles in a different way. Also, since the training of SROs varies among states and counties, the results on the training is not able to be generalized.

The second limitation is because of the nature of the project I was required to be with the individual's presence when they gave their answers. This could influence how the participants answered certain questions or how they acted while around me. There is a thin blue line and no one participant wanted to shine a negative life on their department or the school they worked at. A third limitation of this study has to do with any biases that I had going into the project or biases that could have emerged as research was conducted. I am pro-police and that could have influenced

the way I saw the participants throughout the study. It could also have influenced how I interpreted what the officers said or acted. The interpretations could have been different, such as an officer not wanting to answer a question because they were uncomfortable because they did not want to put someone under the bus, but really they were simple uncomfortable because they themselves did not want to look bad. While I do not think that this occurred regularly throughout, Archie did ask to stop the tape a few times and that could have been a result of him being uncomfortable with the question and what I saw as not wanting to throw a fellow officer under the bus.

The fourth limitation of this study is the access to individuals willing to participant in the study. Recruiting officers to participate in the study proved challenging and the shape of the project changed from conducting a case study on the county to creating three individual case studies of individuals who worked as SROs within the county. Lastly, this project was the lack of research that had previously been conducted on the topic of, not just job responsibilities and training of SROs, but on the profession of SROs in general. There were also very few cases of researchers conducting through studies on the perspectives of SROs on what their job entails. This gave me little to compare my findings to on a larger scale and the project had no earlier studies to reference.

Another limitation to this research is that this study only got the perspective of the SROs and did not include the perspectives of the school administrators or police departments. This is important because in order to get a full picture of the roles of SROs, the perspectives of those setting the expectations could deem beneficial. By having these perspectives the research would be able to see what is wanted from the school's side and not just what the SROs see when they are in the schools.

### **Future Research**

Based off of this study, future research should be conducted that includes the perspectives of schools and police departments on the roles of SROs. There should also be research done in other types of school environments including, but not limited to; geographical locations (urban vs. rural), private and public schools, and varied economical areas. In future research, the training of SROs should also be looked at through the perspectives of those who currently conduct the training courses. This could include what they cover, what they believe needs to be covered, and how the training course is conducted. It could then be expanded to compare the different training requirements across various counties and states.

## REFERENCES

- About - D.A.R.E. America. (n.d.). Retrieved July 19, 2016, from <http://www.dare.org/about-d-a-r-e/>
- Addington, L. A. (2003). Students' Fear After Columbine: Findings from a Randomized Experiment. *Journal Of Quantitative Criminology*, 19(4), 367-387.
- Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008).
- Armour, M. (2016). School Inequality: Challenges and Solutions: Allen Chair Issue 2016: School Discipline Polices: Restorative Practices: Righting the Wrongs of Exclusionary School Discipline. *University Of Richmond Law Review*, 50999.
- Ascani, N. (2012). Labeling Theory and the Effects of Sanctioning on Delinquent Peer Association: A New Approach to Sentencing Juveniles. *Perspectives (University Of New Hampshire)*, 80-84.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Becker, Howard S. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press. B
- Beckett, K. (1997). *Making crime pay: Law and order in contemporary American politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bernburg, Jon Gunnar, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2003. Labeling, life chances, and adult crime: The direct and indirect effects of official intervention in adolescence on crime in early adulthood. *Criminology* 41: 1287-318.
- Bernburg, Jon Gunnar, Marvin D. Krohn, and Craig J. Rivera. 2006. Official labeling, criminal embeddedness, and subsequent delinquency: A longitudinal test of labeling theory. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43:67-88.
- Buckingham, Samantha, A Tale of Two Systems: How Schools and Juvenile Courts are Failing Students, 13 *U. Md. L.J. Race Relig. Gender & Class* 179 (2013).
- Canady, M., James, B., & Nease, J. (2012). To Protect and Educate: The School Resource Office and the Prevention of Violence in Schools. Retrieved December 29, 2015, from <https://nasro.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NASRO-To-Protect-and-Educate-nosecurity.pdf>
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory. *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, 81-110.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- DeNisco, A. (2016). Schools continue hard work of discipline reform. *District Administration*, (3). 14.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Emerson, R. W. (2015). Convenience Sampling, Random Sampling, and Snowball Sampling: How Does Sampling Affect the Validity of Research?. *Journal Of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 109(2), 164-168 5p.
- Finn, P. (2006). School Resource Officer Programs. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 75(8), 1-7.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co.
- Gonsoulin, S., Zablocki, M., & Leone, P. E. (2012). Safe Schools, Staff Development, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. *Teacher Education And Special Education*, 35(4), 309-319.
- González, T. (2012). Keeping Kids in Schools: Restorative Justice, Punitive Discipline, and the School to Prison Pipeline. *Journal Of Law & Education*, 41(2), 281-335.
- Gowdey, L. J. (2015). Disabling Discipline: Locating a Right to Representation of Students with Disabilities in the ADA. *Columbia Law Review*, 115(8), 2265-2309.
- Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline. (2014). Retrieved December 29, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>
- Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). Education or Incarceration: Zero Tolerance Policies and the School to Prison Pipeline. *Forum On Public Policy Online*, 2009(2).
- Hirschfield, P. J. (2008). Preparing for prison?: The criminalization of school discipline in the USA. *Theoretical Criminology*, 12(1), 79-101. doi:10.1177/1362480607085795
- Hirschfield, P. J., & Celinska, K. (2011). Beyond Fear: Sociological Perspectives on the Criminalization of School Discipline. *Sociology Compass*, 5(1), 1-12. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00342.x
- Home - National Association of School Resource Officers. (n.d.). Retrieved December 29, 2015, from <https://nasro.org/>
- IV, E. A. (2012). Zero Tolerance, Frivolous Juvenile Court Referrals, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Using Arbitration as a Screening-Out Method to Help Plug the Pipeline. *Ohio State Journal On Dispute Resolution*, 27179.
- Jaikaran, S. D., Schubmehl, K. M., & Atlas, J. G. (2014). Student Perceptions: Safety, Roles, and Behaviors of School Resource Officers. *Student Perceptions: Safety, Roles, And Behaviors Of School Resource Officers*, doi:10.1037/e547252014-001
- Justice Policy Review (2011). *Education Under Arrest: The Case Against Police in Schools*. Justicepolicy.org

- Kelley, J. (2015, November 27). Role of Police in School Questioned. *Dayton Daily News*. Retrieved December 29, 2015, from <http://www.mydaytondailynews.com/news/news/local-education/role-of-cops-in-school-questioned/npWwm/>
- Kraska, P. B., & Neuman, W. L. (2008). *Criminal justice and criminology research methods*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Kupchik, A., Green, D. A., & Mowen, T. J. (2015). School Punishment in the US and England: Divergent Frames and Responses. *Youth Justice*, 15(1), 3-22. doi:10.1177/1473225414540556
- Lavarello, C., & Trump, K. (2001). To are or not to arm? *American School Board Journal*, 188(3), 32-33.
- Liberman, A. M., Kirk, D. S., & Kim, K. (2014). Labeling effects of first juvenile arrests: Secondary deviance and secondary sanctioning. *Criminology*, 52(3), 345-370.
- Lopes, Giza, Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, Nicole M. Schmidt, Bob Edward Vasquez, and J ´ on Gunnar Bernburg. 2012. Labeling and cumulative disadvantage: The impact of formal police intervention on life chances and crime during emerging adulthood. *Crime & Delinquency* 58:456–88
- Mahoney, A. R. (1974). The effect of labeling upon youths in the juvenile justice system: A review of the evidence. *Law & Society Review*, 8(4), 583-614.
- May, D., Barranco, R., Stokes, E., Robertson, A., & Haynes, S. (2015). Do School Resource Officers Really Refer Juveniles to the Juvenile Justice System for Less Serious Offenses? *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 1-17. doi:10.1177/0887403415610167
- McAra, Lesley, and Susan McVie. 2007. Youth justice? The impact of system contact on patterns of desistance from offending. *European Journal of Criminology* 4:315–45.
- Merkwae, A. (2015). Schooling the Police: Race, Disability, and the Conduct of School Resource Officers. *Mich. J. Race & L.*, 21, 147.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research. [electronic resource] : a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, California : Jossey-Bass, 2016.
- Morton, R. (2013). Returning Decision to School Discipline Decisions: An Analysis of Recent, Anti-Zero Tolerance Legislation. *Wash. UL Rev.*, 91, 757.
- Mulqueen, C. 1999. School Resource officers more than security guards. *American Schools and Universities* 71 (11): S17
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Retrieved June 28, 2016, from <https://nces.ed.gov/>

- Pandit, N. R. (1996). The creation of theory: A recent application of the grounded theory method. *The qualitative report*, 2(4), 1-15.
- Poteat, V. P., Scheer, J. R., & Chong, E. K. (2016). Sexual orientation-based disparities in school and juvenile justice discipline: A multiple group comparison of contributing factors. *Journal Of Educational Psychology*, 108(2), 229-241. doi:10.1037/edu0000058
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Schlosser, M. D. (2014). Multiple Roles and potential Role Conflict of a School Resource Officer: A Case Study of the Midwest Police Department's School Resource Officer Program in the United States. *International Journal Of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 9(1), 131-142.
- Simon, J. (2007). *Governing through crime: How the war on crime transformed American democracy and created a culture of fear*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Simmons, L. (2015). Profiting from Punishment: Public Education and the School Security Market. *Social Justice*, 41(4), 81-95.
- Skiba, R. J., & Losen, D. J. (2016). From Reaction to Prevention: Turning the Page on School Discipline. *American Educator*, 39(4), 4-11,.
- Snapp, S. D., Hoenig, J. M., Fields, A., & Russell, S. T. (2015). Messy, Butch, and Queer: LGBTQ Youth and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. *Journal Of Adolescent Research*, 30(1), 57. doi:10.1177/0743558414557625
- Sneed, T. (2015, January 30). School Resource Officers: Safety Priority or Part of the Problem? Retrieved December 29, 2015, from <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/30/are-school-resource-officers-part-of-the-school-to-prison-pipeline-problem>
- Theriot, M. T. (2009). School resource officers and the criminalization of student behavior. *Journal Of Criminal Justice*, 37(280-287). doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2009.04.008
- The National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2014/ind\\_20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2014/ind_20.asp)
- U.S. Department of Education (2014). *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline*. Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Department of Education. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of State Support. (2015). *Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A)*.
- Weiler, S. C., & Cray, M. (2011). Police at School: A Brief History and Current Status of School Resource Officers. *Clearing House*, 84(4), 160-163.

- Wiley, Stephanie A., and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2013. The effect of police contact: Does official intervention result in deviance amplification? *Crime & Delinquency*. Published online ahead of print. doi: 10.1177/0011128713492496.
- Wilson, H. (2014). Turning off the School-to-Prison Pipeline. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, 23(1), 49-53.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage publications.

## APPEDIX

### A. Interview Guide

#### 1. Demographics

- a. What race do you most identify with?
- b. What is your gender?

#### 2. Work background

- a. How long have you been in law enforcement?
- b. Why did you chose to work in law enforcement?
- c. How long have you been working with juveniles?
- d. Why did you chose to work with juveniles directly?
- e. How long have you been an SRO?
- f. Why become an SRO?

#### 3. Job Responsibilities

- a. What is your official job description as a SRO?
  - i. What do you think of these expectations?
  - ii. Where do you think these expectations come from?
  - iii. Why do you think these are the expectations?
- b. What does your department expect from you as an SRO?
  - i. What do you think of these expectations?
  - ii. Where do you think these expectations come from?
  - iii. Why do you think these are the expectations?
- c. What does the school expect from you as an officer?
  - i. What do you think of these expectations?
  - ii. Where do you think these expectations come from?
  - iii. Why do you think these are the expectations?
- d. What role do you believe you should play in the schools?
  - i. Why do you think this?
  - ii. Do you think the school would support this idea?
  - iii. Do you think your department would support this idea?
- e. Do the expectations of an SRO conflict with one another?
  - i. If so, how do they conflict with one another?
  - ii. Why do you think that they do/do not conflict with each other?

#### 4. Training

- a. Do you receive training on
  - i. how to distinguish between simple infractions and serious threats
  - ii. how to refer students to various helpful services
  - iii. de-escalation techniques,
  - iv. conflict resolution,
  - v. developmentally appropriate responses,
  - vi. crisis management
  - vii. civil rights laws,
  - viii. child and adolescent development,

- ix. disability and special education issues,
- x. cultural responsiveness and institutional bias,
- xi. needs of students with disabilities
- xii. student and family engagement
  - 1. If yes to any of the above:
    - a. Where did you get this training
    - b. Do you find it important to your job function
  - 2. If no to any of the above:
    - a. Why not?
    - b. Would it help you in your job duties

## B. Consent Form



### **COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

---

### **DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CRIMINOLOGY**

---

1. My name is Sarah Parker and I am a graduate student in the Masters of Social Science-Criminal Justice & Criminology program at Georgia Southern University. I will be conducting this research as my final thesis project for graduation from the program.
2. The purpose of this study is to look at the perspectives that officers in schools, also known as school-resource officers, have on their job responsibilities and the training they receive in order to fulfill those responsibilities. The goal is to understand what officers think they should be doing within the schools and if the training that they receive coincides with those beliefs.
3. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include completion of in person interviews lasting 30-45 minutes in length along with observations. Interviews will be transcribed and coded to pull out themes on school resource officer job responsibilities and training.
4. Discomforts and Risks: There are minimal risk to participating in this study, the potential for harm or discomfort does not exceed what could be encountered in the individual's daily life.
5. Benefits:
  - a. The benefits to the participants is not direct, but the findings from this research could lead to possible changes in policy in regards to school resource officer training and job responsibilities.
  - b. The results of this study will allow an insight into what law enforcement officers in schools think of their responsibilities and if the training that they receive reflects those ideals. This area of study could provide information that can help form policies that outline the proper roles of these school officers and contribute to how their training reflects those roles. The results can help policy-makers by allowing them to see the viewpoints of those who do the job and receive the training. It can provide insight that is not widely available in the present research and can form policy that reflects the needs of the officers in schools. This case study focuses on the school law enforcement officer's perspectives of their assigned duties as well as how the training they receive reflects those duties. These findings could have an impact on how the duties of a school law enforcement officers are defined and impact a change to ensure that training reflects these outlined duties. The research could also determine the influence that these officers have on students and if they are needed in the context that they are currently utilized.
6. Requirements: The requirements of the participants include 30-45 minutes of their time for the researcher to interview them on the topics of the research project. The participants may also be

asked for follow-up interviews should the need arise. The participants will also devote time to allow for the researcher to shadow them during their day for a duration that is unknown due to the qualitative nature of the study, which does not allow for a set time to be placed on the observation portion of the study.

7. **Statement of Confidentiality:** The participants will not be identified by name or any other identifying characteristics throughout the data set or any other reports related to the study, and the confidentiality of the participants in this study will be secured. The use of records and data will be subject to the standard data use policies and practices which will protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions. The only individuals with access to the data will be the researcher and the thesis committee. The interviews will be erased from tape once the interviews have been transcribed onto paper, with the names of the participants replaced with a letter (example: Participant A, Participant B...etc.).
8. **Right to Ask Questions:** The participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-5465.
9. **Voluntary Participation:** As a voluntary participant you do not have to participate in this study and have the right to end your participation at any time by notifying the person researcher. As a voluntary participant you also have the right to not answer any questions that you do not want to answer. The interviews will be recorded and you have the right to request the interview not be recorded on tape or to stop recording at any time during the course of the interview.
10. **Penalty:** There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study and that you may withdrawal at any point during the study without penalty or retribution.
11. **Mandatory Reporting:** All information collected from this research will be treated confidentially. There is one exception to this confidentiality that you need to be aware of. In certain research studies, it is our ethical responsibility to report ant situations of child or elder abuse, child or elder neglect, or any life-threatening situation to appropriate authorities. However, we are not seeking out this type of information in this study nor will any questions be asked about these issues.
12. **You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number H\_\_\_\_\_.

Title of Project:

Principal Investigator: Sarah Parker, address, (404)723-4729, sp02496@georgiasouthern.edu

Faculty Advisor: John Brent, address, (912)478-1088, jbrent@georgiasouthern.edu

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date