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Teachers' and Students' Perceptions about the Roles of School Resource Officers
in Maintaining School Safety

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Sarah Jane Rippetoe

December 2009

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Keywords: School Resource Officer, SRO, School Safety, School Violence,
School Violence Prevention

ABSTRACT

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions about the Roles of School Resource Officers in Maintaining School Safety

by

Sarah Jane Rippetoe

According to the National Association of School Resource Officers (2009), every state in the nation employs school resource officers. The trend, which began in 1991, was initially funded by federal monies. Since that time, school resource officers have remained in schools, gaining popularity as a proactive strategy in fighting against school violence. The purpose of the study was to examine students' and teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' performance related to the 3 dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. Data were gathered from 104 teachers and 272 students from a middle school and a high school, totaling 376 participants.

An analysis of data was based on 6 research questions and information gathered from participant surveys. A *t* test for independent samples was then conducted to evaluate the mean differences for the 3 dimensions measured in the survey. The following grouping variables were used in the comparisons for each dimension: students and teachers, male and female students, male and female teachers, teachers with varied years of experience, middle and high school students, and middle and high school teachers.

A significance difference was found between middle school students and high school students regarding each dimension, suggesting that middle school students observed school resource officers actively performing each role to a higher degree than did high school students. There was also a significant difference between teachers and students regarding the role of maintaining a safe environment and enforcing the law, suggesting that teachers observed school resource officers more active in these roles than in the role of counseling. A significant difference was also found between high school teachers and middle school teachers regarding the role of enforcing the law. High school teachers observed enforcement of law more than middle school teachers.

This study suggests that school resource officers' roles need to be clearly defined for teachers and students. Students need to know they can report crime, have knowledge that they are being monitored, and know they have resources available other than administrators and teachers.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my family--those who give me strength, guidance, and unconditional love. This dedication includes:

In loving memory of my Uncle David; my gentle cheerleader, always believing in me and supporting me. You have been a model of servanthood, steadfastness, reliability, and love. I wish you were here to see this chapter of my life closed – I know you would be proud of me. I am still not sure what we are all going to do without you. I will never ever forget about you and I will cherish your imprint on my life forever.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imagine an ordinary school day in small town USA--teachers engaging students and children listening intently. Suddenly the silence of the hallways is broken by the sounds of gunshots, screaming, and crying. Hours later, news crews cover the tragedy as families hover in somber, stunned silence many completely baffled that this scene is in their town, their school, and their child's classroom. Unfortunately, this exaggerated tale is not entirely fiction. In the last 15 years our schools have been rocked by random acts of violence. It seems as if many administrators are now preparing for war in order to maintain peace.

School safety awareness has increased across the nation with school safety and the prevention of violence becoming more pressing topics nationwide. Suddenly schools are perceived as unsafe places filled with fear and insecurity when in fact this is far from the truth. There have been several large acts of violence in the last 10 years, but schools still remain a safe place for children. Feeding our perception has been the media and the many outlets for us as a nation to get information. We have watched as children have been injured or even killed while attending school. Although these acts of violence are few and far between, we must still arm our schools with the weapons needed to protect America's most vulnerable.

In response to this fear and insecurity, school systems across the United States are taking a stand against violence. Schools are more alert to safety needs and demands that were rarely ever looked at in the past. School safety audits are becoming a common practice in schools, thus allowing school administrators to see better their individual needs. After assessing and identifying safety needs, many school administrators turn to violence prevention programs and

technology to promote a safer environment. In addition to these programs many schools are also turning to school resource officers to help prevent violence.

In East Tennessee, the safety and security concerns of large cities seem far away; however, even small rural counties in Appalachia face many of the same safety issues as do schools in large cities. The small tourist town where this study took place, along with the surrounding towns, are not places where parents would fear for their children's safety at school. Instead, it seems to be a safe area, one of the few left. However, when it comes to school safety, the targeted county has been following the nation in a surge of preventative measures to ensure that towns stay safe, that schools continue to be positive learning centers, and that children return safely to their parents at the end of the day. In the past 11 years, the police community has joined the school system to help educate students on law, respect, and good character. School resource officers are employed countywide and are becoming an active part of the school community. This research study examined students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the three dimensions of school resource officers' responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching.

Statement of the Problem

As the nation moves forward in the prevention of school violence, schools need to assess their current safety programs. Many schools are testing different approaches and making significant strides toward creating a safer environment. This study evaluated a safety program from the insiders' perspective, that of students and teachers within schools that currently have school resource officers. The purpose of this study was to examine students' and teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of

their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. Students and teachers were asked to share their opinions and perceptions about school resource officers' roles.

Significance of the Study

Over the past 30 years, safety in schools has become an unavoidable issue. In the 2004-2005 school year there were 39 school-associated violent deaths (Fratt, 2006) followed by 27 deaths in the 2005-2006 school year, 32 deaths in the 2006-2007 school year, and more recently 16 school-associated deaths in 2007-2008 (National School Safety and Security Services, 2009). These tragedies have unraveled the nerves and awakened fears of students, parents, and school staff. Across the nation, school systems have taken the initiative to safeguard youth from further dangers by trying to create a safe place for students to learn. The road to safety in schools continues to be built with new ideas, concepts, and strategies. Many schools are adding technology to battle school violence, whereas others are taking a conflict resolution approach with programs aimed at educating youth on violence and how to deal with anger. One of the most popular strategies being implemented by schools and communities is integrating law enforcement into the school environment. Uniformed police are joining school staff not only to serve as a law enforcement "presence," but also to be a link between school and community for the students. On the surface, this appears to be a successful intervention. Many of these resource officers are interacting directly with students and building trust and respect. Students are responding to resource officers, speaking up about school safety threats, and developing a respect for the law and the police officers who protect our communities.

Further study into the effectiveness of school resource officers could better equip our schools in preventing school violence. Money and time are being spent on these programs and knowledge of whether they are effective or finding out what needs to be fine-tuned in the program could help school systems better spend their resources. I also completed this study in hopes that students, teachers, and community members might understand better the training behind the uniforms in schools. Investigation of school resource officers' roles and determination of how consistently these roles are performed might help identify weaknesses and strengths in training, setting the stage for more successful officer education. School resource officers are placed in schools to do more than create crisis plans and patrol the halls. They are trained to teach, guide, and protect. They can be more effective with the cooperation and respect of the entire community.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are applicable to this study:

1. *Safety*: For the purpose of this study, this pertains to the condition of being safe from undergoing or causing hurt, injury, or loss (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, 2009).
2. *Safe School*: This is a school in which the total school climate allows students, teachers, administrators, staff, and visitors to interact in a positive, nonthreatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school (Butcher, 2005).
3. *School Resource Officers (SRO)*: These are certified law enforcement officers who are permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or a set of schools. The officers are trained to perform several roles: law-related counselors, law enforcement

- officers, and law-related education teachers (National Association of School Resource Officers, 1998).
4. *Targeted Violence*: For the purpose of this study, this applies to school shooting and other school-based attacks where the school was deliberately selected as the location for the attack and was not simply a random site for opportunity (Borum, Fein, Modzeleski, Reddy, & Vosekuil, 2004).
 5. *Violence*: This term means more than just physical harm. This definition encompasses the actual or threatened use of physical, verbal, sexual, or emotional power, intimidation, or harassment by an individual or group that is harmful to the physical, psychological, or social well-being of an individual or group (Mather, 2001).
 6. *Role*: This pertains to a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, 2009).

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. Are there significant differences between the views of students and teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?
2. Are there significant differences between the views of male and female students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

3. Are there significant differences between the views of male and female teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?
4. Are there significant differences between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with 12 or less years experience regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?
5. Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?
6. Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study could be limited by participants who might have had a personal bias toward school resource officers, or even more specifically the school resource officer at their assigned school. School characteristics, disciplinary procedures, and disciplinary expectations could differ from one school to another.

Another limitation could possibly be my personal bias regarding school resource officers. My own experiences have lead me to believe that most students and teachers do perceive school resource officers as effectively performing their roles and deterring school violence.

Delimitations included the sample size. Sample size was limited to students and teachers in two schools with full-time school resource officers. Students were in grades 6 through 12, as were the teachers included in the study. The county in which this study took place was a relatively small area with a low crime rate and a variety of socioeconomic levels. The school resource officer program in this county was specific to the county. Results, therefore, might not be generalized to other populations.

Overview of the Study

This study is organized into 5 chapters. Chapter 1 included an introduction, statement of problem, significance of study, definition of terms, research questions, limitations and delimitations of study, and an overview of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of literature beginning with the state of our schools today and reviewing the current violence prevention techniques schools are using. The review of literature ends with a history of school resource officers and information about their roles and responsibilities. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology and includes research design, population information, research questions and hypotheses, instrumentation, and data analysis. Chapter 4 consists of a data analysis and Chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Current State of School Safety

Fifty years ago schools had no metal detectors, security guards, and few, if any, threats of violence; now, petty theft and brawls can turn into incidents of waged war. Educational systems nationwide have been thrown into the 21st century with a fear of dangerous weapons, physical attacks, theft, and violence. Many Americans regard schools as unsafe places, when in reality they are still among the safest places for our children (Argon, 1999). A report in the February 2000 issue of the *Australian Journal of Social Issues* stated that 173 students were killed in American schools over the past 7 years (Fields, 2000).

Agron and Anderson completed a study in 2000 revealing that 70% of school officials named security as one of their most important issues. The importance of security in creating an environment conducive to learning scored a 4.5 on a five-point scale. Parents and the public were also polled with 82% of them sufficiently concerned about security in schools. The larger the city, the more concern existed for students' safety (Agron & Anderson).

In 2000, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice released the *National School Safety Report of 2000* and found that the majority of American schools were safe places and in fact many of these schools were actually becoming safer. Since 1992, school crime has declined. Nonfatal serious violent crimes are much more likely to occur outside of school. The report also stated that fewer students were carrying weapons and engaging in physical fights at school. These threats increased in certain areas of the nation and often in larger cities (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice). In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education reported during the 2002-

2003 school year that students were victims of serious crimes at a rate of 6 per 1,000 students (Devoe, Peter, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2005). Although these numbers sound large, the trend is that student victimization is decreasing and has been over the last decade. Nevertheless, the potential for a child being hurt in school scares most parents and reaches many Americans in their most vulnerable places.

Much of the heightened awareness of safety in schools has increased in the past decade; however, the first targeted school attack dates back to 1974. According to Borum et al. (2004), the Safe School Initiative research found that within 119,000 plus schools in the nation, only 37 incidents of targeted school-based attacks had been carried out between December 1974 and May 2000.

Crime reporting in schools is a problem in itself. The National School Safety and Security Services (2006a) best described this problem:

Federal statistics grossly underestimate the extent of school crime and violence. Public perception tends to overstate school crime and violence. Reality exists somewhere in between---but statistically, nobody knows exactly where this “somewhere” is in numbers because there is no federal mandatory K-12 school crime reporting and tracking law in the United States. (p. 1)

For several years the National Association of School Resource Officers (SROs) has held conferences to survey all resource officers in attendance. Each year, beginning in 2001 and ending most currently with the last survey released, in 2004, 84% to 89% of SROs stated that school crimes are underreported to law enforcement. One reason schools might be underreporting crime could be because of the “persistently dangerous school” component of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. School officials do not want this label and in order to avoid risk, as well as the political stigma that comes with it, they underreport school crime. School crime could also be underreported because of the ignorance of administrators in defining what school crime is and distinguishing it from regular school behavior infractions (National School Safety &

Security Services, 2006a).

Modern societies are heavily dependent upon technology. Americans have access to information from around the world and are not safe from media propaganda. Americans are saturated by media reports of school violence. Parents fear American schools are not safe and some schools do have serious crime and violence problems (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2000). Although acts of violence are random and few, they receive extensive media coverage. Pictures of students weeping, parents frightened, and school authorities baffled seem to become a permanent picture in the minds of many Americans. No longer do schools worry about intruders coming in; they worry when their own students might erupt in a violent rage (Bostain & Kipper, 2001).

Most Recent Tragedies

One of the most tragic of school massacres occurred in Littleton, Colorado at Columbine High School. The nation watched in disbelief as two young men took the lives of 12 classmates and one teacher. This targeted violent act on April 20, 1999, left more than 20 students injured and left the nation in a state of panic (Kennedy, 1999). What happened at Columbine High School has been a “wake-up call” for many educators; however, the timeline of school violence began years before Columbine (Bostain & Kipper, 2001).

In February 1996, Frontier Middle School in Moses Lake, Washington was shaken when Barry Loukaitis shot two students and one teacher. The following year, also in February, a student killed a classmate and the principal. This shooting at Bethel Regional High School also resulted in the wounding of two other students. Later that same year, students at Pearl High School in Mississippi fell victim to a 16-year-old gunman. He killed two students, wounded

several others, and had stabbed his mother to death before leaving home that morning. Only 2 months later, another student, Micheal Carneal, opened fire on several classmates who were having a prayer meeting before school. His rampage killed three students and left five wounded. Two middle school students in Jonesboro, Arkansas opened fire on school staff and students after pulling the fire alarm. The boys killed four students and a teacher. This 1998 incident left 10 people wounded. Only 2 months later, a 15-year-old in Springfield, Oregon murdered his parents at home and then continued his spree of violence at school killing two students and wounding 22 others (Kennedy, 1999). January 1999 brought another act of violence to Central High School in Carrollton, Georgia as a young boy and his girlfriend carried out their planned murder-suicide (Barras & Lyman, 2000).

Sadly, several other violent attacks have occurred in schools since 1999. In March 2005, a student in Northern Minnesota shot his grandfather and his companion before leaving home armed with his grandfather's 12-gauge shotgun and .40 caliber handgun. He killed a security guard, a teacher, and five students. The tragedy ended in suicide and 10 deaths (Madero, 2005). Almost a year later, a Campbell County Tennessee school was victimized by targeted school violence when a 15-year old student shot and killed an assistant principal and wounded two other administrators (Infoplease, n.d.). Since this attack there have been 13 other schools around the country involved in a school shooting, including a middle school in New Orleans where on May 18, 2009, a student opened fire on a teacher (Wikipedia, 2009). These horrific acts are not characteristic of schools but are rather a call for help from troubled students (Barras & Lyman, 2000).

Characteristics of the Attacker(s)

Following the tragic shooting at Columbine High School in April 1999, the Secret Service teamed up with the Department of Education to study the thinking, planning, and preattack behaviors of attackers. Many of these violent offenders showed common characteristics. Most of the students told or threatened someone before they actually carried out the act. Some of them also displayed warning signs of violent behavior including threats to others, cruelty to animals, previous violence, warning signs of anger, feelings of being bullied, emotional problems, personal failures, significant losses or depression, and incidents of carrying a weapon on campus. Many of the attackers had access to weapons or were experienced in using weapons and usually the attacks included other students helping to plan or carry out the attack. In many instances, students actually told someone or had written their intentions directly (Borum et al., 2004).

According to the Safe School Initiative (Borum et al., 2004), 93% of the time the attackers acted out in some way causing concern for one or more persons around them and 88% of the time at least one adult was concerned for the student. This concern came from a parent, close adult, teacher, pastor, or SRO. Many times students will try to passively get help or attention by acting out disruptively at school, writing about sadness or violence, trying to get guns, talking about violence, or simply changing their normal behavior or attitude in some way (Borum et al.).

Exposing Targeted School Violence

Students are consistently keeping quiet about threats of danger. According to Borum et al. (2004), in three fourths of the events, the attacker told at least one person about his or her

plan. In nearly two thirds of the cases, more than one person knew or had information about the attack. Many students did not take the threat seriously; others said they feared retaliation. In some cases students are just not educated about their responsibility to keep their school safe. In the 1996-1997 school year, Hopkinsville High School Youth Services Center in Kentucky surveyed 900 students. More than 500 students said they were not comfortable telling school staff about problems at school including presence of weapons, fights, and arguments. Among students in the same survey, a smaller percentage reported that they did not feel it was their responsibility to report these activities. On the other hand, when students did report these threats, the violence was prevented. One incident in Burlington, Wisconsin prevented five boys from following through with a plan to take over the school. They were going to kill staff members and students in a room-to-room battle. The police were notified and all five students were arrested. Another intervention occurred when a father overheard a conversation his daughter was having on the phone. He heard her mention that she knew someone who was planning to shoot the assistant principal. The parent warned officials and the boy was arrested. He carried two guns and several rounds of ammunition. He was on school property when apprehended (Barras & Lyman, 2000). This recent violence taking place in our schools has pushed leaders in education to come up with new and inventive ways to foster safety in the classroom.

Methods to Stop Targeted School Violence

Although many of these random video game-like acts of violence tend to soak up media spotlight, administrators are more worried about everyday behavior infractions. Over the past decade, Americans have equipped their schools with preventative and proactive measures.

Schools all over the country are assessing individual school safety needs. Data were collected and studied to give education administrators a baseline for safety programs. School administrators have continued trying to balance what is effective and right for their schools as well as the community and school district as a whole. Many of these security audits not only identified security risks and needs but also helped to identify gaps or weak points in security systems. Many school systems are choosing prevention programs, and some districts even develop individual programs to fit their purposes (Argon & Anderson, 2000).

Prevention Programs

New York City began implementing a new comprehensive conflict resolution program called Resolving Conflict Creatively Program or RCCP (Patti & Tobbin, 2001). According to Coben, Weiss, Mulvey, and Dearwater (1994), RCCP is the largest and best-documented school-based educational program for violence prevention in the nation. It began in 1985 as a partnership between the New York City Board of Education and Educators for Social Responsibilities. This program has grown rapidly and now serves over 400 schools across the nation. The RCCP has goals of teaching young people how to handle emotions, resolve conflicts nonviolently, and appreciate diversity (Patti & Tobbin). This program not only trains teachers in conflict resolution but also offers parent workshops and incorporates peer mediation into its training (Coben et al.). A survey collecting data about RCCP showed that 90% of parents participating in the workshops offered by RCCP had improved communication skills and problem-solving skills with their children (Selfridge, 2004). Principals of the schools cooperating in this program played a key leadership role in its development and tried to create an environment that reflected the values of RCCP. Another ingredient to making this a successful

project was the readiness and willingness of staff members to put forth genuine effort and leadership (Patti & Tobbin). Not only did this program offer solutions to school violence, but it has also had a positive effect on school climate, parent and teacher communication, student and teacher communication, and academic achievement (Selfridge).

Another program that has been implemented in parts of Oregon is Effective Behavior Support or EBS. This approach focuses on preventing school violence through social skills training, one of the most effective ways to deter behavior problems (Promoting Safe Schools, 2006). This program is usually implemented at the elementary level and carried into middle school. Teachers and faculty members are given tools to figure out what factors lead to student violence and then follow a series of steps to deal with behavior problems. In this program, students are given positively phrased rules such as, “Be respectful.” They then develop expectations to go with those rules. Students are taught what behaviors are acceptable and have a system that acknowledges those behaviors positively. EBS is gradually supposed to turn the school environment into a positive place where teachers and students act more respectful and responsive (Leffler & Snow, 2001). Teaching students appropriate behavior and respect for others at a young age could help to prevent behavior problems and violence in later grades.

Some programs use students to teach conflict resolution directly. One is called Conflict Resolution-Peer Mediation Project. Students are trained to help their peers resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. After student training is complete, teachers refer students to the mediators to have disputes settled peacefully. Most of the time the mediators work in pairs with a staff member overseeing the project. The other program involves teachers in teaching students to solve problems and is called, “I Can Problem Solve.” This program is primarily used in elementary school (grades K-5). Students are taught skills that include solving problems,

seeking alternative solutions, understanding solutions, understanding consequences, developing “means-end” thinking, and recognizing and identifying emotions. Students learn how to focus on their feelings, work through a conflict, think about how others might feel, and look at how their actions contribute to the situation (Leffler & Snow, 2001).

Two examples of other intervention programs include those that employ technology. In one situation, students play interactive computer games to assess how they might handle stressful situations. This game teaches the social skills necessary to avoid anger and violence. This program was tested on 600 students in an Indianapolis middle school where many users were aggressive students. The study showed that aggression decreased and students were better able to control themselves and manage their anger. Another program that employs technology is the Peacemakers program, which is designed for students in grades 4-8. Here, students actually role-play different scenarios using problem-solving skills, anger management, and conflict resolution skills (Singer, 2001).

Although the previous programs are just a sampling of what Americans are now implementing in school violence prevention, they promote a common goal. Schools are trying to establish programs that produce positive results in preventing violence (Leffler & Snow, 2001). Research data on the effectiveness of violence prevention programs, however, are hard to find. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development reported that the evaluations used to measure these programs were ineffective. It conducted a multiyear study to investigate the programs. The report concluded, “Based on the data obtained through the questionnaire and follow-up interviews, it is impossible to state with conviction which types of violence prevention programs or intervention strategies reviewed are the most effective” (Coben et al., 1994, p. 313). Most data collected were related to the attitudes and opinions of those involved with the programs

(Coben et al.). According to Halford (1998), the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted research that examined what qualities were effective in prevention programs. The Center found that preventing school violence required comprehensive programs that created close, trusting relationships with young people. These programs should help develop healthy behaviors including conflict resolution and anger management skills (Halford).

Preventative Technology

Prevention programs are just one step in a long series of solutions that schools are implementing. Along with preparing students to face real situations and arming them with knowledge on how to handle violent situations, schools have been taking a more direct action toward violence by implementing different security measures. Although these security measures might be effective, the attitude of school staff and students is what most directly affects school security (Dunn, 1999). Some of the obstacles schools face is in finding the right security measures for their specific needs, paying for expensive security systems, and enforcing school rules without destroying the school environment. Many of the direct approaches to school violence have taken advantage of technology. Technology has played an important role in establishing a more secure environment for school personnel and students (Kennedy, 2001a). Unfortunately, this technology has come at a high cost. In 2000, United States public schools spent \$795 million on security and in the 2000 school year alone, 94.5% of schools upgraded or reviewed their security measures (Argon & Anderson, 2000).

Some of the most commonly used security measures have been simple and inexpensive. One of the most predominant forms of security technology at elementary, middle, and high

school levels has been the basic door lock and call box. Call boxes are useful in bridging the line of communication between the classroom teacher and the school's office. Teachers can push the call button that rings into the office, and staff members respond. A bell, horn, or intercom system can signal when a school has received a threat or needs to follow specific safety precautions and actions (Bridges, 1999).

In middle schools, the most common form of security is an identification badge. Many schools go beyond identifying staff members by requiring students to wear badges upon entering the building. This measure helps keep all school staff aware of registered students and school personnel. Any person without a badge has not checked in and does not have permission to be in the building. This person is directed to the office where he or she is properly checked in as a visitor. This tool is designed to bring attention to strangers in a building. Another tool used by schools is CCTV or closed circuit television. It is used more widely in high schools to monitor all parts of the school building (Agron & Anderson, 2000). CCTV can access any room in the building and the perimeters outside the building. Cameras can provide superior identifying capabilities; however, they have to be monitored in order to be effective (Woodcock, 1999). Schools employ many of the above security measures.

One common supplemental type of equipment is the metal detector. Metal detectors are more common in high schools, particularly those in larger cities (Agron & Anderson, 2000). In 1999, the Department of Education found that 4% of schools performed random metal detector searches. Two major downfalls of metal detectors are supplying the labor to operate the detectors and preventing students from avoiding the detectors (Woodcock, 1999).

Another common type of technology being used is a two-way radio. Two-way radios make it possible for school personnel to be in contact at all times. Contact between classroom

teachers and administration becomes extremely important in the event of an intruder or a threatening situation that teachers need to be aware of in the classroom. Two-way radios are also useful when teachers have students outside the building or if teachers are located in a portable classroom. In case of an emergency, teachers have a communication tool to speed the recovery process. Many schools are considering two-way radios a necessity for safety (Kennedy, 2001a).

In addition to technology some schools have been putting further restrictions on students. Many schools require students to carry a clear or mesh backpack so that all materials can be seen. Schools are also implementing a dress code to help unify students and erase some socioeconomic strife that occurs among students (Bridges, 1999). A few schools are surrounding their campuses with spiked fences (Easterbrook, 1999).

Schools are going beyond safety within building perimeters and looking at safety on school buses. Many school buses are equipped with cameras to record student action. This not only encourages students to follow rules but also is also responsible for the increase in reported assaults. The driver is not the only eyewitness to students misbehaving (Singer, 2001).

According to Halford (1998), the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control conducted research to study the effectiveness of the new security technologies that have been implemented in the nation's schools. The Center found that technology approaches such as metal detectors, two-way radios, and CCTV are only slightly helpful. All these protective measures used collectively are designed to form a secure school environment, and each device offers a different service. Technology in schools is adding an extra edge to safety but most schools are using technology in conjunction with prevention programs in the belief that children need to be taught right from wrong, the purpose of rules and order, and the consequences of breaking those rules. When children learn those basic concepts, they will be better prepared to

succeed in school and take on a more positive role as an adult in society (Wilkins, 1999).

Several prevention programs are working toward that goal; however, one program that stands out among others is the SRO program.

School Resource Officers

The placement of law enforcement officers in schools, otherwise known as school resource officers, started in the 1950s. The program began with the intent to improve the relationship between law enforcement and students. It was not until the 1990s, with an increased rate of school shootings, that SROs made a comeback. SROs are rapidly becoming a key presence in the fight against school violence. These officers act as a proactive method for schools to use in order to prevent incidents of violence from happening. Many educators said they believe that violence in schools reflects community violence, and that the SROs were a strong link between the school and community (National School Safety and Security Services, 2006a). These officers act to provide a safe and secure environment. The police presence in itself is a great crime deterrent (Babiec & Peck, 1995). Police presence is not meant to be a symbol that a school is unsafe but rather that the community and school system have taken a positive, proactive step toward preventing school violence (Atkinson, 2001).

History of School Resource Officers

The SRO program first began in Flint, Michigan in the 1950s. Its goal was to improve the relationship between local police and youth. The officers acted not only as law enforcers but also as teachers and counselors who built relationships with students. This program was a pilot for many more to come. In 1991, the National Association of SROs or NASRO was created.

NASRO exists as the primary trainer and facilitator of SROs (National Association of School Resource Officers, 1998). SROs account for one of the fastest growing areas of law enforcement (Kennedy, 2001b). As stated by McDaniel (2001), the Center for the Prevention of School Violence surveyed attendees of NASRO's 1997 Annual Conference. Of the SROs attending, the Center for Prevention of School Violence found that 35 states were represented, and the next year that number rose to representation from 40 states (McDaniel). Since 1998, the SRO population has grown to include every state in the nation (National School Safety and Security Services, 2006b). Two reasons were given for the increase in resource officers, one of which was the recent spree of violence in the late 1990s. The other reason was that the federal government established the COPS in Schools program as a leg of the U.S. Justice Department in 1998. COPS stands for The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and has pushed millions of dollars into American schools by helping to provide SROs. Since the program started in 1998, more than \$753 million has been used to fund over 6,500 SROs. The COPS in Schools Program not only provides money to help get SROs into schools but it also provides money to fund training ("COPS in Schools," 2006).

Roles of School Resource Officers

SROs work with all grade levels, but more are assigned to high schools than elementary and middle schools (McDaniel, 2001). SROs work in a triad concept with three primary roles in the school environment. The first role is that of a teacher. Officers are considered a part of the school staff to educate students on different facets of the law. Classes are conducted that teach good citizenship and help students understand laws. The second role officers play is that of counselor. They work closely with students in the schools by forging trusting and respectful

relationships with students (National Association of School Resource Officers, 1998). Building relationships with students allows officers to identify and solve problems before they explode into violence (Mulqueen, 1999). Students get accustomed to being around officers. They see their badges and gradually learn to respect officers and the jobs they perform (Babiec & Peck, 1995). Not only are officers counselors to students, they are also a liaison between schools and police departments. Resource officers work closely with school administrators on safety plans and community concerns about school safety (National Resource Center for Safe Schools, 2000). The third role of officers is that of law enforcement. They have the responsibility to wear a police uniform, carry a firearm, and drive a police vehicle (National Association of School Resource Officers, 1998).

The law enforcement role is the primary functioning role of officers in schools. SROs are to carry out duties as law enforcement officers. A survey by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence found that 50% of the resource officers' time in school was spent in law enforcement. Thirty percent of officers' time was spent on counseling and advising students, while the remaining 20% of their time was spent on law education (McDaniel, 2001). According to the Comparison of Program Activities and Lessons Learned among 19 SRO Programs studied that was released in February 2005, there were shifts in the amount of time officers spend on each of the triad activities. Usually, after the initial focus of law enforcement has passed, the officers spend more time on educating and getting to know students. Law enforcement still remains a top priority but the officers work toward building relationships with students to decrease the amount of law enforcement that takes place (Finn, Lassiter, McDevitt, Rich, & Shively, 2005).

Officers investigate school crimes; sometimes these include juvenile-related crimes such as theft, drug abuse, weapons violations, and assault. They might be the first ones to handle a crisis situation such as a traffic accident on or near school property. They could also be the first to respond to suicide attempts, natural or man-made disasters, and threats made to the school (National Resource Center for Safe Schools, 2000). A police officer and executive director of the National Association of SROs reported that these officers are out in the schools, interacting with students and giving classroom presentations. According to Kennedy (1999), this executive director stated, “We’re another set of eyes and ears looking out for warning signs.... we have to be proactive. We can put out fires, but how long will they stay out? We should be preventing the fire from occurring” (p. 4).

Typically, Americans are accepting and appreciative of the role these officers play in schools; however, some question the need for a police presence in a learning atmosphere. In order for youth to learn adequately, they need to be able to think critically and use new knowledge and skills. Students cannot do this if they are fearful and anxious. Students need to feel safe and secure throughout the school not just in the immediate classroom. Officers add to that sense of security (Mather, 2001). The National School Safety and Security Services (2006a) made a comparison of police officers in schools and police officers in communities. Findings showed that Americans did not question the presence of police in banks, malls, parks, and other public places because they wanted the added security that comes with a police presence; therefore having police in schools is a natural extension of their presence elsewhere by protecting our most precious possessions (National School Safety and Security Services, 2006a).

Cost of School Resource Officers

One important question in any violence prevention method is the cost. Fortunately, most resource officers have partial if not full funding from government agencies in the form of grants (National Resource Center for Safe Schools, 2000). In 1998, President Clinton allocated 65 million dollars to help schools hire and train 2,000 new community and SROs (“Weekly Compilation,” 1998). Some counties form a financial partnership with schools in which the police department pays part of resource officers’ salaries and the school system supplies the rest. An example of a financial partnership can be found in one of the counties of Tennessee. The school system pays \$15,000.00 toward the officers’ salary and the police station pays the remainder of the salary. The school system uses general funds to pay for officers (K. King, personal communication, July 26, 2009). The COPS in Schools Program gives a maximum of \$125,000 for new SRO’s salary and benefits over a 3-year period. Many school systems will contribute to this grant to make the full salary for the SRO (Nation’s Schools, 2005). Other schools have employed part-time resource officers who are off-duty, which cuts down on some of the cost of having a full-time officer; however, schools are better off having a full-time resource officer (Arney, Burlingame, & Caine, 1998). When compared to other intervention methods SROs are worth the price. Most schools employ the local police and get more for their money. When schools employ SROs, they get quality, well-trained officers familiar with their community and needs (Babiec & Peck, 1995).

Impact of School Resource Officers

According to the National Association of School Resource Officers (2009), school based policing, SROs, has been the fastest growing area in law enforcement. Although this area of law

enforcement has grown, there were few articles providing specific data on the results of their presence. One of the most comprehensive reports came out in February 2005. It was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice and it focused on model SRO programs. Even though the report did not statistically reveal the effectiveness of SROs, it did examine what made some programs work including the individual set-ups used and the lessons they implemented in their schools.

The report examined 19 sites and collected data on the following seven issues:

1. choosing a program model;
2. defining SRO roles and responsibilities;
3. recruiting SROs;
4. training and supervision;
5. collaborating with administration and teachers;
6. working with students and parents; and
7. evaluating the SRO program. (p. 1)

Finn et al. (2005) found that the most popular program model was the triad model supported by the National Association of School Resource Officers. This program worked differently in each of the 19 sites and varied by the school culture, leadership, and individual officers. The same was true for the responsibilities of the officer in the school. It was found that elementary school officers devoted more time to education than did high school officers who devoted more time to connecting with students and law enforcement.

One of the most important planning points in receiving a SRO is in recruiting. School administrators need to decide their criteria and actively search for an officer that will fit their list and best fit into their schools. Also, many police departments send their choice officer to schools. Training and supervision also varied from one site to another but it was recognized that

training and supervision were imperative to an effective SRO program. Inservice training is required but other training was also helpful. Many of the programs pair a new SRO with an experienced SRO and let he or she shadow that officer for several weeks. SROs training programs encourage SROs to be supervised to meet all their needs as well as to ensure they are meeting the school's needs. This helps to keep the lines of communication open between the officer and the administration so that the program can be successful (Finn et al., 2005).

Finn et al. (2005) discovered that the relationship between officers and administrative officials was one of the most troublesome areas for programs because their roles were so different and in many situations there could be an initial power struggle. For example, in a potential crisis, many SROs stated they were more comfortable having the power to call a lockdown immediately without permission or sometimes even the knowledge of the school principal. Some principals stated they wanted to be the ones officially to call a lockdown and did not want that power placed in the hands of the SROs. It is especially important that the administrators and the officers work well together and have unified expectations. It is best that they establish a set of working rules and guidelines early in their relationship so that a crisis can be handled with ease and time cannot be lost on a power struggle.

Teachers also need to be involved in this process. SROs can be valuable in the classroom, especially in educating children on violence, dangers of drugs, and even internet safety. Teachers can bridge the connection between the officer and the children (Finn et al., 2005).

One of the most overlooked areas in the SRO program has been the relationship with parents. Each day, the officers are bonding and connecting with students in order to gain their trust. Without parent support this important bond could be easily broken. Schools need to

educate parents about the SRO program through meetings, newsletters, and newspaper articles (Finn et al., 2005).

One of the last steps in creating a successful program is to assess that program. In order to make improvements or to figure out what is already working an evaluation needs to be completed. Early in the program, goals need to be established and at selected intervals those goals need to be assessed to see needed improvements or weak areas (Finn et al., 2005).

Other articles relayed experiences and opinions rather than research-based facts about the performance and results of resource officers in schools. According to McDaniel ((2001), the Center for the Prevention of School Violence compiled a report on SROs for the United States Department of Justice School Safety Strategic Planning Meeting which was held in April 1999. The Center for Prevention of School Violence examined the effectiveness of resource officers and found that when an officer was initially assigned to a school, the number of criminal and violent incidents actually increased. The center attributed that increase to the “extra pair of eyes” at the school that was specially trained to see things that would normally go unrecognized on a campus. When examining the qualitative evaluation portion of the study, the researchers found that almost 62% of administrators rated the SRO approach as a “most effective” method of crime prevention. An additional 26% rated this strategy with the second highest rating in comparison to other prevention methods such as security technologies (McDaniel).

Summary of Review of Literature

As the nation continues to make strides in keeping schools safe, more technologies and prevention methods will develop. School safety requires an effort from everyone including community members, parents, administrators, teachers, and students. Prevention programs are

beginning to create ways to teach students how to handle problems, talk through situations, and ask others for help. These programs also teach many values that are absent from some homes. Schools should not just focus on the hardware of control but on the software of our students' hearts. Technology has been a great resource but a machine or piece of equipment can never take the place of the human touch. SROs may be able to reach struggling children, see dangers that school personnel miss, and educate youth with respect to law and order.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine students' and teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. This chapter provides information on the research design, the population, research questions and related hypotheses, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

A quantitative research approach was used in this study. This study examined students' and teachers' perceptions of the three dimensions of a school resource officers' responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching.

The study was conducted using survey methodology from a nonrandom sample of teachers and students. The schools participating were chosen based on their employment of full-time school resource officers. Survey methodology was chosen in order to study a population by gaining responses from a sample of that population. The participating group was administered a set of carefully designed questions in order to gather information about their attitudes or opinions (Creswell, 2003, p.153). Two schools in Sevier County, Tennessee were used in this study. Students and teachers in grades 6 through 12 were administered the survey (see Appendices A & B). Permission was required from the director of schools, the school principals, and participants along with permission from the parents or legal guardians of the minor children (see Appendices C, F, & G).

Population

The population was comprised of students at a middle school serving grades 6 through 8 and students at a high school serving grades 9 through 12. The two schools used in this study had full-time school resource officers. These two schools served approximately 2,600 students and employed approximately 155 teachers ("Sevier County Schools," 2007). Nonrandom sampling was used and schools were purposefully chosen because they maintained a full-time school resource officer; however, I did not purposefully select any group of students or teachers in the school.

All teachers, 155, were afforded the opportunity to participate in the study. Of these, 67% participated with a return of 104 completed teacher surveys. Students were distributed surveys through the English departments in the middle and high schools. Approximately 38% of the middle school population, or 300 students, received a survey and consent form. From these, 165 were returned for a return rate of 55%. Approximately 34% of the high school population received a survey and consent form. One hundred seven were returned and filled out correctly. Approximately 60 more were returned but were not usable in the study. A total of 272 student surveys, from 800 distributed, were returned. Of the students who were asked to participate, 30% completed the study.

Instrumentation

A paper survey was administered to Sevier County students and teachers in a middle and high school with an employed school resource officer. Two schools with an approximate population of 2,600 students and 155 teachers were used in this study. The survey was self-administered and addressed the three dimensions of the school resource officers' responsibilities:

maintaining a safe environment, enforcing school rules, and teaching (see Appendices A & B). The survey included limited demographic information such as gender and the number of years of teaching experience. The instrument was created by the researcher using the National Association of School Resource Officers training triad as a guide to the three dimensions of a school resource officer's responsibilities (National Association of School Resource Officers, 1998).

The researcher divided the student survey instrument into three dimensions: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. The triad model of counseling is represented in the survey with the dimension of maintaining a safe environment. This dimension includes counseling behaviors such as advising, gaining respect, and forming trusting relationships with students. Student surveys included: five questions pertaining to maintaining a safe environment, four questions pertaining to law enforcement, and six questions pertaining to teaching (see Appendix A). Student surveys included one demographic question to determine the gender of the participant.

Teacher surveys included: six questions pertaining to maintaining a safe environment, four questions pertaining to law enforcement, and six questions pertaining to teaching (see Appendix B). Teacher surveys included two demographic questions. Teachers were asked their gender and an open-ended question requesting the number of years they had been teaching. Teachers with 1 to 12 years of service were grouped together as having experience in a school with a school resource officer. This group presumably has not experienced the school environment without a police presence. The group of teachers with 12 or more years of service represents teachers who have been in a school with and without a school resource officer. This question was included to see if teachers who had experience without a resource officer and

teachers who had only known teaching in a school with a resource officer would perceive SRO roles differently. Survey questions, with the exception of demographic questions, were measured on a Likert-type scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Survey development activities were conducted to test the validity and reliability of the survey instrument before it was administered to students and teachers. The participants in the survey development group were not in the study. No changes were made to the survey as a result of the survey development activities.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the study, approval was sought and maintained from the Institutional Review Board, the Sevier County director of schools, and the principals of participating schools. Teachers were presented the survey during a faculty meeting conducted by the principal. Principals explained the study and handed out the Research Explanation, Teacher Consent Form, and Teacher Survey (see appendices D, B, & G). Teachers who chose to participate filled out the consent form and survey and placed each in a separate box. Anonymity was secured through separate collection boxes and teachers were not pressured to participate with collections being done after the meeting. Principals secured consent forms and surveys until the researcher collected them.

Students were given the opportunity to participate through English classes. Three middle school teachers, comprised of one English teacher per grade level (as recommended by the principal), were contacted and presented with information and directions for survey distribution. The chairperson of the high school English department was also contacted and presented with information and directions for survey distribution.

Middle and high school students were then informed orally and given survey packets by participating teachers. Students who completed the Child Assent Form (see Appendix E) and returned the Permission Form (see Appendix F) were allowed to participate in the study. Instructions on how to complete the survey were included in the Child Assent Form and the Parent Permission Form (see appendices E & F). To encourage participation, students were given a piece of Laffy Taffy candy. Students who chose to participate completed the surveys at home and returned them to their teacher. Teachers secured the surveys with their principal until the researcher collected them. Anonymity was secured through separate consent and survey forms. Students were not asked any identifying information on the survey itself or demographic data with the exception of their gender.

Data Analysis

The findings of this study were analyzed using SPSS, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, software program. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the data and inferential statistics were used to examine relationships and differences among the variables identified in the survey instrument.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean differences for the three dimensions measured in the survey. The three dimensions examined were maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. The following grouping variables were used in the comparisons for each dimension: students and teachers, male and female students, male and female teachers, teachers with varied years of experience, middle and high school students, and middle and high school teachers. Results were analyzed at a .05 significance level.

This research study focused on students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the three dimensions of school resource officers' responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. The research questions and hypotheses reflect the research topic. Research questions and hypotheses are presented below:

1. Are there significant differences between the views of students and teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho1₁: There is no difference between students' and teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

Ho1₂: There is no difference between students' and teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcing of the law.

Ho1₃: There is no difference between students' and teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' teaching.

2. Are there significant differences between the views of male and female students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho2₁: There is no difference between male and female students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

Ho2₂: There is no difference between male and female students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcing of law.

Ho2₃: There is no difference between male and female students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' teaching.

3. Are there significant differences between the views of male and female teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho3₁: There is no difference between male and female teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

Ho3₂: There is no difference between male and female teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcing of law.

Ho3₃: There is no difference between male and female teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' teaching.

4. Are there significant differences between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho4₁: There is no difference between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

Ho4₂: There is no difference between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' enforcing of law.

Ho4₃: There is no difference between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' teaching.

5. Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho5₁: There is no difference in the mean survey score between the views of middle and high school students regarding the school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

Ho5₂: There is no difference in the mean survey score between the views of middle and high school students regarding the school resource officers' enforcing of law.

Ho5₃: There is no difference in the mean survey score between the views of middle and high school students regarding the school resource officers' teaching.

6. Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho6₁: There is no difference in the mean survey score between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding the school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

Ho6₂: There is no difference in the mean survey score between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding the school resource officers' enforcing of law.

Ho6₃: There is no difference in the mean survey score between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding the school resource officers' teaching.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the research design, the population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. This study was quantitative and was completed using a survey instrument to gather information from a nonrandom sample of Sevier County school teachers and students. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. In Chapter 4, the data analysis is presented.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine students' and teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. Six research questions guided the study. The research questions were presented in Chapter 1 and corresponding null hypotheses were presented in Chapter 3. The research questions and null hypotheses are addressed in this chapter.

Demographics

The population for this study consisted of teachers and students in a middle and high school in Sevier County, Tennessee that employs a full-time SRO. Of the teachers asked to participate, 67% agreed resulting in 104 teacher participants. There were 33 male and 71 female teacher participants. Of the students asked to participate, 30% agreed resulting in 272 student participants. There were 119 male and 151 female participants.

Analysis of Research Questions

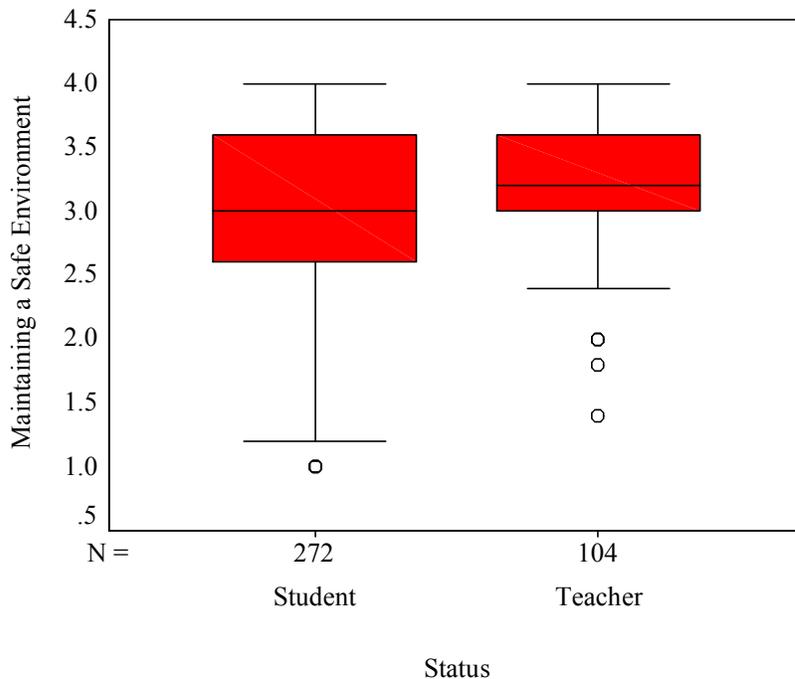
Descriptive statistics were used to examine the data and inferential statistics were used to examine relationships and differences among the variables identified in the survey instrument. The following is an analysis of each research question.

Research Question #1

Are there significant differences between the views of students and teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho₁: There is no difference between students' and teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of maintaining a safe environment between students and teachers. The test variable was the dimension for maintaining a safe environment and the grouping variable was students versus teachers. The test was significant, $t(374) = 3.17, p = <.01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.03). Only 3% of the variance in maintaining a safe environment dimension was accounted for by the difference in students and teachers. The mean for teachers ($M = 3.24, SD = .56$) was slightly higher than was the mean for students ($M = 3.00, SD = .66$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .38 to .09. Figure 1 shows the boxplot for the maintaining a safe environment dimension by students versus teachers.



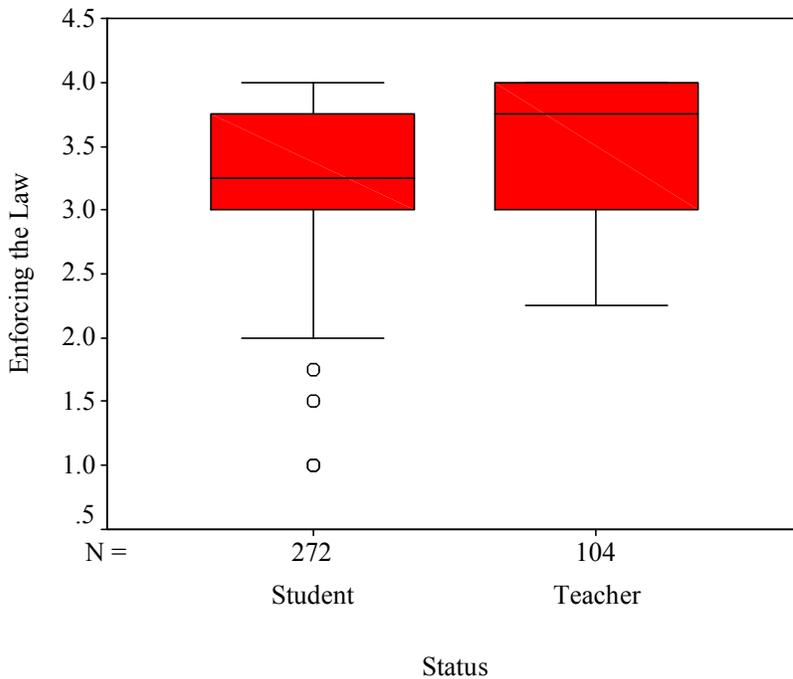
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 1. Boxplot for Maintaining a Safe Environment by Status (Students Versus Teachers)

H_{02} : There is no difference between teachers' and students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcement of the law.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of enforcing the law between students and teachers. The test variable was the dimension for enforcing the law and the grouping variable was students versus teachers. The test was significant, $t(374) = 4.77, p < .01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was medium (.06). That is, 6% of the variance in enforcing the law dimension was accounted for by the difference in students and teachers. The mean for teachers ($M = 3.55, SD = .50$) was higher than was the mean for students ($M = 3.26, SD = .55$).

The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .42 to .17. Figure 2 shows the boxplot for the enforcing the law dimension by students versus teachers.



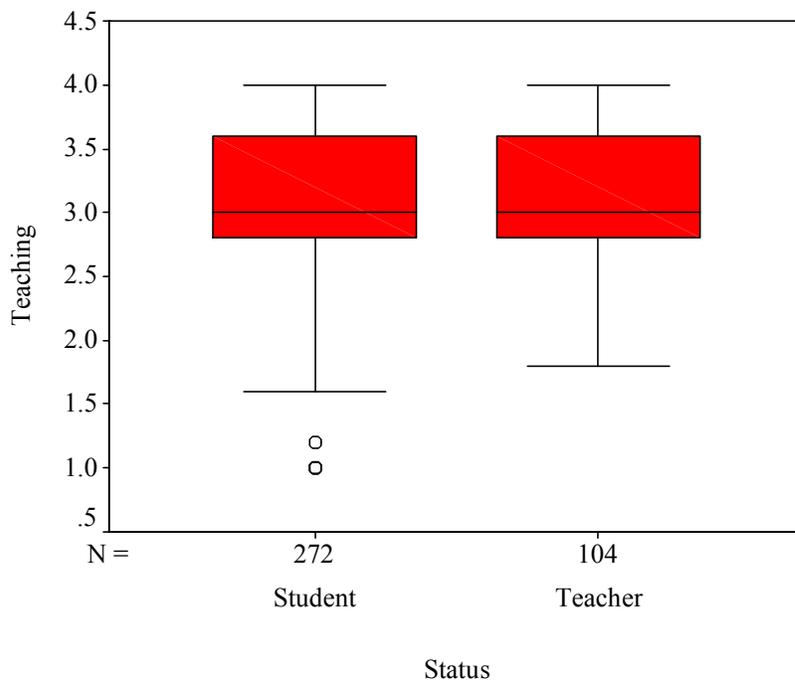
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 2. Boxplot for Enforcing the Law by Status (Students Versus Teachers)

Ho₁₃: There is no difference between teachers' and students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' role of teaching.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of teaching between students and teachers. The test variable was the dimension for teaching; the grouping variable was students versus teachers. The test was not significant, $t(374) = .42, p = .67$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size,

as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in the teaching dimension was accounted for by the difference in students and teachers. The mean for teachers ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .52$) was only slightly higher than the mean for students ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .59$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.16$ to $.10$. Figure 3 shows the boxplot for the teaching dimension by students versus teachers.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

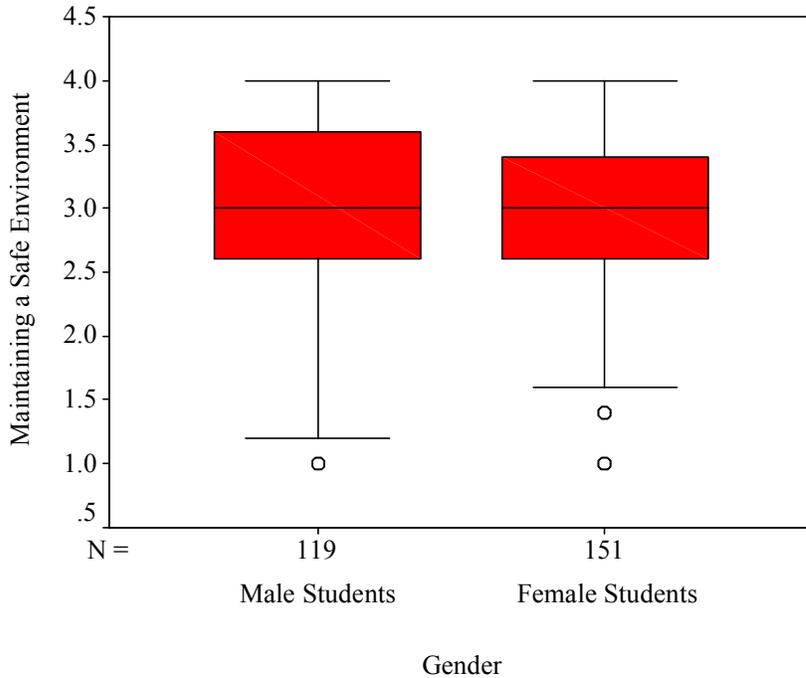
Figure 3. Boxplot for Teaching by Status (Students Versus Teachers)

Research Question #2

Are there significant differences between the views of male and female students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho₂₁: There is no difference between male and female students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in maintaining a safe environment between male and female students. The test variable was the dimension for maintaining a safe environment; the grouping variable was male versus female students. The test was not significant, $t(268) = .35, p = .73$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in maintaining a safe environment dimension was accounted for by the difference in male and female students. The mean for male students ($M = 3.02, SD = .66$) was higher than was the mean for female students ($M = 2.99, SD = .67$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.13$ to $.19$. Figure 4 shows the boxplot for the maintaining a safe environment dimension by male and female students.



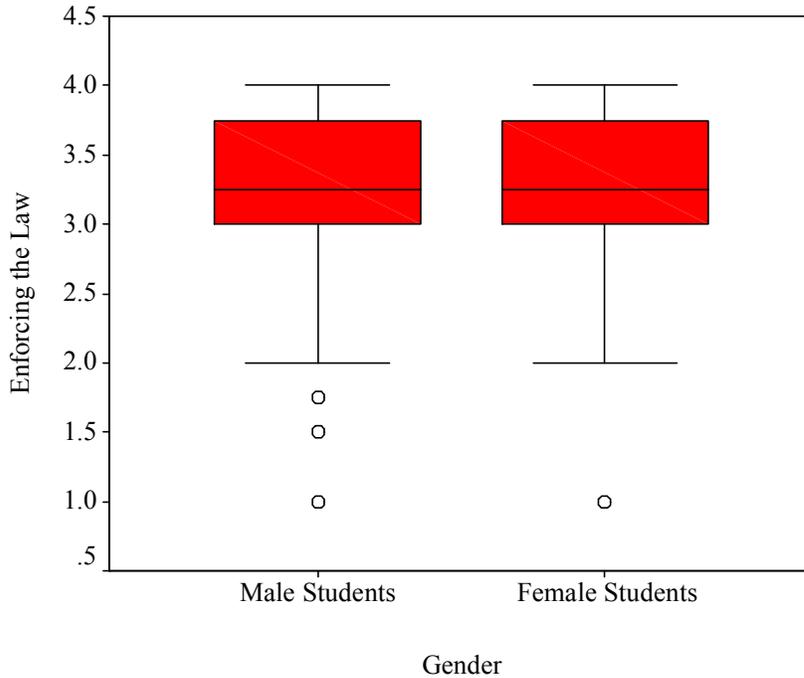
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 4. Boxplot for Maintaining a Safe Environment by Students' Gender

Ho₂: There is no difference between male and female students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcement of the law.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of enforcing the law between male and female students. The test variable was the dimension for enforcing the law; the grouping variable was male versus female students. The test was not significant, $t(268) = .08, p = .93$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in enforcing the law dimension was accounted for by the difference in male and female students. The mean for male students ($M = 3.26, SD = .59$) was the same as the mean for female students ($M = 3.26,$

$SD = .53$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.14$ to $.13$. Figure 5 shows the boxplot for the enforcing the law dimension by male and female students.



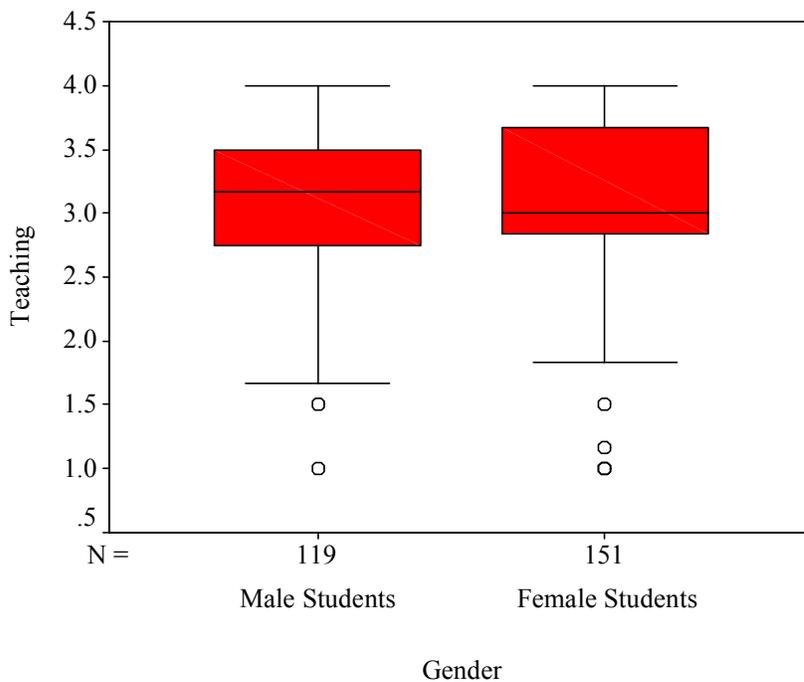
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 5. Boxplot for Enforcing the Law by Students' Gender

H_{03} : There is no difference between male and female students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' role of teaching.

A t test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of teaching. The test variable was the dimension for teaching; the grouping variable was male versus female students. The test was not significant, $t(268) = .24$, $p = .81$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in the teaching dimension was accounted for by the

difference in male and female students. The mean for male students ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .59$) was higher than was the mean for female students ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .60$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.13$ to $.16$. Figure 6 shows the boxplot for the teaching dimension by male and female students.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

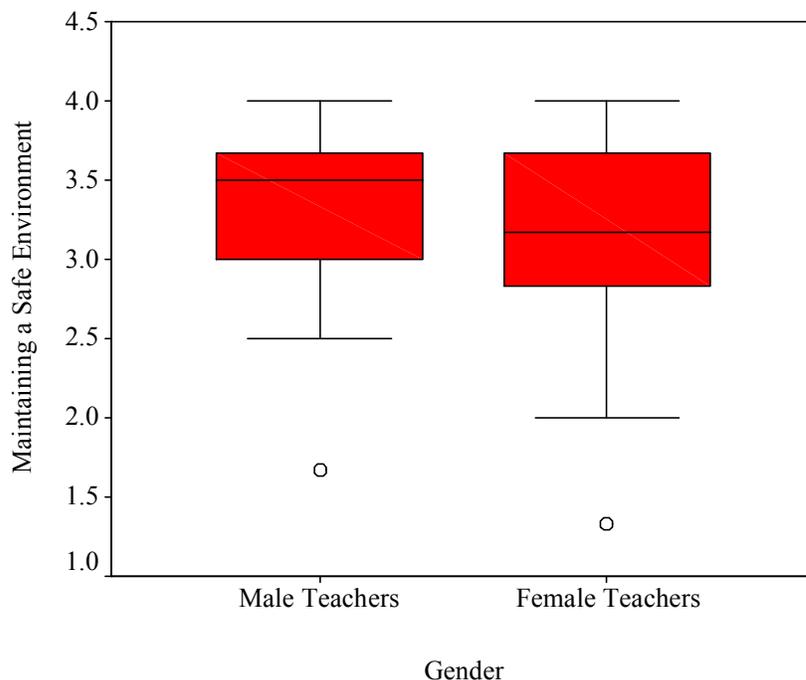
Figure 6. Boxplot for Teaching by Students' Gender

Research Question #3

Are there significant differences between the views of male and female teachers regarding school resource officer's performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

H_{03_1} : There is no difference between male and female teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

A t test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in maintaining a safe environment between male and female teachers. The test variable was the dimension for maintaining a safe environment; the grouping variable was teachers' gender. The test was not significant, $t(102) = 1.11, p = .27$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.01). Only 1% of the variance in maintaining a safe environment dimension was accounted for by teachers' gender. The mean for male teachers ($M = 3.34, SD = .50$) was higher than the mean for female teachers ($M = 3.21, SD = .58$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.10$ to $.36$. Figure 7 shows the boxplot for the maintaining a safe environment dimension by teachers' gender.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 7. Boxplot for Maintaining a Safe Environment by Teachers' Gender

Ho3₂: There is no difference between male and female teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcement of the law.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in enforcing the law between male and female teachers. The test variable was the dimension for enforcing the law; the grouping variable was teachers' gender. The test was not significant, $t(102) = .60, p = .55$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in enforcing the law dimension was accounted for by teachers' gender. The mean for male teachers ($M = 3.51, SD = .53$) was lower than was the mean for female teachers ($M = 3.57, SD = .49$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.27$ to $.15$. Figure 8 shows the boxplot for the enforcing the law dimension by teachers' gender.

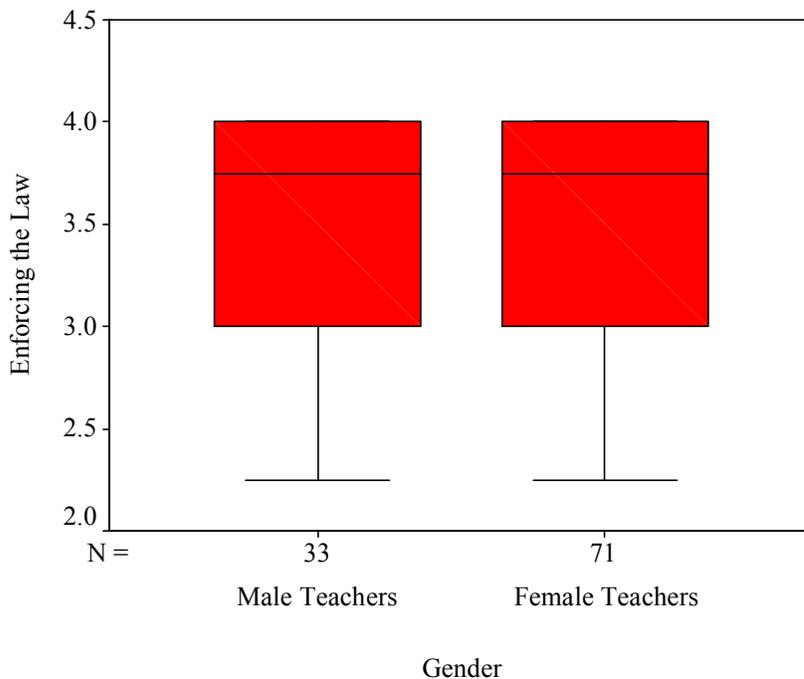
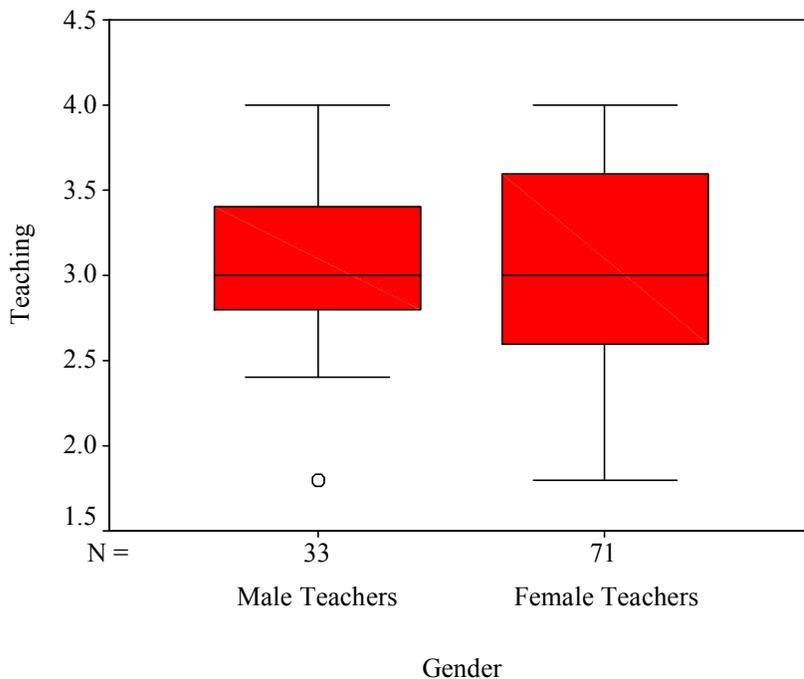


Figure 8. Boxplot for Enforcing the Law by Teachers' Gender

Ho3₃: There is no difference between male and female teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' role of teaching.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in the School Resource Officers' role of teaching between male and female teachers. The test variable was the dimension for teaching; the grouping variable was teachers' gender. The test was not significant, $t(102) = .45, p = .66$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in teaching dimension was accounted for by teachers' gender. The mean for male teachers ($M = 3.13, SD = .47$) was higher than was the mean for female teachers ($M = 3.09, SD = .54$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.17$ to $.27$. Figure 9 shows the boxplot for the teaching dimension by teachers' gender.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

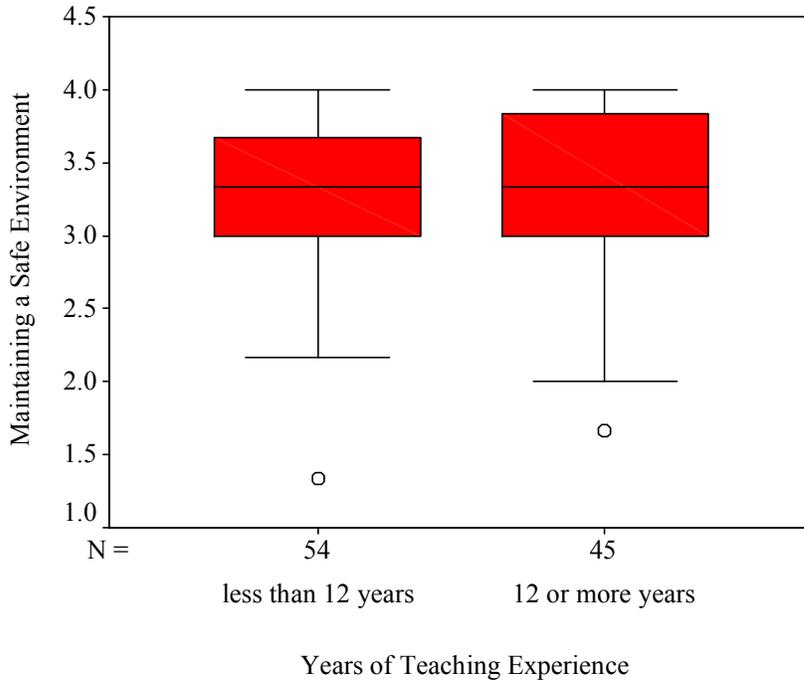
Figure 9. Boxplot for Teaching by Teachers' Gender

Research Question #4

Are there significant differences between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho4₁: There is no difference between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment. The test variable was the dimension for maintaining a safe environment; the grouping variable was years teaching experience. The test was not significant, $t(97) = .28, p = .78$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in maintaining a safe environment dimension was accounted for by the difference in teachers' years of experience. The mean for teachers with less than 12 years experience ($M = 3.27, SD = .56$) was higher than the mean for teachers with more than 12 years experience ($M = 3.23, SD = .59$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.20$ to $.26$. Figure 10 shows the boxplot for the maintaining a safe environment dimension by teachers' years experience.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 10. Boxplot for Maintaining a Safe Environment by Teachers' Years Experience

Ho₄₂: There is no difference between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' role in enforcing the law.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' role of enforcing the law. The test variable was the dimension for enforcing the law; the grouping variable was years teaching experience. The test was not significant, $t(97) = .19, p = .85$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in enforcing the law dimension was accounted for by the difference in teachers' years of experience. The mean for teachers with less than 12 years experience ($M = 3.57, SD = .52$) was

higher than was the mean for teachers with more than 12 years experience ($M = 3.55, SD = .49$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.18$ to $.22$. Figure 11 shows the boxplot for the enforcing the law dimension by teachers' years experience.

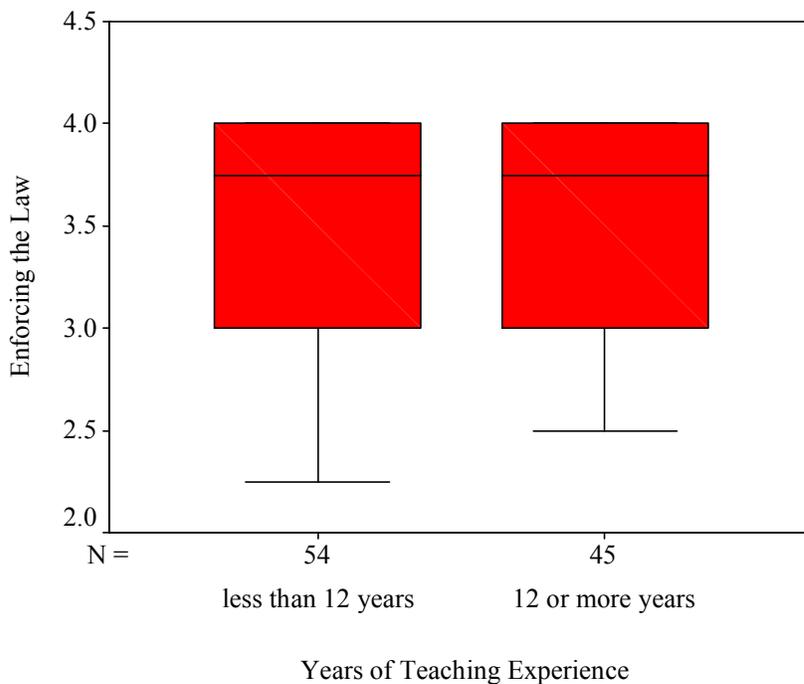


Figure 11. Boxplot for Enforcing the Law by Years of Teaching Experience

Ho₄₃: There is no difference between the views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' role of teaching.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' role of teaching. The test variable was the dimension for teaching; the grouping variable was years teaching experience. The test was

not significant, $t(97) = .65, p = .52$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in the teaching dimension was accounted for by the difference in teachers' years of experience. The mean for teachers with less than 12 years experience ($M = 3.14, SD = .49$) was higher than was the mean for teachers with more than 12 years experience ($M = 3.08, SD = .56$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.14$ to $.28$. Figure 12 shows the boxplot for the teaching dimension by teachers' years of experience.

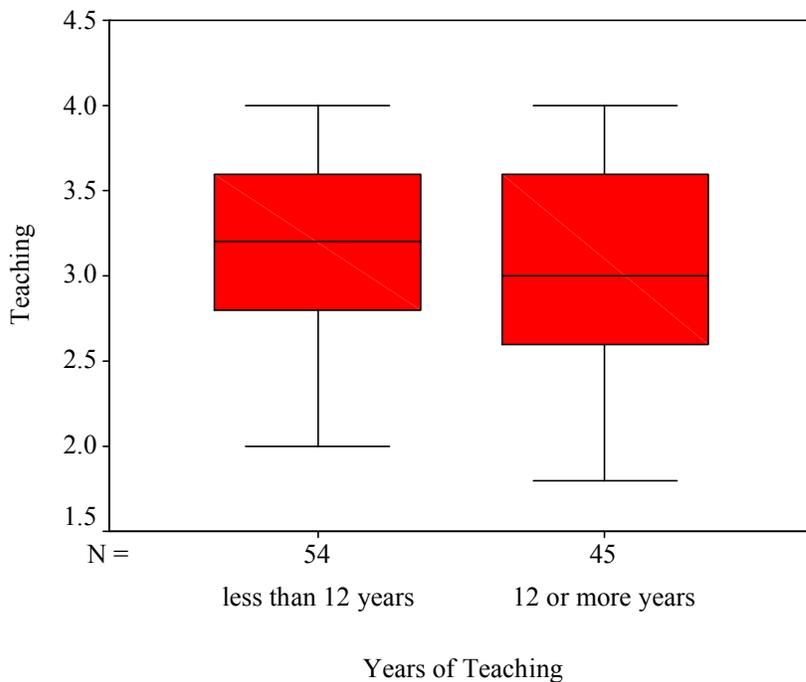


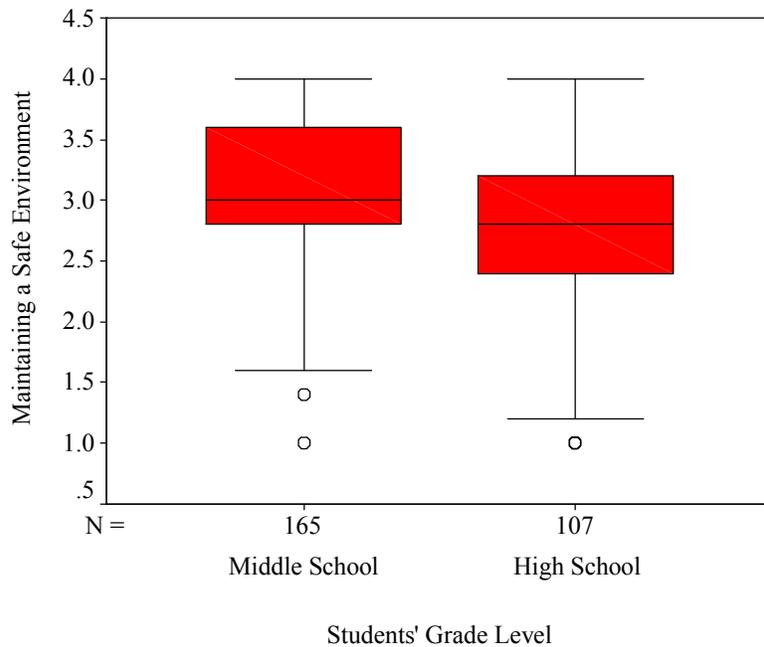
Figure 12. Boxplot for Teaching by Years of Teaching Experience

Research Question #5

Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho5₁: There is no difference between middle and high school students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in maintaining a safe environment between middle and high school students. The test variable was the dimension for maintaining a safe environment; the grouping variable was grade level. Levene's test for equality of variances showed that equal variances could not be assumed for maintaining a safe environment, $F(270) = 6.18, p = .01$. Therefore, equal variances are not assumed. The test was significant, $t(191.79) = 4.91, p = <.01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was medium (.09). Nine percent of the variance in maintaining a safe environment dimension was accounted for by students' grade level. The mean for middle school students ($M = 3.16, SD = .58$) was higher than was the mean for high school students ($M = 2.76, SD = .72$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .24 to .57. Figure 13 shows the boxplot for the maintaining a safe environment dimension by student grade level.



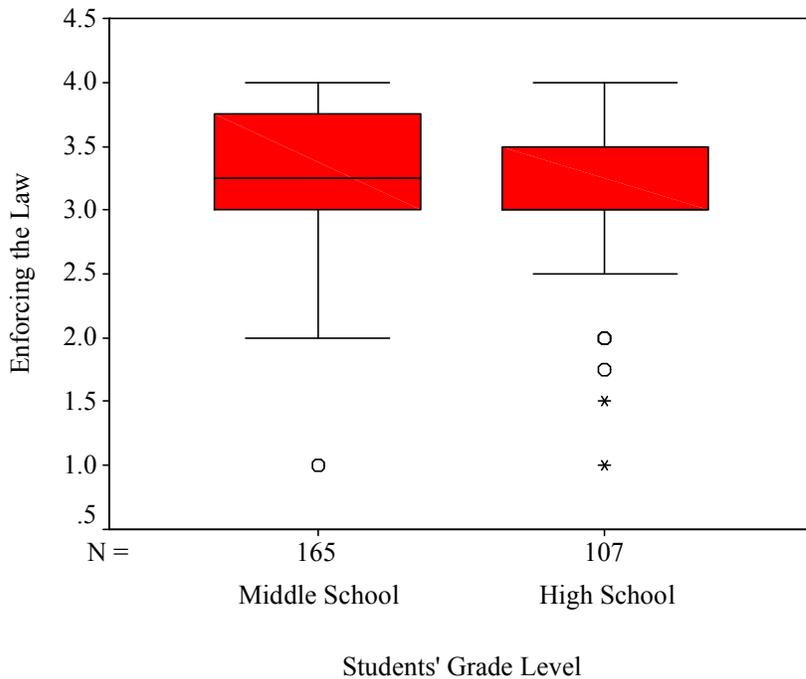
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 13. Boxplot for Maintaining a Safe Environment by Students' Grade Level

Ho5₂: There is no difference between middle and high school students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcement of the law.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of enforcing the law. The test variable was the dimension for enforcing the law; the grouping variable was grade level. The test was significant, $t(270) = 2.19, p = .03$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.02). Only 2% of the variance in the enforcing the law dimension was accounted for by student grade level. The mean for middle school students ($M = 3.31, SD = .54$) was higher than was the mean for high school students ($M = 3.17, SD = .57$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in

means was .02 to .28. Figure 14 shows the boxplot for the enforcing the law dimension by student grade level.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

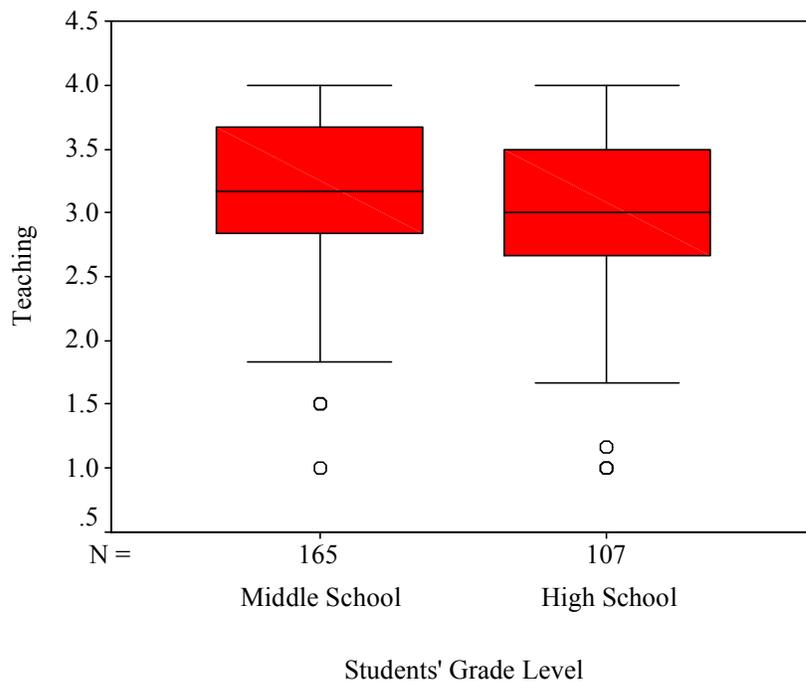
* = an observation b which is more than 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 14. Boxplot for Enforcing the Law by Students' Grade Level

Ho5₃: There is no difference between middle and high school students' mean survey scores on school resource officers' role of teaching.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of teaching. The test variable was the dimension for teaching; the grouping variable was grade level. The test was significant, $t(270) = 3.72, p = <.01$. Therefore,

the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.05). Five percent of the variance in the teaching dimension was accounted for by students' grade level. The mean for middle school students ($M = 3.20, SD = .55$) was higher than was the mean for high school students ($M = 2.93, SD = .62$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was .13 to .41. Figure 15 shows the boxplot for the teaching dimension by student grade level.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

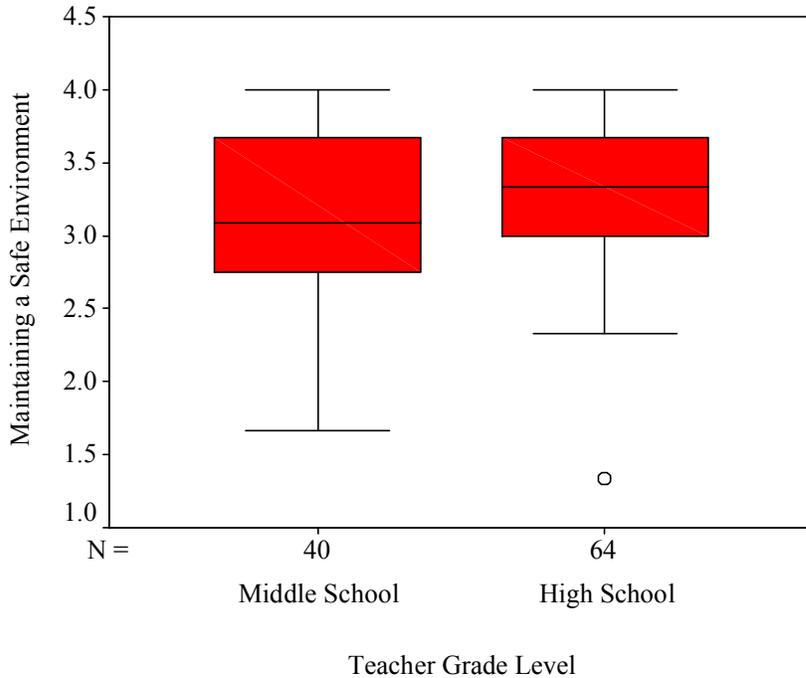
Figure 15. Boxplot for Teaching by Students' Grade Level

Research Question #6

Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Ho₆₁: There is no difference between middle and high school teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' maintenance of a safe environment.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in maintaining a safe environment between middle and high school teachers. The test variable was the dimension for maintaining a safe environment; the grouping variable was teacher grade level. The test was not significant, $t(102) = -.84, p = .40$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small (.01). Only 1% of the variance in maintaining a safe environment dimension was accounted for by teacher grade level. The mean for middle school teachers ($M = 3.19, SD = .62$) was lower than was the mean for high school teachers ($M = 3.29, SD = .51$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was -.32 to .13. Figure 16 shows the boxplot for the maintaining a safe environment dimension by teacher grade level.



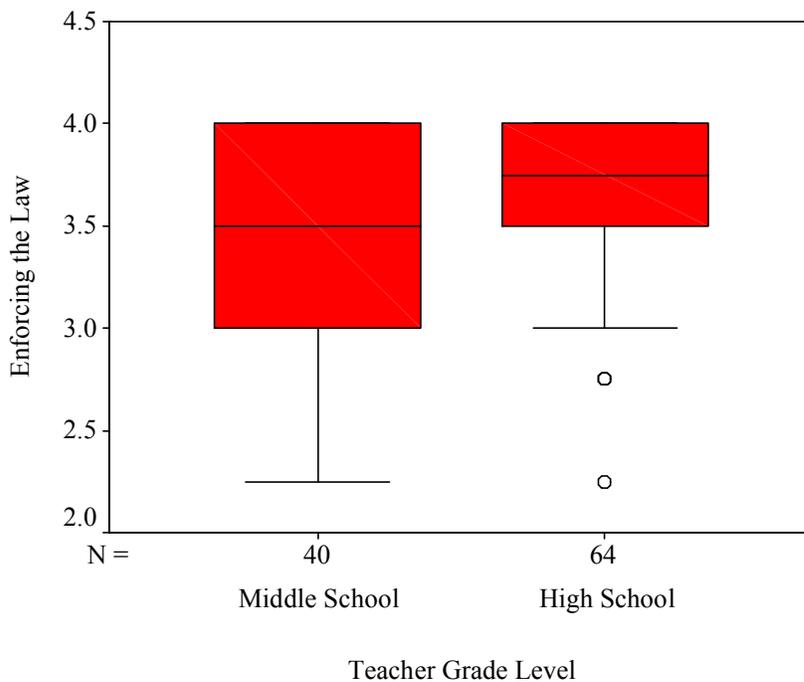
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 16. Boxplot for Maintaining a Safe Environment by Teachers' Grade Level

Ho₆₂: There is no difference between middle and high school teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' enforcement of the law.

A *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' enforcement of the law. The test variable was the dimension for enforcing the law; the grouping variable was teacher grade level. Levene's test for equality of variances showed that equal variances could not be assumed for enforcing the law, $F(102) = 9.26, p < .01$. Therefore, the *t* test does not assume equal variances were used. The test was significant, $t(68.24) = 2.67, p = .01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was medium (.07). Seven percent of the variance in enforcing the law dimension was accounted for by teacher grade level. The mean for middle school teachers ($M =$

3.38, $SD = .56$) was lower than was the mean for high school teachers ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .43$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.48$ to $.07$. Figure 17 shows the boxplot for the enforcing the law dimension by teacher grade level.



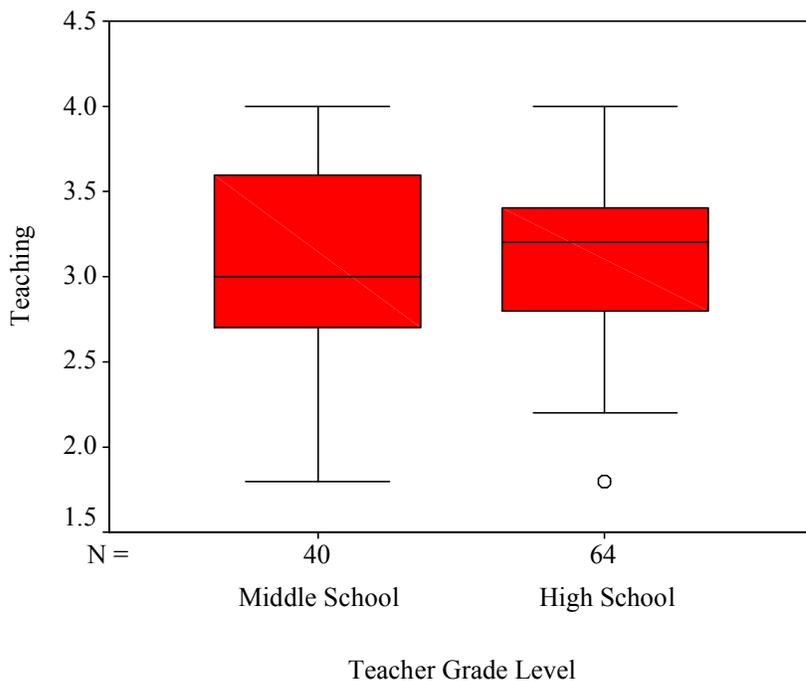
o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 17. Boxplot for Enforcing the Law by Teachers' Grade Level

Ho6₃: There is no difference between middle and high school teachers' mean survey scores on school resource officers' role of teaching.

A t test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean difference in school resource officers' role of teaching. The test variable was the dimension for teaching; the grouping variable was teacher grade level. The test was not significant, $t(102) = .31$, $p = .76$.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The effect size, as measured by η^2 , was small ($<.01$). Less than 1% of the variance in the teaching dimension was accounted for by teacher grade level. The mean for middle school teachers ($M = 3.08, SD = .59$) was lower than was the mean for high school teachers ($M = 3.11, SD = .47$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.24$ to $.18$. Figure 18 shows the boxplot for the teaching dimension by teacher grade level.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 18. Boxplot for Teaching by Teachers' Grade Level

Summary

This chapter included an evaluation of six research questions using inferential and descriptive statistics. Chapter 5 includes a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on schools that currently had School Resource Officers (SROs). The purpose of the study was to examine students' and teachers' perceptions regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching.

Summary of the Study

Students and teachers were given surveys and asked to share their opinions and perceptions about school resource officers' roles. From the survey information, a *t* test for independent samples was conducted to evaluate the mean differences for all three dimensions measured in the survey. The three dimensions examined were maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching. The following grouping variables were used in the comparisons for each dimension: students and teachers, male and female students, male and female teachers, teachers with varied years of experience, middle and high school students, and middle and high school teachers. Results were analyzed at a .05 significance level.

Summary of Findings

This study was guided by six research questions. Survey scores were analyzed using SPSS, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, software program. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the data and inferential statistics were used to examine relationships and differences among the variables identified in the survey instrument.

The sample consisted of 104 teachers and 272 students from a middle and high school, totaling 376 participants. Both schools used in this study employ, and have employed for at least 12 years, a full-time school resource officer.

Research Question #1

Are there significant differences between the views of students and teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

There was a significant difference between teachers' views and students' views regarding SROs' performance in the role of maintaining a safe environment at school. Teachers more strongly view SROs' performing this role. There was also a significant difference between teachers' views and students' views regarding SROs' performance in the role of enforcing the law. Teachers more strongly agreed that SROs enforce the law in school. In contrast, there was no significant difference in the teachers' and students' mean scores on SROs' role of teaching in the school.

Research Question #2

Are there significant differences between the views of male and female students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

There was no significant difference between male and female students' mean survey scores about SROs' maintenance of a safe school environment, enforcement of the law, or teaching. Male students' mean survey scores were slightly higher when scoring SROs on

maintaining the school environment but not high enough to be statistically significant. Similarly, male students' mean survey scores were also slightly higher when scoring SROs on teaching in the school; however, they were not significant.

Research Question #3

Are there significant differences between the views of male and female teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

In measuring the mean survey scores for male and female teachers regarding the three roles of SROs, there were no significant differences. Male and female teachers' mean survey scores did differ somewhat but not enough to reject the hypothesis.

Research Question #4

Are there significant differences between views of teachers with 12 or more years experience and teachers with less than 12 years experience regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Teachers were grouped based on their years experience service. The null hypotheses were all retained with both groups responding similarly. The mean difference varied slightly in measuring only the mean scores for all three SRO roles. Teachers with 1 to 12 years experience scored a slightly higher mean for all three roles than did teachers with more than 12 years experience.

Research Question #5

Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school students regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

Middle school and high school students' mean survey scores were compared regarding the three roles of SROs. There was a significant difference between middle school students' and high school students' views regarding SROs in the role of maintaining a safe environment. Middle school students had a higher mean score than did high school students. There was also a significant difference in their views of SROs in the role enforcing the law and teaching in the school. Middle school students perceived SROs in these roles more than high school students.

Research Question #6

Are there significant differences between the views of middle and high school teachers regarding school resource officers' performance related to the three dimensions of their responsibilities: maintaining a safe environment, enforcing the law, and teaching?

There was no significant difference between middle and high school teachers' mean survey scores regarding SROs' maintenance of a safe school environment. High school teachers had a slightly higher mean score than did middle school teachers. In measuring the difference between middle and high school teachers' mean survey scores regarding SROs' role of enforcing the law there was significance. High school teachers had a higher mean score than did middle school teachers. When middle and high school teachers were asked their views on the role of teaching, the findings were not significant although high school teachers did have a slightly higher mean score.

Conclusions

School resource officers are now a common sight in many schools across the country. The triad model, which governs SRO roles in school, includes the roles of enforcing law, teaching, and counseling or maintaining a safe environment (National Association of School Resource Officers, 1998). Much research has been completed on violence in schools; however, little has been published on the SROs or the roles they play in school. This study focused on the views of students and teachers in regard to the roles of their SRO.

Dimension #1

Dimension 1, maintaining a safe environment, represents one of the triad concepts SROs are trained to carry out in a school. This dimension represents counseling in the triad concept for SRO training. Counseling includes advising students, gaining their respect, and forging relationships with them. There was no significant difference found regarding this dimension when considering the following variables: gender of students, gender of teachers, grade level of teachers, and teachers' years teaching experience. However, there was a significant difference between teachers' and students' mean scores, as well between high school and middle school students' mean scores.

Teachers' mean scores were higher than students' mean scores regarding SROs in the roles of maintaining a safe environment. Maintaining a safe environment encompasses many of the activities labeled as "counseling" in the training process. I believe teachers have a better understanding of the proactive behaviors of SROs. Students are not made privy to all the behavior infractions and crimes that are committed or planned in a school; therefore, they may

not see this role as strongly as do teachers. A report published by the Center for Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati authored by Lawrence and Coon (2005) studied 14 schools with SROs. Their research showed that junior and high school populations desired police in their school overwhelmingly as a deterrent measure and law enforcer. I find this important because many roles were identified by participants but these were the chief descriptors and they included two of the three dimensions in this study. Deterring students from crime or maintaining a safe environment ranges from keeping children safe from bullying to preventing drugs from being on campus. Teachers and administrators often deal with student situations before they pose a threat or become a classroom problem. Many times students have no knowledge of what is taking place outside their classroom or wing in the building. Teachers see SROs' dealing with these issues and catching many of them before they pose a threat to the safety of students. Students might not take much notice of the daily duties of an SRO and how they impact the school environment but teachers do notice and perceive SROs as filling this role in their school.

There was a significant difference between middle school students and high school students regarding SROs' maintenance of a safe environment. Middle school students' mean scores were higher than high school students' mean scores. My initial impression was that middle school students were more captivated with school resource officers and generally held them in higher regard than did high school students. This idea was supported by a report in 2005. In this report, researchers found that middle school students were more likely to view SROs positively (McDevitt & Panniello, 2005). The same report determined that a positive opinion of a SRO might lead to a higher degree of perceived safety. McDevitt and Panniello found a significant relationship between positive perceptions of SROs and feeling safe in school. Also, the schools used in the survey were very different in size with the high school being more

than double the size of the middle school. The views of middle school students could be a reflection of a smaller, more intimate environment. The smaller environment might give students more time with the SRO, better observations of the SRO, and more information about what is going on in the school in general. These environmental differences could give them the opportunity to see more proactive behaviors from the SRO such as a stronger presence in the hallways and classrooms, enforcement of rules and law throughout the school, and more one-on-one time with the officer.

Dimension #2

Dimension 2, enforcing the law, represents the most obvious role an SRO plays in school. There were no significant differences for this dimension in mean survey scores when considering the following variables: gender of students, gender of teachers, and teachers' years of teaching experience. There was a significant difference between teachers' and students' mean survey scores regarding this role, with teachers having higher mean scores. This was an expected outcome and supports the earlier research from Lawrence and Coons (2005) stating law enforcement as one of the two chief descriptors of SRO roles. Teachers know the primary purpose of SROs.

There was also a significant difference between middle school students' and high school students' perceptions of this dimension. Middle school students viewed this role more strongly than did high school students. Several factors could play a part in this difference. Again, the middle school setting is much smaller than is the high school setting so students have more opportunities to see the SRO. Students might see more active SRO enforcement such as making arrests, searching lockers, questioning students, and investigating school crimes. High school

students, on the other hand, have a much larger building and many more students around them. They may not see all the activities the SRO is attending to or get the opportunity for much time with or around the SRO. Middle and high school students are treated quite differently as well. Middle school students are still contained within small units of their school with a higher degree of teacher direction whereas high school students are more autonomous. High school students might be more concerned with themselves, friends, and classes to pay much attention to a school resource officer. Middle school students might be more interested in the SRO, especially because they have more time with the SRO.

Lastly, there was a significant difference between high school teachers and middle school teachers regarding their views of enforcing the law. High school teachers had higher mean scores than middle school teachers. This might be because high school students have a higher rate of criminal activity and teachers in the high school see the officer performing law enforcement more frequently. According to a report published by the United States Department of Education, 85% of school attackers are ages 13 to 18, representative of 8th- to 12th-grade students (Borum et al., 2004). In addressing school violence statistics, many of the researchers studied students as one large group and did not separate data by middle and high school groups. However, Devoe et al. (2005) stated that teachers at the instructional level reported higher rates of theft and violence from high school students than middle school students. High school teachers probably see more serious behavior problems that lead to police intervention on a law enforcement level. High school students are driving, gaining independence from parents, and gaining independence in the school environment. The greater independence afforded to high school students might allow for more frequent opportunities to challenge acceptable legal boundaries.

Dimension #3

Dimension 3, teaching, covers everything from classroom time as a D.A.R.E. teacher (Drug Abuse Resistance Educator) to giving students information at a lunch table. There were no significant differences regarding Dimension 3 when considering the following variables: student and teachers, gender of students, gender of teachers, teachers' years teaching experience, and teachers by grade level. There was a significant difference between middle school students' and high school students' views regarding SROs teaching in school. Middle schools students more strongly viewed SROs as fulfilling this role. I believe this is because of the content appropriate for this age group. Middle school students are still learning about safety, law, and discipline as they become increasingly independent in middle school. There are more opportunities for SROs to interact as a teacher during the middle school years. When students get into high school they become more independent and travel independently within the school, thus, losing most of time that might have been used for nonacademic instruction.

Recommendations for Best Practices

Based on the literature presented and the results of this study, I make the following recommendations:

1. The roles of SROs need to be clearly defined with administration and staff to encourage clear communication and cooperation.
2. The roles of SROs need to be clearly defined with students. Do not be afraid to be honest with students about the purpose of SROs. Students need to know they can report crime, have knowledge that they are being monitored, and know they have a resource available other than administration and teachers.

3. SROs should build positive relationships with students. This will promote a sense of safety and trust.
4. The roles of SROs might need to be refocused periodically depending on community characteristics and school needs. This allows for greater use of the SROs in order to benefit the school and students to the greatest extent.
5. Parents should be involved in the SRO program by educating them on the roles and purpose of the SRO. They can help communicate the purposes and roles to their children, therefore creating further opportunities for students to use SROs.
6. SROs should be incorporated into the school family. Allowing the SRO to be an essential part of the school staff would build trust between the SRO and teachers. If teachers understand the SROs' purposes and know them as part of the school family and faculty, they might be more comfortable inviting them to speak with students and teach.
7. The SRO should be used in teaching the staff as well students. SROs are a valuable resource in designing crisis plans and safety procedures. They have expertise and knowledge about safety, crime, and security that most teachers lack and sharing this information with teachers helps to build a more secure school.
8. SRO teaching programs should be evaluated for effectiveness. This enables SROs to identify areas that need to be strengthened.
9. Principals should have a hand in hiring their SRO. This officer should be a good fit for the school climate. He or she should be given opportunities to engage informally with the students, work fun events at school, talk with students at lunch, walk

hallways during class breaks, and visit classrooms. Students should be comfortable with the SRO.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Replication of this study should include more schools in the county that employ an SRO in order to gain a broader understanding of SRO roles and to explore further variables.
2. Replication of this study should include SROs as participants in order to identify perception gaps that might exist. This could lead to changes in the training program or the way SROs carry out roles.
3. A study should be completed exploring what factors in an SRO program affect students' perception of safety. Factors that result in students' positive perception of safety could be focused on and strengthened further while weak areas of the SRO program could also be strengthened.
4. A study should be completed examining students' perception of safety. This study focused on the roles of SROs rather than how they influenced students' perception of safety.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Student Survey

*Directions: Use the following scale in responding to the questions, circle only 1 response:
 SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree*

Statement	Scale			
-Maintaining a Safe Environment-				
1. Our school resource officer helps keep students from being bullied.	SD	D	A	SA
2. Our school resource officer helps keep weapons out of my school.	SD	D	A	SA
3. Our school resource officer helps keep students from fighting.	SD	D	A	SA
4. Our school resource officer helps keep students from bringing drugs/alcohol to school.	SD	D	A	SA
5. Our school resource officer makes me feel safer.	SD	D	A	SA
-Enforcing the Law-				
6. An important part of our school resource officer's job is to investigate criminal activity in our school.	SD	D	A	SA
7. An important part of our school resource officer's job is to help carry out school searches (locker, etc.).	SD	D	A	SA
8. An important part of our school resource officer's job is to make arrests when students break the law.	SD	D	A	SA
9. The main job of our school resource officer is to enforce the law.	SD	D	A	SA
-Teaching-				
10. I often see our school resource officer in public areas of our school.	SD	D	A	SA
11. I feel comfortable talking to my school resource officer.	SD	D	A	SA
12. I would feel comfortable reporting dangerous or suspicious activity to our school resource officer.	SD	D	A	SA
13. Having a school resource officer makes my school a safer place.	SD	D	A	SA

14. The main job of our school resource officer is to enforce school rules. SD D A SA

15. The main job of our school resource officer is to teach about safety
and law enforcement. SD D A SA

16. Are you male or female? Male Female

APPENDIX B

Teacher Survey

*Directions: Use the following scale in responding to the questions, circle only 1 response:
 SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree*

Statement	Scale			
-Maintaining a Safe Environment-				
1. Our school resource officer helps keep students from being bullied.	SD	D	A	SA
2. Our school resource officer helps keep weapons out of the school.	SD	D	A	SA
3. Our school resource officer helps keep students from fighting.	SD	D	A	SA
4. Our school resource officer helps keep students from bringing drugs/alcohol to school.	SD	D	A	SA
5. Our school resource officer makes students feel safer.	SD	D	A	SA
6. Our school resource officer makes me feel safer.	SD	D	A	SA
-Enforcing the Law-				
7. An important part of our school resource officer's job is to investigate criminal activity in our school.	SD	D	A	SA
8. An important part of our school resource officer's job is to help carry out school searches (locker, etc.).	SD	D	A	SA
9. An important part of our school resource officer's job is to make arrests when students break the law.	SD	D	A	SA
10. The main job of our school resource officer is to enforce the law.	SD	D	A	SA
-Teaching-				
11. I often see our school resource officer in public area of our school.	SD	D	A	SA
12. Students feel comfortable talking to our school resource officer.	SD	D	A	SA
13. Students feel comfortable reporting dangerous or suspicious activity to our school resource officer.	SD	D	A	SA
14. The main job of our school resource officer is to enforce school rules.	SD	D	A	SA

15. The main job of our school resource officer is to teach about safety and law enforcement. SD D A SA

16. Are you male or female? Male Female

17. How many years have you been teaching? _____

APPENDIX C

Letter to Director of Schools

Dr. [Name]
Director of Schools
[Name] County Schools
[City] [State] [Zipcode]

Dear Dr. [Name]:

I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. I am interested in conducting a study within your school system to determine what role school resource officers play in preventing school violence. The study will take place at [Name] School and [Name] School.

This study will involve anonymously surveying administrators, teachers, and students. Participation in the study is voluntary and students will have to obtain parent permission before participating in the study.

I am requesting your permission to conduct this study within the [Name] School System and will provide your office and the participating schools with copies of the finished report. This should be helpful in providing information that could benefit the district and assist others.

Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor or me if you have any further questions about my study.

Sincerely,

Sarah Rippetoe
Doctoral Student
East Tennessee State University

APPENDIX D

Teacher Research Study Explanation

Dear Teacher,

You are being asked to take part in a study to discover the role of School Resource Officers in maintaining school safety. You will be asked to complete a survey answering questions about the types of activities your School Resource Officer performs while they are at your school. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete and will be at school and returned to the designated proctor. This research will be important in discovering the role School Resource Officers' play in helping to maintain school safety. Information gained can be used in School Resource Officer training in the future.

Completing this anonymous survey will cause little or no risk to you. The survey has been designed to protect your privacy. You will not put your name on the survey. Also, no school or teacher/administrator will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your participation is voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. In addition, you may stop participating in the survey at any point without penalty.

If you have any questions, problems or research-related problems at any time, you may call Sarah Rippetoe at XXXX or e-mail XXXX, or Dr. Eric Glover at XXXX. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at XXXX for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at XXXX.

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the researcher's residence for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

If you have questions today about the survey, your proctor or principal should be able to answer them. If you are not willing to take part in the survey, simply return the survey unanswered or dispose of it.

Your participation is very important to the success of this study, and we certainly appreciate your help.

Version date 4/14/07

APPENDIX E

Child Assent Form

Dear Student,

You are being asked to take part in a study to discover the role of School Resource Officers in maintaining school safety. You will be asked to complete a survey answering questions about the types of activities your School Resource Officer performs while they are at your school. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete and will be taken at home and returned to the teacher giving you the survey. This research will be important in discovering the role School Resource Officers' play in helping to maintain school safety. Information gained can be used in School Resource Officer training in the future.

The survey has been designed to protect your privacy. Completing this anonymous survey will cause little or no risk to you. In order to keep the survey anonymous you will not put your name on it and no one will know your answers. Also, no class or student will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your participation is voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. In addition, you may stop participating in the survey at any point without penalty.

The teacher giving you the survey or your principal should be able to answer your questions about the survey.

If you are willing to take part in the survey, please sign this form and give it to your teacher. If you do NOT want to complete the survey, please check the refusal box, sign and return the form to the teacher that gave it to you. You will receive a small piece of candy such as laffy taffy for your participation.

Your participation is very important to the success of this study, and we certainly appreciate your help.

Permission for Student Participation

I have read or had this document read to me and know what the survey is about. I understand that I may withdraw from the research study at any time without any consequences or explanation and I am free to ask questions at any time, without penalty.

Student Signature

Please print your name

Teacher

Date

Refusal for Student Participation

[] I **do not** want to fill out the survey.

Student Signature

Version date 4/14/07

APPENDIX F

Parental Permission Form

Dear Parents,

XXXX School is taking part in a School Resource Officer research study to discover the role School Resource Officers play in maintaining school safety. Students will be asked to complete a survey answering questions about the types of activities they observe their School Resource Officer participating in while at school, specifically regarding maintaining a safe environment, enforcement of the law, and teaching. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete and will be taken at home and returned to their teacher. The results of this study will provide the XXXX School System with information to guide and assist in better training of School Resource Officers in maintaining a safe school environment.

We would like all selected students to take part in the survey, but participation is voluntary. Completing this anonymous survey will cause little or no risk to your child. Students will not put their names on the survey. Also, no school, class or student will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your child will get no benefit right away from taking part in the survey. However, the results of this survey will help children in the future by influencing School Resource Officer training programs. Students can skip any question that they do not wish to answer. You may refuse for your child to participate. Your child can quit at any time. If your child quits or refuses to participate, the benefits or treatment to which they are otherwise entitled will not be affected. If your child participates in this study, he/she will receive a small piece of candy such as laffy taffy.

If you have any questions, problems or research-related problems at any time, you may call Sarah Rippetoe at XXXX or e-mail XXXX, or Dr. Eric Glover at XXXX. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at XXXX for any questions you may have about your child's rights as a research participant. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at XXXX.

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the researcher's residence for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming your child as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

If you have no objection to your child taking part in the survey, you and your child should read and sign the attached form and return it to your child's teacher preferably tomorrow, but no later than **Friday, May 18**. If you prefer your child not take part in the survey, please check the refusal box, sign and return the attached form to your child's teacher.

Your child's participation is very important to the success of this study, and we certainly appreciate your time, help and quick return of the attached consent form.

Sarah Rippetoe, Ed.S

XXXX

Participant Permission/Refusal Form

Permission for Student Participation

I have read or had this document read to me and know what the survey is about. I understand that my child may withdraw from the research study at any time without any consequences or explanation and is free to ask questions at any time, without penalty. I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document.

I agree to have my child to complete the survey at home and return it to his/her teacher. I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand that if I have any questions I can address them at any time to the researcher, Sarah Rippetoe, or the researchers project chair, Dr. Eric Glover, or my child's teacher or principal.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Please print your child's name

Homeroom Teacher:

Date

XXXX

Refusal for Student Participation

If you **do not** want your child to take part in the survey, check the box, sign and date the form, and return the form to the school no later than May 18, 2007. Signing and returning this form will dismiss your child from taking the survey.

[] My child **may not** take part in this survey.

Child's name:

Grade:

Homeroom Teacher:

Parent's signature

Date

Version date 4/14/07

APPENDIX G

Teacher Assent Form

Dear Teacher,

You are being asked to take part in a study to discover the role of School Resource Officers in maintaining school safety. You will be asked to complete a survey answering questions about the types of activities your School Resource Officer performs while they are at your school. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete and will be at school and returned to the designated proctor. This research will be important in discovering the role School Resource Officers' play in helping to maintain school safety. Information gained can be used in School Resource Officer training in the future.

Completing this anonymous survey will cause little or no risk to you. The survey has been designed to protect your privacy. You will not put your name on the survey. Also, no school or teacher/administrator will ever be mentioned by name in a report of the results. Your participation is voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. In addition, you may stop participating in the survey at any point without penalty.

If you have any questions, problems or research-related problems at any time, you may call Sarah Rippetoe at XXXX or e-mail XXXX or Dr. Eric Glover at XXXX. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at XXXX for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at XXXX.

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the researcher's residence for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

If you have questions today about the survey, your proctor or principal should be able to answer them. Your participation is very important to the success of this study, and we certainly appreciate your help. If you are willing to take part in the survey, please sign this form and give it to your proctor. If you do NOT want to complete the survey, please check the refusal box, sign and return the form to your proctor. Your participation is very important to the success of this study, and we certainly appreciate your help.

Permission for Teacher/Administrator Participation

I have read or had this document read to me and know what the survey is about. I understand that I may withdraw from the research study at any time without any consequences or explanation and I am free to ask questions at any time, without penalty.

Teacher/Administrator Signature

Please print your name

Refusal for Teacher/Administrator Participation

[] I **do not** want to fill out the survey.

Teacher/Administrator Signature

Version date 4/14/07

VITA

SARAH JANE RIPPETOE

Personal Data: Date of Birth: October 24, 1976
 Place of Birth: Knoxville, Tennessee
 Marital Status: Married

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