

Perspectives of Administrators, Teachers, SROs, and Recent Graduates
on School Safety and the Role of the School Resource Officer:
A Mixed Methods Study

by
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Abstract

Students today have various feelings of distrust among many of their teachers and administrators regarding the handling of violent episodes. As such, an examination of existing educational research to assess strategies that promote school safety and how to access community partnerships within this study is warranted. The efficacy of nonviolent and restorative disciplinary practices, with characteristics of social/emotional wellness programs supported by community partnership school resource officer (SRO) initiatives, are examined. Demonstrations of how positive school culture, features of emotional wellness programs, and an SRO's community-based role can promote school safety rather than exacerbate the school-to-prison pipeline are shared. This study further builds on the current pool of knowledge through an investigation of the viewpoints of 18 participants including school personnel and recent graduates in rural, suburban, and urban school districts across three counties in Northeast Ohio. Specifically, the researcher examined the perspectives of four key stakeholder groups to study their ideas regarding school safety, SROs performing law enforcement duties at the school and the associated impacts on learning, recommendations for ensuring building-wide safety, existing school climate and safety strategies, and SROs implementing the triad model (i.e., law enforcement, teacher/mentor, counselor). The investigation utilized Q-methodology and follow-up questions. Seventeen of the 18 Q-sorts loaded significantly on one of the three factors (summarized as Factor 1: *We Are In This Together*, Factor 2: *Keep Us Safe*, and Factor 3: *Teachers Teach*), which together explained 67% of the study variance. Follow-up questions provided additional support and context for the researcher's operationalization of the participants' collective viewpoints across these three main lines.

Implications of this research will provide districts and educational professionals a blueprint for restorative practices that SROs can contribute to.

Keywords: school safety, positive school culture, school resource officer initiatives, community partnerships, social and emotional wellness

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my childhood friend and former U.S. Army Staff Sergeant, Paul Poulos.

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This educational journey has been a marathon, not a sprint. Throughout YSU's doctoral program, I have learned more skills, and broadened my knowledge base. I would like to thank my mom and dad, Leo and Barb for their unwavering support and encouragement. As elementary teachers, they dedicated the best portion of their lives to serve others. To my wife Jen, you have endured so much complaining, interrupted vacations, little sleep, and patience that was not humanly possible. I love you so much. To my kids, Olivia, and Sean, I am very proud of you and thank you in advance for your understanding as I missed so many of your opportunities for the sake of advancing my studies and career.

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belief in me. Even while I strayed from the Boardman Family for a brief two years, you kept in touch, and still remained close to me. I will always be indebted to you all for your kindness and support. Siena, you have been an inspiration to me and have truly gone above and beyond to help me as I bounced ideas and topics off of you, and you've been patient to hear me complain, and gently prodded me to refocus and never to worry. You are an amazing young lady, and I am very proud of you!

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Chapter One

Introduction

Students have various feelings of distrust among many of their teachers regarding the handling of violent episodes (Brooks, 2020). As a result, an examination of educational research to assess strategies that promote school safety and how to access community partnerships is warranted. Strategies that have been demonstrated to aid students in abating this anxiety include social-emotional programs that emphasize nonviolent and restorative discipline practices (Losen et al., 2021). Additionally, the development of close social relationships contributes to lower bullying and victimization rates. Both strategies have reduced school violence (Eijigu & Teketel, 2021). Lustick (2020) shares that some common iterations of these school-based restorative practices include “community-building circles (commonly held in homeroom or advisory), restorative conferences for addressing harm, and reentry circles for preparing suspended students to reenter their school community” (pps. 556-557) Establishment of close social relationships and positive peer interactions also strengthen a sense of belonging, empathy, and role-taking, all of which build resilience and increase belonging in schools (Kankaanpaa et al., 2022).

Research in nonviolent practices and restorative justice programs has shown a correlation between reduced recidivism, increased social and emotional well-being, and fewer disciplinary incidents (Abt, 2017). As part of a violence prevention strategy, nonviolent practices have shown a greater impact on reducing school victimization than schools that do not use these tools (McDade et al., 2017). In contrast, simply adding school resource officers (SROs) to schools without adequate training has shown mixed results in reducing violence or promoting school safety (Heise & Nance, 2020). A similar study found no statistically significant difference in total violations when an SRO was present (Sullivan & Hausman, 2017). The Harvard Law

Review (2015) contended that there is limited evidence to show that heavy policing, zero-tolerance rules, and more frequent searching increase school safety. Tobin & Sugai (1996) noted that students who have been suspended from school were more likely to be referred for disciplinary action in the future. Furthermore, these students were disproportionately more likely to be males, individuals from a low socioeconomic status (SES), or members of ethnic minorities (Crosse et al., 2022). Theorists who promote zero-tolerance rules, increased policing, and harsh consequences contest that these approaches are necessary to keep schools safe. When challenged by the courts, they tend to favor districts that enforce and apply zero-tolerance policies (Stader, 2004).

Most administrative theories on discipline tend to focus on the attractiveness of the zero-tolerance approach, as it attempts to take subjective decision-making out of the discipline equation. Others have noted that the shift toward zero-tolerance is simply a response by schools to the litigious nature of parents who are quick to not only defend their child but to sue the district. However, in conjunction with these zero-tolerance approaches, the assignment of an SRO who is used to facilitate an emphasis on formal processing of offenses (e.g., writing citations, punitive responses, etc.) over other strategies can contribute to a more adversarial, punitive environment (Crosse et al., 2022).

In comparison, Rosiak's theory, which presents the SRO model of school-based law enforcement, focuses on the efficacy of nonviolent and restorative practices that contribute to a positive learning environment (Losen et al., 2021). Building upon this theory, when social/emotional wellness programs are supported by SRO initiatives that partner with community agencies, the school culture is positively enhanced. These practices create a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning (McDade et al., 2017). Understanding student

to student, student to teacher, and teacher to administrator relationships, as well as how all of these relationships are linked to an effective SRO program, provides the foundation for this study, as well as warrants further research.

Statement of Problem

Feelings of distrust exist amongst students based on how their teachers and administrators handle violent episodes (Ali et al., 2019). This distrust opposes efforts made by school officials to ensure a safe and orderly learning environment. School safety is fundamental to a positive school climate, in part because student and teacher engagement and connectedness are so impacted by school safety. Thus, an examination of educational research to assess strategies that promote school safety and how to access community partnerships is warranted. In many communities, this type of partnership manifests in the assignment of a school resource officer (SRO) who plays a vital role in promoting school safety. Selecting a quality SRO and strengthening the coordination and cooperation between these officers and school officials are key components of success (Sullivan & Hausman, 2017). Positive school climate leads to increased school engagement and connectedness, which in turn lead to higher academic achievement. Higher achievement can only occur when staff and students feel safe and secure.

The existing body of research does not include the perspectives of parents, students, teachers, and administrators regarding the integration of SROs implementing the triad model (i.e., law enforcement, teacher/mentor, counselor) on school climate, student connectedness, and academic achievement. There has been a great deal of research regarding the impact of police on the school-to-prison pipeline, particularly among students of color (Heise & Nance, 2020). However, without the inclusion of these stakeholders' perspectives and the consideration of alternative methods like the SRO triad model, there will be little incentive to further reform how

untrained police interact with students in schools, particularly where increased student charges and arrests have occurred (Javdani, 2019).

Purpose Statement

This study aims to examine the role that school resource officers (SROs) executing the triad model (i.e., law enforcement, teacher/mentor, counselor) can play in the development of a positive school climate, increased student engagement and connectedness, and improved academic achievement. This study also documents how stakeholder perspectives, both positive and negative, can interface with the climate of a school building.

Schools must be informed on how they can best enhance students' feelings of belonging, which can be accomplished by determining which aspects of the school climate are most influential (Renick & Reich, 2020). High-achieving districts represent high levels of student engagement, with safety and security playing large roles (Waasdorp et al., 2020). These factors are important for a positive overall school climate, characterized by fewer instances of bullying and victimization (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014).

Understanding the SRO's role in the school has implications for how his/her unique skillset can contribute to engagement, connectedness, and positive school climate (Wang & Degol, 2015). Students who are engaged and feel strong support from their teachers and peers share in a secure, welcoming school environment. In turn, these schools are safer, and the experience for students is more equitable (Coyle et al., 2021). This study supports districts in reforming how SROs are utilized, as well as examines how, when trained effectively, they can be assets to students, staff, and parents by supporting school climate, engagement/connectedness, and student achievement.

Research Questions

The following questions underlie the study and were developed to capture the perspectives of 12 school employees and six recent graduates. The 12 school employees hold a mixture of administrator, teacher, and school resource officer (SRO) titles, and the participants overall are representative of urban, suburban, and rural school settings across Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana counties in Northeast Ohio. The central question for the study is: *What can be learned about school safety and the impact of school resource officers' contributions to school safety by considering the perspectives of urban, suburban, and rural school personnel and recent graduates?* The following sub-questions are used to enrich and operationalize the central question:

Research Question 1: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives regarding school safety?

Research Question 2: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives about the impact of SROs on student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement?

Research Question 3: Do the perspectives of educational professionals, recent graduates, and SROs differ from one another?

Research Design

Following an in-depth literature review, this mixed-methods study consists of a Q-sort and follow-up questions. The research site spans three counties in Northeast Ohio. There is one school represented from each of the following settings: rural, suburban, and urban. The sample includes 18 total participants comprised of administrators, SROs, teachers, and recent graduates (i.e., one SRO, one administrator, two teachers, and two recent graduates from each school).

Significance of Study

This study was designed to identify patterns and trends in the experiences of 18 school employees and recent graduates. The Q-sort and follow-up questions have been crafted to reveal the participants' various perspectives. The Q-sort rankings will serve to uncover which aspects of school safety, including the role of the school resource officer (SRO), are prioritized within the participants' viewpoints, while the follow-up questions provide additional context for these viewpoints. Many proponents of SROs identify the triad approach, which sparked the idea for this study, as building student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement. The results of this study constitute potentially useful information for schools nationwide, as well as local law enforcement communities and educational researchers interested in SRO-supported school safety.

Limitations

This study interfaces with up-to-date research on school safety and alignment with school resources officer (SRO) initiatives. The sample is comprised of 18 total participants, including SROs, administrators, teachers, and recent graduates from rural, suburban, and urban school settings located in Columbiana, Mahoning, and Trumbull counties in Ohio. The data was collected from multiple individuals at multiple sites to ensure some broader insight can be gleaned from participants' perspectives on school safety and SRO initiatives.

However, the resulting participant pool may still consist of limited perspectives due to the geographical constraints of three Northeastern Ohio counties and the demographic constraints of three largely middle-class SES districts. Q-Method software, as a data collection method/assessment instrument, is used in this study to reduce researcher and participant bias, but further research outside of the Northeast Ohio geographic region would increase generalizability.

Assumptions

The existing literature on school safety and the role of the school resource officer (SRO) is centered on the school-to-prison pipeline. Although there is some research on school safety that highlights the triad approach (i.e., law enforcement, teacher/mentor, counselor) of the SRO, there is a large gap in the research on how this approach influences student engagement, climate, connectedness, and academic achievement. There is also a large gap in the literature regarding the perspectives of SROs, teachers, administrators, and recent graduates. Mixed-methods studies are also not the norm within this research topic.

The current study aims to bring further understanding to the issues by investigating the school safety perspectives of 18 total participants, including SROs, administrators, teachers, and recent graduates in rural, suburban, and urban districts across Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana counties in Northeast Ohio. The researcher examined the perspectives of four important stakeholder groups to study their concerns on school safety, as well as their opinion on the role of the SRO regarding student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement to determine if their perspectives differed from one another.

The current study utilizes Q-methodology and follow-up questions. The stakeholders are free of constraints and can answer openly from their own experiences, which allows the researcher to find themes in their responses. The Theory of Care provides the framework for this study. As the chapters continue, the research purpose involving the triad model, questions, design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis are discussed.

Definitions of Terms

Care: “a longing for goodness that arises out of the experience or memory of being cared for”. People who are committed to justice are dedicated to doing right by everyone (Noddings, 2010, p. 392)

Interpersonal Relationships: human beings are realized through genuine relationships (Aspelin, 2021, p.590)

Student Dispositions: “...how a student becomes open to experiences, their emerging beliefs about the value and worth to them from investing in learning, and the manner in which they learn that they can build a sense of self from their engagement in the learning enterprise...” (Hattie, 2009, p. 32)

Safety: Protecting lives and property of the students, staff, and community; preventing criminal activity through close contact with students, school employees, and community members; assisting school personnel in formulating criminal justice programs (Barnes, 2016, p. 198).

Organization of the Dissertation

This study provides both qualitative and quantitative data. School personnel who are participants in the study assist in filling the gaps of existing research. The following sections: Review of Literature, Methodology, Results, and Discussion are explored below.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

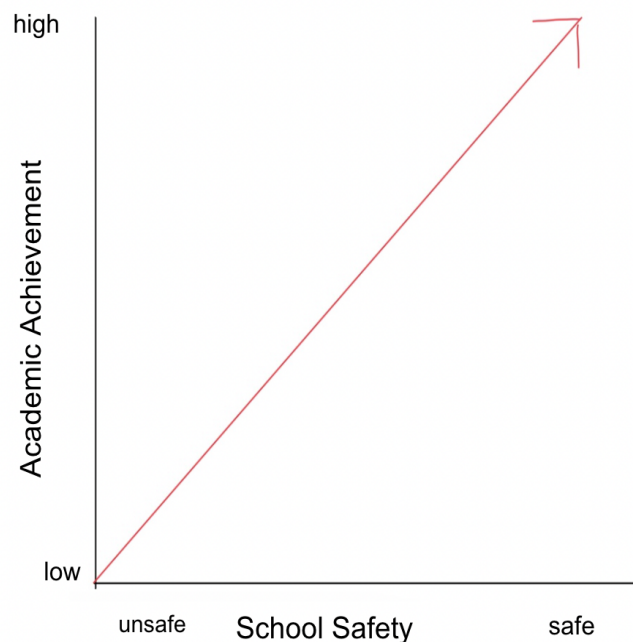
School climate has a powerful influence on the lives of teachers, staff, students, and families (National School Climate Center, 2021). Student engagement, safety, and security are factors that influence school climate and student achievement (Markow & Liebman 2007). “According to the National School Climate Council (2007), school climate is defined as the values, beliefs, and expectations in a school that ensure that students feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe” (p. 2). Positive climate is integrated with the mission of schools and their improvement efforts (Berkowitz, 2020). However, school resource officers (SROs), when trained effectively, can contribute to a positive school climate, increase student engagement, and enhance feelings of safety and security (Broll & Howells, 2019).

A positive school climate, characterized by students' feelings of belonging and connectedness, is considered “important in facilitating multicultural understanding and identity development” (Henry et al., 2011, p. 702). To this end, schools need to know how they can most effectively enhance students' feelings of belonging, which can be determined by identifying which aspects of the school climate are most influential (Renick & Reich, 2020). In the literature, strong interpersonal relationships are significantly related to an increased sense of engagement, as these relationships have shown positive results of connectedness, regardless of the SES of the district (Berkowitz, 2020; Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Kelly & Constable, 2021; Renick & Reich, 2020). High-achieving districts are representative of high levels of student engagement, with safety and security playing a significant role (Lee & Gage, 2020). Safety and security are essential for a positive school climate, as less bullying and victimization occur under effective systems (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014).

School safety is fundamental to the development and maintenance of a positive school climate. Student and teacher engagement and connectedness are heavily impacted by school safety. Understanding the SRO's role in the community has implications for how his/her unique skill set can contribute to engagement, connectedness, and a positive school climate. Wang and Degol (2015) share that “[positive] school climate leads to increased school engagement and connectedness. Increased school engagement and connectedness leads to higher academic achievement. Higher achievement occurs when staff and students feel safe and secure” (pp. 316-317). Perceptions of school safety are related to higher academic achievement (Milam et al., 2010), as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1

Perceptions of School Safety and Academic Achievement



Policing In Schools

The earliest known police presence in schools dates back to the 1950s in Flint, Michigan where it was believed that stationing law enforcement officials in the schools, would reduce

school violence and push gun-related incidents to subside (Ryan et al., 2017). This reasoning was put forth in response to the increasing amount of violence prevalent in schools during this time (Ryan et al., 2017). The term *school resource officer* was first used by a police chief in Miami, Florida in the 1960s (Lynch et al., 2016). The most common definition of a school resource officer is “a sworn law enforcement officer assigned to work in a school, or group of schools, to facilitate a climate that is conducive to learning” (Lynch et al., 2016, p. 523). In an attempt to respond to the events of the Columbine school shooting, the school resource officer (SRO) initiative expanded in the 1990s, as increased federal funding became available (McKenna & Pollock, 2014). When responding to incidents in schools, untrained officers utilized the tools they were familiar with to deter misbehavior (i.e., increased police presence, increased student charges, and arrests) (Javdani, 2019). Unfortunately, research indicates that the presence of untrained police officers in schools has led to a whole host of additional problems, such as disproportionality, exclusionary practices, and a propensity of the school-to-prison pipeline (Heise & Nance, 2020; Peak, 2015).

Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality in Discipline

Research conducted over the past 40 years indicates that students of color are disciplined at higher rates than other demographic groups (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Black students are two to three times more likely than their White peers to be referred for school discipline (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). This type of racial and ethnic disproportionality contributes to academic disparities, lifetime inequities, and deep social gaps that negatively impact mental health, waste human potential, and hinder potential economic growth (Robson et al., 2019). Students who experience exclusionary practices are subjected to a loss of educational engagement, suffer from swaths of

lost instructional time, and frequently experience a higher propensity to drop out (Marchbanks et al., 2015). Longitudinal research confirms that suspensions are often the result of inflexible zero-tolerance policies, a belief in the discipline philosophy, and the presence of SROs (Fabelo, et al., 2011). Punitive disciplinary practices contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, which directs underprivileged youth from the educational system into the criminal justice system (Skiba et al., 2014).

The largest deployment of police in schools over time has occurred in urban districts predominantly home to students of color, even though these schools did not have a single shooting event (Blitzman, 2021). Research indicates that the presence of police in these districts led to higher rates of discipline, including suspension, expulsion, and arrest, which were more pronounced among the youth of color and students with special education needs (Losen et al., 2021).

Through the rise of zero-tolerance policies and increasing calls for sufficient response to school shootings, the expansion of police presence in schools led to unprecedented rates of criminalization of student behavior from the 1990s on (Thurau & Wald, 2009). This movement stemmed from an incident in 1999 when seven African American boys from Illinois were expelled from school for fighting at a football game, even though they did not possess weapons or cause serious injuries. Jesse Jackson and other civil rights leaders became involved to draw attention to the increasing rates of school suspension, expulsion, and school-based arrests, many of which were centered on students of color (Thurau & Wald, 2009). Along with the expansion of police assigned to schools, school administrators increasingly referred students to law enforcement for acts committed while in the school environment that traditionally would have been handled by building administrators themselves (Tobin & Sugai, 1996). Over 79% of police

who were assigned to schools without memorandums of understanding or procedural guidelines participated in school discipline (Curran et al., 2019).

When handled by a police officer, in combination with zero-tolerance policies in urban districts, school discipline tends to be disproportionately focused on students of color (Hoffman, 2012). Minority students are harshly disciplined in schools at a disproportionate rate compared to their White peers. For example, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights' (2014) data collection report shows that while minorities make up 12% of the student population, they make up 75% of physical restraints. Additionally, the civil rights data collection report shows that while Black students make up 16% of student enrollment, they represent 27% of students referred to law enforcement and 31% of students subjected to a school-related arrest. In 2015, the Huffington Post published survey results indicating that incidents involving pepper spray and stun gun use were carried out more frequently in minority-majority schools. Furthermore, increasing police presence in schools has not led to a significant difference in the relationship between police presence and arrest rates of White and Hispanic students, but it has shown an increase on behalf of Black students (Homer & Fisher, 2019). Thus, the results of increased police presence and subsequent detrimental effects to students of color, and Black students in particular, fuel concerns of a school-to-prison pipeline being established in the United States.

The school-to-prison pipeline is the term attributed to the criminalization of school discipline and the subsequent increased involvement between students and the juvenile justice system (Dankner, 2019). Black individuals are more likely than White individuals to experience exclusionary school discipline and criminal justice involvement (Welch et al., 2022). Black individuals are not the only students subject to disproportionality (Welch et al., 2022). The civil

rights data collection report also indicates that American Indian and Native-Alaskan students face higher rates of suspensions and expulsions, as they make up less than 1% of the student population yet they account for 2% of suspensions and 3% of expulsions (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). When students of color were asked what could have prevented them from entering this pipeline, many responded that "[we] simply wanted our schools to treat us as students, and not label us as criminals" (Liston, 2022, p. 17).

Exclusionary policies, which are the result of the zero-tolerance discipline movement, have the unintended consequence of converting children in conflict into criminal offenders (Skiba, 2014). Juvenile arrests have long-term impacts on future adult-life success, as arrested juveniles go on to have lower assets, debts, and net worth in young adulthood compared to non-arrested juveniles (Siennick & Widdowson, 2020). This economic disparity is widely found to be the result of lower educational attainment, lower hours worked per week, and consequently, lower income (Siennick & Widdowson, 2022). Untrained law enforcement officers who perform disciplinary duties fall back on their police training of issuing citations and conducting arrests (Heise & Nance, 2020). These responses criminalize school misconduct and fuel the school-to-prison pipeline (Ryan et al., 2017). Therefore, schools should invest in alternative methods of utilizing law enforcement personnel in their buildings so as to avoid further exacerbating the school-to-prison pipeline.

Community Policing

School resource officers who are trained to follow a community policing approach to law enforcement, inclusive of teaching and counseling duties, can contribute to a safe and secure learning environment (Broll & Howells, 2019; McCurdy et al., 2019). Students who build relationships with their SRO and are engaged in their school have been found to have lower rates

of truancy, reduced anxiety, and greater academic success (Granot et al., 2021). In addition, Granot et al. concluded that these students report a favorable view of the climate and safety in their schools overall. The opportunity for increased engagement and relationships between SROs and students can promote connectedness, improve school climate, and contribute to school safety.

Positive School Climate

A positive school climate encompasses issues like safety, relationships between students and staff, teaching approaches, and physical school facilities (Almroth et al., 2021). Positive inflections of these characteristics are associated with reduced truancy, improved student self-concept, and heightened student achievement (Haynes et al., 1997). Students who experience a positive school climate are found to be more resilient, engage in more extracurricular activities, and take on more school responsibilities (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2021). Research has shown that a positive school climate is not limited to high SES districts and that SES does not directly dictate the quality of the climate in schools (Capp et al., 2021).

Positive school climates have also been linked to reduced aggressive behaviors and a decline in victimization (da Cunha et al., 2021), as well as decreased bullying and harassment (Wang et al., 2013). For a positive school climate to be established, students and staff must be connected and feel safe and secure in the shared learning environment.

School Engagement

Connections between adults and students result in positive student behaviors (Cash et al., 2019). Teachers' relationships with students and students' relationships with one another are monumentally important for student engagement (Walls et al., 2019). Students who are engaged at school and have positive attitudes become characterized by reduced disciplinary incidents,

improved academic achievement, and increased future academic performance (Granot et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2018). Most of these crucial connections are made through or facilitated by relationships between adults and students.

Understanding relationships built between teachers and students is key to engagement efforts. Examining these relationships, in all of their complexity, creates classroom experiences that consist of cooperation, mutual support, trust, communication, and empowerment (Reimer, 2018). Trust is a key component of a good teacher-student relationship and is characteristic of an engaged learning environment (Platz, 2021). Highly engaged students contribute to collaboration in the classroom and take ownership of their learning (Claessens et al., 2016).

Moreover, student engagement and academic achievement are intertwined. A positive link between increased student engagement and higher academic achievement has been identified (Fung et al., 2018; Lee, 2013; Lei et al., 2018; Malczyk & Lawson, 2019; Rushton et al., 2019). Students who are engaged and feel strong support from their teachers and peers share in a positive school climate. In turn, their schools are safer, and the experience for students is more equitable (Coyle et al., 2021). Student and staff engagement and a safe learning environment are prioritized when establishing a positive school climate.

School Climate

The concept of school climate is difficult to define (Berkowitz et al., 2016). While many elements are associated with school climate, it is most commonly referred to as the quality and character of school life (Anderson, 1982; Borkar, 2016; Cohen et al., 2009; Dimitrova et al., 2018). The National School Climate Council (2007) defines school climate as a “school's values, beliefs, and expectations that ensure students feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe” (para. 3). A positive school climate and sense of school belonging can influence students'

academic outcomes and well-being in desirable ways (Renick & Reich, 2020). Positive school climate has been persistently associated with many desirable student outcomes including successful academic behaviors and those related to effective learning (Hultin et al., 2016; Thapa et al., 2013). Conversely, a negative school climate is often characterized by disruptive behavior and high rates of suspension (Hultin et al., 2016; Thapa et al., 2013). A motivational school climate is synonymous with the success of the teachers' pedagogical task. The ability of the individual teacher to review and develop their pedagogical actions are key to a motivational school climate (Dickhauser et al., 2020). If teachers hold high goals for themselves, this expectation is modeled for the students, who in turn are more motivated to learn.

Research concerning pedagogical approaches and the perception of quality related to school climate differs between teachers and students. Teachers have an overall more positive perception of the current quality of education than students (Conderman et al., 2013). Student perception of school climate is aligned with the major areas of school climate: relationships, teaching and learning, the institutional environment, and safety (Bottiani et al., 2020; Renick & Reich, 2020; Thapa et al., 2013).

School Safety

Safe schools are foundational to the establishment of successful school climate, student engagement, and student achievement. Schools with a positive school climate and high levels of student engagement have lower rates of violence (Barnes et al., 2012). Schools that frequently experience fights, bullying, security threats, and high rates of depression among students were found to have lower levels of academic achievement than schools perceived to be safer (Kim et al., 2019). In an attempt to respond to these types of conditions, many schools have chosen to increase visible security measures, such as security cameras and metal detectors, with the aim of

keeping schools safe and promoting academic success. However, visible security measures have few demonstrated beneficial effects on adolescents' academic outcomes. Some measures, particularly surveillance, even have detrimental impacts, especially in schools that predominantly serve students from a lower SES (Fisher & Tanner-Smith, 2014; Nance, 2017; Sussman, 2012). Beyond physical measures, the role that the trained SRO plays in the school community can make an immense difference regarding school safety. An officer who acts as an educator, counselor, and law enforcement resource in alignment with the triad model can improve school climate, increase student engagement, and enhance school security with the end goal of measurably higher academic achievement. When students experience these conditions, they benefit from the unimpeded opportunity to focus on what should be their main objective in the building: to learn.

Law enforcement, school engagement, school climate, and school safety all coexist in the school environment. The responsibility of administrators in this school safety ecosystem is to manage the integration of law enforcement personnel in their buildings to best promote engagement and support the establishment and maintenance of a positive school climate. Expectations of the SRO, including their interaction with administrators, teachers, students, and families, serve to impact and influence the climate of the building.

The presence of law enforcement in schools has been evolving since the 1950s. Previous researchers focused on the inclusion of traditional policing in schools and the effect on crime in schools. These early studies were focused on law enforcement duties that were carried out in the form of citations and arrests to curb violence (Ryan et al., 2017). There are school districts in the United States still overwhelmingly using law enforcement in this capacity to cite and arrest (Heise & Nance, 2020). However, the role of officers in many districts has evolved, as officers

are now frequently also involved in educating, mentoring, and building relationships with students (Granot et al., 2021). As a result, researchers have begun to study the increasingly broadened role of law enforcement in schools to better understand how the presence of law enforcement representatives can contribute to student engagement, school climate, and academic achievement through school safety (Lopez, 2019).

As the role of law enforcement continues to evolve, more emphasis has been placed on law enforcement acting in a school resource officer (SRO) capacity. A police chief first referenced the term *school resource officer* in Miami, Florida in the 1960s (Lynch et al., 2016; Weiler & Cray, 2011). Although there is not one uniform, functional definition for the role occupied by SROs, they are often described as “certified peace officers employed by local or county law enforcement agencies that are assigned to a particular school or schools” (Weiler & Cray, 2011, p. 160).

When federal funding was established in response to school shooting tragedies that occurred in the 1990s and 2000s, SRO programs began to evolve, too (Jennings et al., 2011). School resource officers may now often function in three roles (i.e., law enforcement, mentor, and teacher), as opposed to simply the traditional law enforcement capacity (Benitez et al., 2021). This view of the SRO, known as the triad model and advocated by Benitez and his colleagues, has been employed to more completely examine how SROs interact with and help shape the school environment. In essence, Benitez et al. sought to investigate the linkage between building SROs, engagement with students, positive school climate, and academic achievement.

By definition, SROs are sworn law-enforcement officers with arrest powers who work either full- or part-time in a school setting (Sawchuk, 2021). The vast majority of these

individuals are armed and can make arrests (Sawchuck, 2021). As requirements vary across states, federal statistics are not available to demonstrate how many of these individuals have received specialized training for their roles. The National Association of School Resource Officers provides a 40-hour training course, but many SROs are eager for more (Barnes, 2016). Sawchuk shares that according to a 2018 EdWeek Research Center Survey, one in five SROs stated that they did not have enough training to work in a school setting, with only 39% stating they had training in child trauma; about half shared that they did not have any training regarding handling students with special needs. While SROs and building administrators welcome increased training, the majority of SROs assigned to buildings perform unconventional police roles based more upon community policing guidelines where they serve as counselors, educators, and mentors (Broll & Howells, 2019; McCurdy et al., 2019), meaning that expanded training offerings should ideally aim to support officers in fulfilling those responsibilities.

In many schools, SROs are expected to be highly visible in order to influence the lives of students, parents, and school staff with whom they interact (Rhodes, 2019). SROs work closely with building administrators to mentor and build impactful relationships with students (Choi et al., 2016). Through these relationships, some schools found that SRO involvement with Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) can contribute to lower victimization of students and contribute to overall campus safety (Barnes, 2016; Choi et al., 2016; McCurdy et al., 2019; Paslov, 2020; Rhodes, 2019). In addition to the role of a mentor, SROs also have a specialized knowledge of the law, local and national crime trends, and safety threats (Choi et al., 2016). This expertise enables them to be valued members of teams geared toward addressing facilities management, environmental safety planning, emergency response preparedness, and school-safety policies (Canady, 2012).

The role of SROs is as diverse as the needs of the buildings to which they are assigned. Consensus among researchers is that their effectiveness, in all of the capacities illustrated above, is inextricably linked to and dependent on the relationships they foster with students, teachers, administrators, and parents (Bottiani et al., 2020).

Teacher-Student Relationships

The relationships between teachers and students are symbiotic and can strongly influence student engagement. Teachers who strive to build better relationships with students, enhance their content, and develop their pedagogical expertise all positively contribute to student engagement (Corso et al., 2013). As teachers strive to improve student engagement in their classrooms, the students benefit (Wang et al., 2022). As the students become more engaged, teachers are more likely to see a return on their investment, and they may feel more engaged themselves, as well as experience higher rates of job satisfaction (Corso et al., 2013). In this way, strong relationships between teachers and students can lead to a positive feedback loop of engagement and trust.

Trust is a key component of a good learning environment. Platz (2021) describes the impact of trust:

Thinking of trust as a fundamental quality of the relationship between teacher and student makes us understand the important value of trust for academic education. A trustful relationship is the basis upon which students acquire knowledge from the teacher's testimony, come to develop epistemic confidence, and learn to trust their own epistemic capacities. Only if the relationship between teachers and students is trustful will the students make themselves vulnerable to their teachers showing them their intellectual weaknesses and ask for assistance and support. (p. 695)

Evaluating trust in the context of teacher-student relationships can reveal its powerful influence on children's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral adjustments (Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Pianta, 1999). When teachers are warm, engaged, responsive, and hold high expectations for student performance, classrooms are safe and supportive for student learning (Castle et al., 2005; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Pianta, 1999). Teachers are the agents responsible for establishing trust and relationships that extend well beyond the classroom. As teachers gain confidence and ownership of their work, they are far better equipped to guide aspects of their own and their pupils' development, as well as help students become independent thinkers who can deal with the demands of adulthood beyond school (Black & William, 2018). Even as students are prepared for life beyond school, trusting teacher-student relationships can also assist students who experience victimization or other threats to long-term success while in the school system. These relationships are critical in supporting safe, secure, and welcoming learning environments.

Teacher-student relationships are particularly essential to students who are identified as at-risk (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Students in many of these circumstances lack maternal attachment, and the impact of relationship quality in other settings can have detrimental (or beneficial) effects on student success (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Teacher-to-student relationships can compensate for the negative effects of earlier experiences. In fact, they have been found to improve academic and socioemotional functioning among students with behavioral and demographic risk factors (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Studies have verified that strong, positive teacher-to-student relationships can buffer the effects of perceived personal and group ethnic discrimination (Civitillo et al., 2021; Goldie & O'Connor, 2021). Positive teacher-student relationships can even foster youth empowerment for those who are exposed to ethnic discrimination (Civitillo et al., 2021). In addition to strong teacher-student relationships, student

to student relationships also add to student engagement, school climate, and overall safety and security.

Student-Student Relationships

Student-student relationships, or peer relationships, are present in the implicit curriculum and “the learning environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented” (Grady et al., 2011, p. 560). Understanding students’ self-perceptions of school climate through peer relationships is important (Reid & Smith, 2018). Students’ perceptions of their peer relationships are a more reliable indicator of a positive school climate than objective accounts (Bandura et al., 2001; Fan, 2011; Koth et al., 2008; Purkey & Novak, 2020). Since adolescents spend most of their time at school, their relationships outside of the family are an increasing source of reliance and support (Eccles et al., 1993; Gerard & Booth, 2015; Newman et al., 2015; Shochet et al., 2006). Peer relationships at school are key to students’ well-being. When these relationships are positive, they may act as buffers for students who do not have necessary support from areas of their lives outside of school (Grover et al., 2015; Hopson et al., 2014).

Teaching and Learning

Effective teaching should inspire effective learning, which is characterized as being self-regulated, collaborative, and constructive (De Corte, 2010). High-quality teaching and learning are features of a positive school climate (Stipek & Chiatovich, 2017). Moreover, there are two dimensions of instructional quality that predict student success: classroom engagement and emotional support. Engaging instruction also influences student motivation (Stipek, 2002).

School Safety

School safety is best defined through a comprehensive lens that includes:

- a positive school climate (Adelman, 2000);

- implementation of effective information gathering systems that not only evaluate school climate, but also address students' behavioral or mental health needs (Anda et al., 2005).

Impact of SROs

SROs are now found in 46% of traditional public schools in the United States (Paslov, 2020). The growth of SRO programs has contributed to public concerns regarding school safety, zero-tolerance educational discipline policies, and increases in federal and state funding (Brown, 2006). Nationwide, schools spend an estimated \$14 billion a year for school safety personnel and practice (Kupchik, 2010). While the effectiveness of SROs in deterring crime has shown mixed results (Cox, 2010), the selection of the SRO plays a critical role in supporting school climate, positive student engagement, and securing a safe school learning environment (Lopez, 2019). On its own, placing an SRO in the hallways of the school building does not automatically ensure a safer learning environment (Weiler & Cray, 2011).

SRO roles are influenced by the school context in which they work (Benitez et al., 2021). Schools that utilize restorative practices as part of their MTSS more frequently have SROs who participate in mentoring (Benitez et al., 2021). The mentoring role of SROs is also stronger in less crowded environments (Hunt et al., 2019; May et al., 2011). The role of mentoring and informal counseling can vary. Many SROs also participate in teaching capacities, discuss alcohol awareness, and conflict resolution, and serve as guest lecturers (Fisher & Devlin, 2019).

Most SROs perform multiple roles, such as the triad model (i.e., law enforcement, teacher/mentor, counselor) in schools, and respond to a variety of responsibilities. The combination of these roles may have differing effects on crime prevention in different settings (Fisher & Devlin, 2019). A positive rapport between SROs and the students who are taught and

mentored by them may raise awareness of crime or other activities that warrant further investigation (Kupchik, 2010).

Summary

School resource officers (SROs) are most beneficial when they engage in activities focused around building positive relationships with students (Fisher & Devlin, 2019). The triad approach of SROs focuses on contributing to a positive school climate, building relationships and connectedness with students, building trust with the school community, protecting students from the school-to-prison pipeline, and further establishing school security assurances (Barnes, 2016; Benitez et al., 2021; Broll & Howells, 2019; Counts et al., 2018; Fisher & Hennessy, 2015; Granot et al., 2021; Lopez, 2019; McCurdy et al., 2019; Paslov, 2020; Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). A safe school environment is critical for academic success, and school resource officers can make a world of difference when utilized effectively (Hopson et al., 2014; Peters & Woolley, 2015; Rollison et al., 2013; Smith, 2020).

Chapter Three

Methodology

The existing literature on the impacts of school resource officers (SROs) presents both pros and cons to their incorporation into the school environment. Although there have been some studies on SRO involvement that include the perspectives of administrators and teachers, there is a large gap in the research regarding SRO implementation of the triad model of school safety (i.e., law enforcement, education, counseling). Mixed-methods studies are also not the norm within this research topic. The current investigation aims to bring further understanding to these areas by investigating the perspectives of 18 participants including SROs, administrators, teachers, and recent graduates in rural, suburban, and urban school districts across Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana counties in Northeast Ohio. The researcher examined the perspectives of these four important stakeholder groups to study their ideas regarding school safety, their opinions on SROs performing law enforcement duties at the school and the associated impacts on learning, their recommendations for ensuring building-wide safety, their knowledge of existing school climate and safety strategies, and their viewpoints on SROs implementing the triad model.

The current investigation utilized Q-methodology and follow-up questions. The stakeholders were free of constraints and encouraged to answer openly from their own lived experiences, thus allowing the researcher the opportunity to learn about the phenomena underlying perceptions of school safety and seek out common themes. The Theory of Care provided the framework for this study. As the chapter continues, the research purpose and questions, design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis are discussed.

Research Design and Questions

The study's design employed a phenomenological approach that assumed that SROs, administrators', teachers', and recent graduates' lived experiences were important and could be useful for school leaders.

The following sub-questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives regarding school safety?

Research Question 2: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives about the impact of SROs on student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement?

Research Question 3: Do the perspectives of educational professionals, recent graduates, and SROs differ from one another?

The sorting activity and the follow-up questions were the main instruments for data collection. The research proposal was reviewed by Youngstown State University's Institutional Review Board prior to any data collection.

Participants

This research investigation began in August 2023 and concluded in November 2023. The sample size of this study was deliberately kept small at 18 total participants. Participants included two recent graduates and four employees (i.e., one SRO, one administrator, two teachers) from each of the sampled school districts. Electronic communications included a direct link to the Q-Method software program, along with a general description of the study and the opportunity to answer follow-up questions. Demographic information was collected from each participant, which included the school district in which they were employed/educated (i.e., rural, suburban, urban), race/ethnicity, gender identification, level of education, years of experience, and age range. The participants in the study could decide to leave the Q-sort activity at any time and discontinue their participation in the study.

Instrumentation

Three levels of instrumentation were used in this study. The first level of instrumentation was demographic information that was completed before the sort. The Q-sort activity was the second level of instrumentation. The third level of instrumentation consisted of follow-up questions that the participants completed after the sorting activity was finished.

Concourse

The concourse was developed by the researcher and consisted of devised opinion statements. The statements selected for the investigation included:

- I am confident police can protect the school.
- Police do not belong in the school.
- SROs only belong in the school.
- SROs and police should be present in the school.
- Administrators have a responsibility to monitor the school campus to ensure security.
- Teachers have a responsibility to ensure school safety.
- SROs and local police must be trained in CIT (Crisis Intervention Training).
- School security staff should be contracted to a private company.
- SROs must be members of the local police department.
- Teacher's job is to teach, not serve as a security guard.
- An SRO's primary role is to enforce the law.
- An SRO's primary role is to serve a counselor.
- An SRO's primary role is to educate young people.
- Only local police should arrest students.
- I feel safe on campus outside the building.
- I feel safe at school.
- I feel safe in my classroom.
- I feel safe in the hallways.
- SROs implementing a triad approach (i.e., law enforcement, counselor, educator) reduces violence/discipline in schools.
- I feel that our school is safe.
- Armed law enforcement in schools make schools safer.

- SROs serving in triad approaches increase liability/school policy vulnerabilities.
- Staff are focused on teaching and not confronting a policy violator.
- The death of a student would devastate the school staff.
- Police on campus scare students.
- SRO impacts on school climate are not genuine.
- SRO impacts on student achievement are exaggerated.
- SROs implementing the triad approach (i.e., law enforcement, counselor, educator) serve as a conduit to mental health professionals.
- All school personnel share responsibility for school safety.

Demographic Questions

The demographic questions selected for the investigation included:

- What is your age?
 - 18-29 years old
 - 30-39 years old
 - 40-49 years old
 - 50-59 years old
 - 60+ years old
 - Prefer not to answer
- Which of the following best describes you? Please select one answer.
 - Asian or Pacific Islander
 - White or Caucasian
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Native American or Alaskan Native
 - Multiracial or Biracial

- A race/ethnicity not listed here
 - Prefer not to answer
- Which of the following best describes your gender identification?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-Binary
 - Other
 - Prefer not to answer
- Which of the following describes your school?
 - Rural
 - Suburban
 - Urban
- What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - High School
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctoral degree
- What is your current role?
 - High School Graduate
 - Teacher
 - Administrator
 - SRO

Follow-up Questions

The follow-up questions selected for the investigation included:

- Is (was) school safety a concern to you? If so, why?
- What is the primary role of the SRO in your building?
- If your SRO implements the triad model (i.e., law enforcement, counseling, educating), has your building experienced an increase in academic achievement?
How do you know?
- What are the physical safety resources at your school? (e.g., metal detectors, surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, ID systems (Raptor), sound sensors, smoke sensors, etc.)
- What are the mental health resources at your school? (e.g., clinical counselors, school counselors, school psychologists, behavior coaches, social workers, etc.)

Procedures

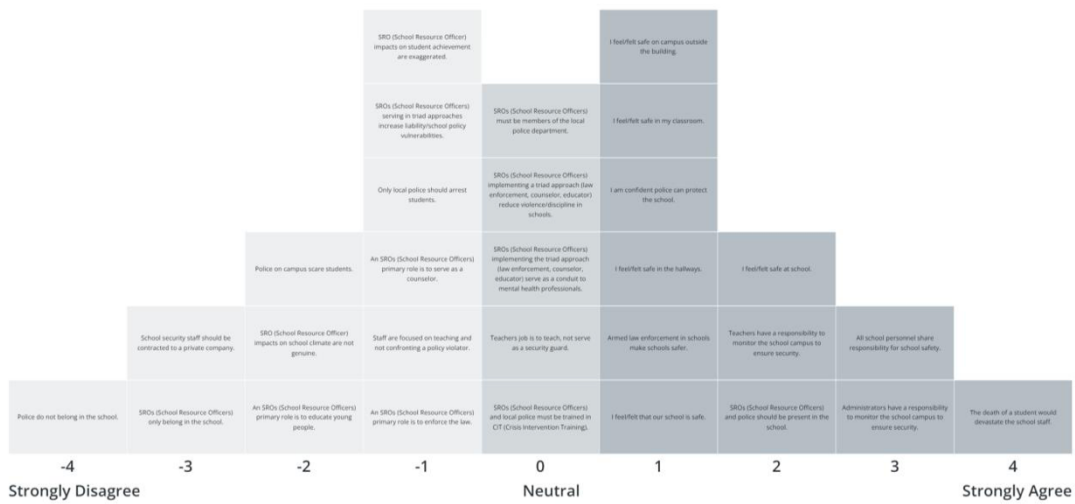
Once Youngstown State University's Institutional Review Board's approval (Appendix A) was granted, the study began. Participants were selected by the researcher, and a personal email (Appendix B) was sent out which included a link to the sorting activity, as well as demographic and follow-up questions, a passive consent form (Appendix C), and a video link. Once the participant watched the video, consented, completed the sorting activity, demographic information, and follow-up questions, a thank-you card and a \$10.00 Starbucks gift card were sent to them (Appendix D). Completing the demographic questions, the sorting activity, and the follow-up questions did not take the participants any longer than 20 minutes. The Q-Method software provided an output of the sorts, the basic sort analysis, and the responses to the demographic and follow-up questions.

Q-Method Software enabled participants to access the Q-sort from any device, without interference from downloading software or apps. Q-Method Software records the data collected from each participant, removing the possibility for human error at that stage. The Q-sort reflects the personal views of each participant (Herrington & Coogan, 2011). During the Q-sort, participants were presented with instructions to read each statement first, then decide which fits best for them. Following the pre-sort of the

statements, participants were prompted to sort the statements again by dragging the statement to the appropriate location on the Q-sort grid that most represented their views. The statements were arranged in order of -4 (Strongly Disagree) to +4 (Strongly Agree) on the grid shown in Figure 1 to reflect their own perspective on each topic (Herrington & Coogan, 2011).

Figure 1

Perspectives Regarding School Safety



After participants completed their Q-sort on the grid, the survey asked additional follow-up questions (i.e. “Is (was) school safety a concern to you? If so, why?” “What is the primary role of the SRO in your building?,” “If your SRO implements the triad model (i.e., law enforcement, counseling, educating), has your building experienced an increase in academic achievement? How do you know?”), and participants had the ability to share their experiences regarding school safety and the role of the SRO. Answers were reviewed and coded by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Demographic data provided by the participants was used to aggregate the basic descriptive statistics about the participant sample. Quantum, or Q-analysis, was used to evaluate the data from the Q-sort activity. For this analysis, the goal was to find the most robust model that would explain the greatest amount of variance in the data. A resulting three factor model met that goal. The responses to the open-

ended questions were analyzed for distinguishing themes. More information is provided regarding the specifics of the data analysis in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

Results

The current investigation examined different viewpoints regarding school safety from the perspectives of school resource officers (SROs), administrators, teachers, and recent graduates. Quantitative and qualitative data were synthesized to distill meaning and present understanding of these outlooks. Results of the analyses were used to respond to the following initial research questions that framed the study:

Research Question 1: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives regarding school safety?

Research Question 2: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SRO's perspectives about the impact of SROs on student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement?

Research Question 3: Do the perspectives of educational professionals, recent graduates, and SROs differ from one another?

The sorting activity and the follow-up questions were the main instruments for data collection. The research proposal was reviewed and approved by Youngstown State University's Institutional Review Board prior to any data collection. Before completing the Q-sort, participants were asked to provide their basic descriptive information. Table 1 provides the descriptive data for each participant in Factor 1. For this study, Factor 1 will be referred to as *We Are In This Together*; Factor 2 will be referred to as *Keep Us Safe*; Factor 3 will be referred to as *Teachers Teach*. Seventeen of the 18 Q-sorts loaded significantly on one of the three factors. Together, Factors 1, 2, and 3 explained 67% of the study variance. One participant (9WNT) did not load significantly on any factor with other participants in this study.

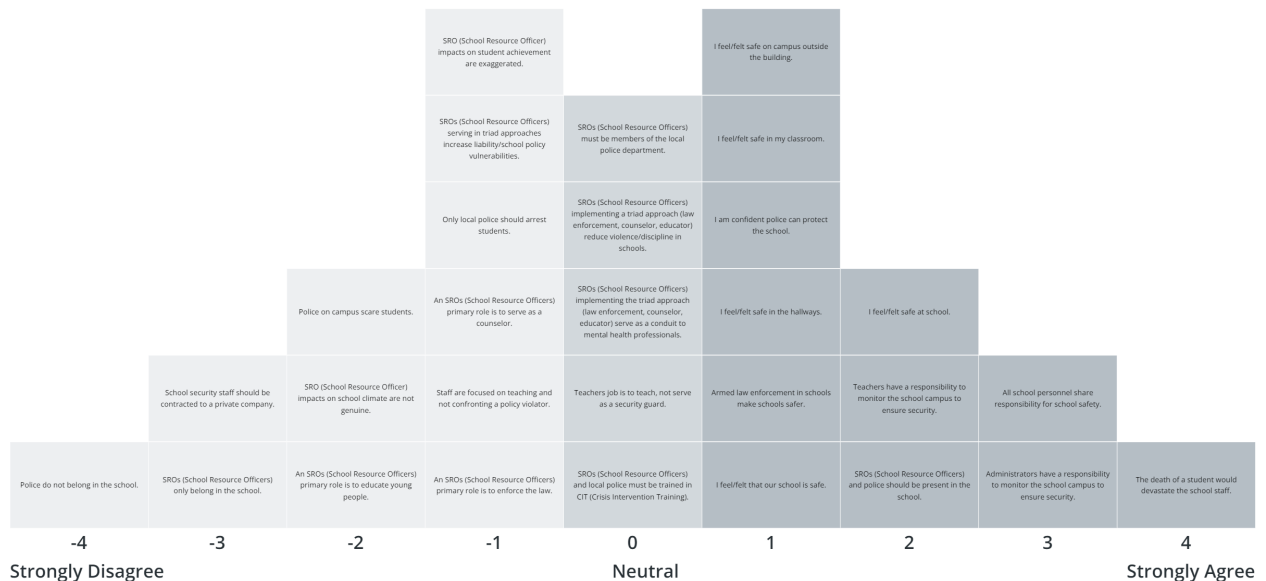
Factor Arrays Identification, and Interpretation

In the specific context of this study, Q-methodology is a reflection of participants’ perspectives regarding school safety and the role of the school resource officer (SRO). A factor array is a visual tool representing the participants’ collective viewpoints, (i.e., not a singular individual’s comments, statements, or views, but the aggregate of a group of individuals with similar viewpoints.) The following section will provide arrays for each of the three factor models along with the factor’s identification and an interpretation of a participant’s viewpoints.

Factor 1: *We Are In This Together*

Figure 1

Model Sort for Those Who Loaded Significantly on Factor 1



*Note: The sort for Factor 1 is also available in Appendix E, as card numbers.

Table 1*We Are In This Together Descriptive Data*

Study Code	Age	Race	Gender	Type of School	Education	Role
0M28	40-49	White or Caucasian	Male	Urban	Master's Degree	Administrator
4LPC	30-39	White or Caucasian	Female	Rural	Master's Degree	Administrator
8T05	18-29	White or Caucasian	Female	Urban	High School	HS Grad.
DVXX	50-59	White or Caucasian	Male	Urban	High School	SRO
I7TO	18-29	White or Caucasian	Female	Urban	High School	HS Grad.
KCQU	50-59	White or Caucasian	Male	Rural	Master's Degree	Administrator
RC7X	40-49	White or Caucasian	Male	Suburban	High School	SRO
UR0S	30-39	Black or A.A.	Male	Suburban	Master's Degree	Administrator
X2KV	40-49	Hispanic or Latino	Male	Suburban	Master's Degree	Administrator

*Note: A.A. in the above table is an abbreviation for African American.

In *We Are In This Together*, there were two participants who fell between the ages of 18-29, two participants who fell between the ages of 30-39, three participants between the ages of 40-49, and two participants between the ages of 50-59. Seven participants marked their race as White or Caucasian, one participant as Black or African American, and one participant as Hispanic or Latino. Three participants were female, and six participants were male. Three participants worked for/attended suburban districts, two participants worked for/attended rural districts, and four participants worked for/attended urban districts. Four participants had a high school diploma, and five participants had a master's degree. Two participants were high school graduates, five participants were administrators, and two participants were SROs.

Table 2*Most Characteristic Statements for Factor 1, We Are In This Together*

Item	Statement
24	The death of a student would devastate the school staff.
5	Administrators have a responsibility to monitor the school campus to ensure security.
29	All school personnel share responsibility for school safety

Table 3*Most Uncharacteristic Statements for Factor 1, We Are In This Together*

Item	Statement
3	An SROs only belong in the school.
8	School security staff should be contracted to a private company.
2	Police do not belong in the school.

The *We Are In This Together* General Viewpoint

We Are In This Together is exemplified by a general consensus amongst respondents that all school personnel have responsibility to ensure the safety of the school campus. *We Are In This Together* states that keeping the student body, staff, and families safe is crucial to the efficacy of a strong education and that all stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure a safe and effective learning environment. Participants 4LPC, X2KV, OM28, 17TO, and 8TO5 all stated that the safe school environment is not only a concern but that it is essential to the provision of an equal educational opportunity for students. Participant 4LPC further states “when students do not feel safe physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, it inhibits their ability to engage in meaningful learning. Children need to be in a school environment where they can focus on growth without fear or major distractions.”

We Are In This Together also shared how the world has become a more dangerous place, and that the shared responsibility of school safety is a primary charge. Participant DVXX states that “morals and the family unit isn’t like it was in the past.” Participant KCQU states that “there is always a sense of concern.” Overall, the participants in *We Are In This Together* did not assign responsibility for school safety to a particular entity; instead, they shared that not only is school safety of personal concern, but all school personnel share responsibility to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment.

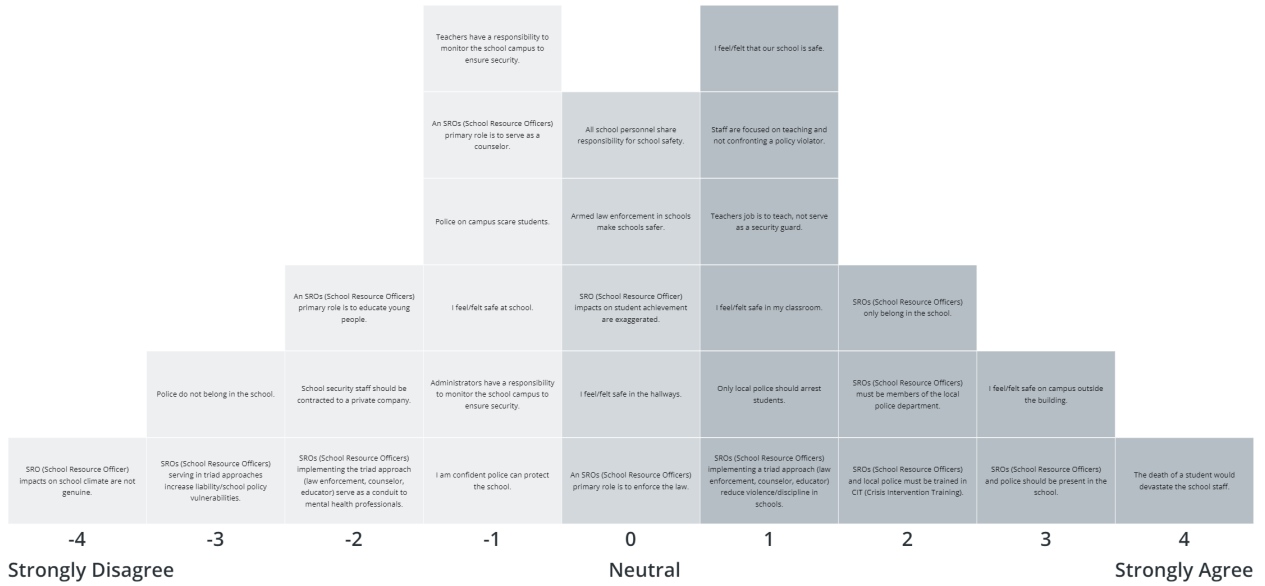
We Are In These Together respondents also shared similar statements regarding the role of the SRO. Participant 17TO states “the primary role [of the SRO] is working to provide a safe and positive learning environment for our students. This is facilitated by building relationships across the student body that consist of daily communication and interaction, conducting physical security operations i.e. verifying doors being secured, staff having access to security protocols and training, and being present during times of large gathering.” Likewise, Participant OM28 states “safety and security of students and staff, and assisting administrators in investigations, as well as dissecting ORC” are main functions that the SRO takes on to ensure school safety.

We Are In This Together respondent presented coordinating statements regarding the role of the SRO and academic achievement. Participants X2KV and 17TO both shared that they felt that implementation of the triad model has helped increase academic achievement. Participant X2KV further states “multiple at-risk students who were not attending school consistently as they should were helped on to a better and more consistent path thanks to our SRO. Some of the students would not be on the path to graduate if not for his direct intervention. There are also [evidence] with our higher achieving students that frequently seek out the SRO out [to] invite him to various events.”

Factor 2: *Keep Us Safe*

Figure 2

Model Sort for Those Who Loaded Significantly on Factor 2, Keep Us Safe



*Note: The sort for Factor 2 is also available in Appendix F, as card numbers.

Table 4 provides the descriptive data for each participant in *Keep Us Safe*.

Table 4

Keep Us Safe Descriptive Data

Study Code	Age	Race	Gender	Type of School	Education	Role
F1YF	30-39	White or Caucasian	Female	Rural	Master's Degree	Teacher
HWBK	18-29	White or Caucasian	Female	Suburban	High School	HS Grad.
IO8M	50-59	White or Caucasian	Female	Urban	Master's Degree	Teacher
LLBC	18-29	White or Caucasian	Non-Binary	Suburban	Bachelor's Degree	HS Grad.
PAIK	18-29	White or Caucasian	Male	Rural	High School	HS Grad.

In *Keep Us Safe*, there were three participants who fell between the ages of 18-29, one participant who fell between the age of 30-39, and one between 50-59. Five participants marked their race as White or Caucasian. Three participants were female, one participant was male, and one participant identified as non-binary. Two participants worked for/attended suburban districts, two participants worked for/attended rural districts, and one participant worked for/attended an urban district. Two participants had a high school diploma, two participants had a master's degree, and one participant had a bachelor's degree. Three participants were high school graduates, and two participants were teachers.

Table 5

Most Characteristic Statements for Factor 2, Keep Us Safe

Item	Statement
24	The death of a student would devastate the school staff.
4	SROs and police should be present in the school.
15	I feel/felt safe on campus outside the building.

Table 6

Most Uncharacteristic Statements for Factor 2, Keep Us Safe

Item	Statement
22	SROs serving in triad approaches increase liability/school policy vulnerabilities.
2	Police do not belong in the school.
26	SRO impacts on school climate are not genuine.

The *Keep Us Safe* General Viewpoint

Keep Us Safe respondents generally feel that the presence of the SRO contributed to their feelings of being safe on the job or in the classroom. *Keep Us Safe* respondents share that they want to ensure that the SRO is present in the building to keep students safe, as well as concerns about school safety in

general. Participant F1YF stated “With mass-shootings and other types of violence occurring in the United States, I want to make sure that my students and I are protected in the case of emergency.”

Participant IO8M stated “school shootings keep happening” to illustrate their perspective on the overall importance of an SRO in the building.

Keep Us Safe respondents observe that the SRO is critical in keeping staff and students safe.

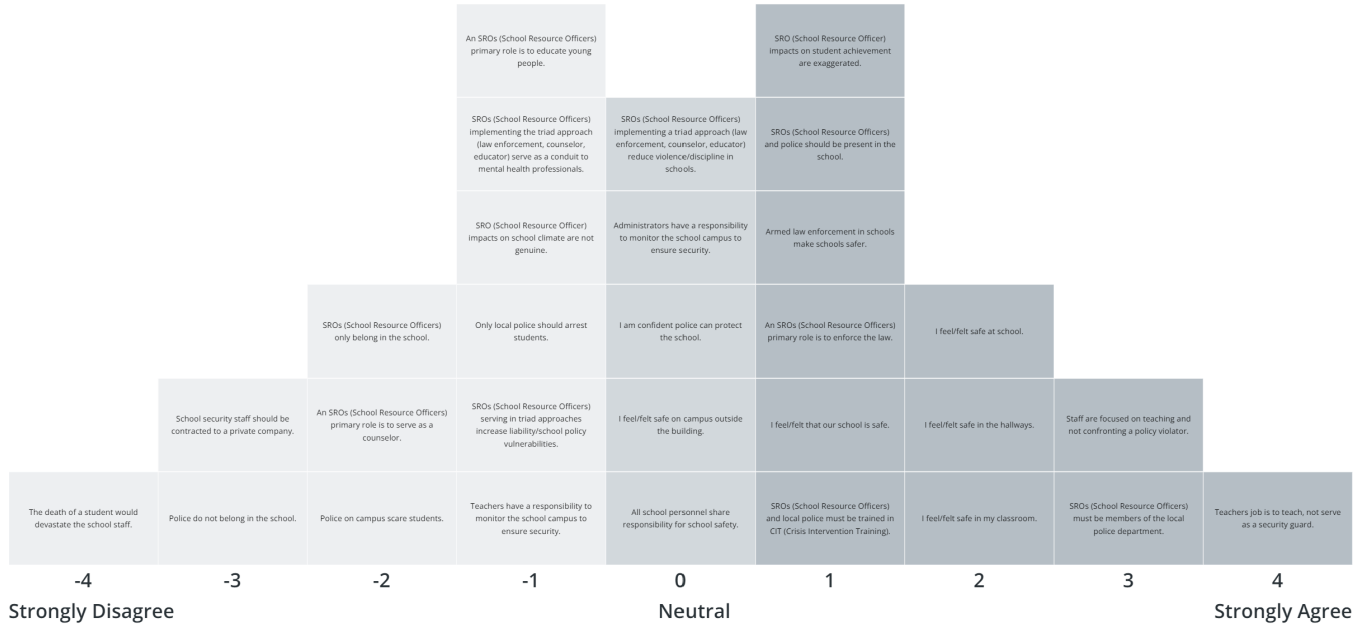
Participant F1YF shared that “The SRO is there to ensure student and faculty safety. He stays in the building to protect us from possible intruders, investigate any situations involving drugs/contraband and break up student conflicts.” Participant HWBK further elaborates that “the primary role of the SRO in my building was to ensure safety among student and staff and eliminate any possible threats.” Participant LLBC shared that the SRO “had a good rapport with students and was sometimes able to act as a counselor and preemptively deescalate conflicts. As a police officer, he also enforced the law when necessary.”

Keep Us Safe respondents described that their experience with the SRO did not typically follow the triad model or contribute to a marked increase in academic achievement. Participant HWBK stated, “I feel as though if this was implemented there would be in an increase in academic achievement because studies have shown that when people are in trouble with the law, they are actually more successful after if they are given resources and educated.” Similarly, Participant F1YF shared, “My school’s SRO exists mostly as a formality. He patrols the building, occasionally checks in with students, and serves as a reminder that in case of emergency, we have personnel to protect us. As such, our SRO has little impact on our building’s academic achievement.”

Factor 3: Teachers Teach

Figure 3

Model Sort for Those Who Loaded Significantly on Factor 3, Teachers Teach



*Note: The sort for Factor 3 is also available in Appendix G, as card numbers.

Table 7 provides the descriptive data for each participant in *Teachers Teach*.

Table 7

Teachers Teach Descriptive Data

Study Code	Age	Race	Gender	Type of School	Education	Role
06DO	50-59	Asian or P.I.	Female	Urban	Master's Degree	Teacher
N74O	50-59	White or Caucasian	Female	Suburban	Master's Degree	Teacher
ZC12	18-29	Asian or P.I.	Male	Rural	High School	HS Grad.

*Note: P.I. in the above table is an abbreviation for Pacific Islander.

In *Teachers Teach*, there was one participant who fell between the ages 18-29, and two participants were between the ages of 50-59. Two participants marked their race as Asian or Pacific Islander, and one participant identified as White or Caucasian. Two participants were female, and one participant was male. One participant worked for/attended a suburban district, one participant worked for/attended a rural district, and one participant worked for/attended an urban district. One participant had a high school diploma, and two participants had a master's degree. One participant was a high school graduate, and two participants were teachers.

Table 8

Most Characteristic Statements for Factor 3, Teachers Teach

Item	Statement
10	Teacher's job is to teach, not serve as a security guard.
9	SROs must be members of the local police department.
23	Staff are focused on teaching and not confronting a policy violator.

Table 9

Most Uncharacteristic for Factor 3, Teachers Teach

Item	Statement
2	Police do not belong in the school.
8	School security staff should be contracted to a private company.
24	The death of a student would devastate the school staff.

The *Teachers Teach* General Viewpoint

Teachers Teach participants embody the perspective that a teacher's main job is simply to teach. Collectively, their viewpoint is that the teacher's core responsibility consists of teaching and learning tasks, and not that they are not responsible to act as a security guard. Participants who loaded into *Teachers Teach* direct safety responsibilities to the SRO. Participant ZCI2 stated, "school safety was

never a concern to me due to an SRO being there. Every time I walked into the building, and lunchroom, I would see a cop, and it made me feel very safe knowing nothing would happen to anyone.” In a similar manner, Participant N74O described, “Our SRO is here to deal with our students firsthand. He is here for our protection and theirs as well as for de-escalation of situations as they arise. He also buildings relationships with the teenagers to maybe deter any potential trouble and build trust.”

In regard to the triad model, *Teachers Teach* participants responded that their SRO is there strictly to keep the building safe and did not have roles and responsibilities beyond this expectation. Participants O6DO, N74O, ZCI2 all responded in this manner.

Overall, there were 18 participants included in the study. Seven participants fell between the ages of 18-29, three participants between the ages of 30-39, three participants between the ages of 40-49, and five participants between the ages of 50-59. Fourteen participants marked their race as White or Caucasian, one as Black or African American, one as Hispanic or Latino, and two as Asian or Pacific Islander. Nine participants were female, eight participants were male, and one participant identified as non-binary. Six participants worked for/attended suburban districts, five participants worked for/attended rural districts, and seven worked for/attended urban districts. Eight participants had a high school diploma, nine participants had a master’s degree, and one had a bachelor’s degree. Seven participants were high school graduates, five participants were administrators, four were teachers, and two were SROs.

Table 10 provides the correlation matrix analysis between the 18 Q-sorts. Correlations found to be statistically significant are shown in bold print.

Table 10

Correlation Matrix Between Sorts

ID	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
06DO	1																
0M28	.46	1															
4LPC	.40	.66	1														
8T05	.33	.63	.54	1													
9WNT	.34	.52	.61	.22	1												
DVXX	.38	.67	.54	.60	.32	1											
F1YF	.55	.22	.34	.23	.19	-.02	1										
HWBK	.55	.61	.63	.58	.40	.39	.53	1									
I7TO	.41	.70	.67	.72	.41	.67	.46	.66	1								
IO8M	.53	.23	.24	.41	-.06	.18	.64	.64	.50	1							
KCQU	.64	.67	.61	.54	.34	.53	.30	.66	.58	.37	1						
LLBC	.19	.50	.38	.35	.25	.16	.29	.57	.53	.46	.20	1					
N74O	.40	.40	.34	.11	.45	.43	.31	.18	.40	.11	.24	.23	1				
PAIK	.38	.50	.35	.58	.01	.39	.49	.46	.63	.52	.46	.38	.34	1			
RC7X	.30	.50	.62	.53	.32	.40	.35	.57	.63	.29	.49	.41	.39	.51	1		
UR0S	.51	.76	.70	.68	.38	.62	.28	.52	.74	.27	.72	.27	.36	.59	.55	1	
X2KV	.46	.70	.63	.69	.46	.49	.53	.63	.84	.45	.58	.53	.50	.53	.72	.61	1
ZCI2	.51	.17	.05	.12	.30	.31	.26	.11	.18	.15	.10	.00	.38	.26	.08	.09	.12

The results of Table 10 revealed many moderate-to-high correlations between participants, as indicated by values of 0.5 or higher ($r \geq .50$). The results also revealed low correlations, or disparities and disagreements, between responses ($r \leq .50$). A result of 1.0 indicates the perfect correlation between that participant and their own response. To account for variability and look for shared meaning in the data, continued analyses involved identification and removal of common variance from the results.

Table 11 reveals eigenvalues ranging from the highest level of 1.84 to the lowest level of 0.46. The analysis indicated that 67% of the variance responses could be explained in three factors.

Table 11

Eigenvalues

Factors	1	2	3
Eigenvalues	8.64	1.84	1.61
% Explained Variance	48	10	9
Cumulative % Explained	48	58	67

The 18 Q-sorts were intercorrelated and factor analyzed. Three factors were extracted and rotated, as they collectively accounted for 67% of the total study variance. These three factors represented people of similar perspectives. Three factors exceeded the acceptable 1.0 cutoff with eigenvalues of 8.64, 1.84 and 1.61. Therefore, a three-factor model was the most efficient model to explain the participants' viewpoints.

Table 12 identifies the extent to which each Q-sort was associated with each participant following rotation. In this three-factor model, (*) indicates the factor each participant connected with the most.

Table 12

Participant	We Are In		
	Together	Keep Us Safe	Teachers Teach
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
06DO	0.27	0.48	0.64*
0M28	0.85*	0.15	0.22
4LPC	0.80*	0.15	0.16
8T05	0.74*	0.34	-0.07
9WNT	0.53	-0.15	0.52
DVXX	0.74*	-0.05	0.31
F1YF	0.06	0.80*	0.33
HWBK	0.59	0.61*	0.06
I7TO	0.78*	0.43	0.15
IO8M	0.12	0.90*	0.04
KCQU	0.68*	0.29	0.19
LLBC	0.41	0.49*	-0.10
N74O	0.33	0.06	0.69*
PAIK	0.43	0.60*	0.13
RC7X	0.66*	0.33	0.07
UR0S	0.82*	0.19	0.16
X2KV	0.72*	0.45	0.19
ZC12	-0.05	0.14	0.82*
% expl. Var.	48	58	67

Note. (*) indicates significant factor loading.

Q-sort Statements with Corresponding Ranks

To determine how much each factor agreed with each statement, *z*-scores (i.e., weighted average scores) were analyzed. The weighted scores reveal the level of agreement and disagreement within each identified viewpoint or factor. Table 13 provides information relating to statements that held the highest levels of agreement (i.e., positive *z*-scores) and disagreement (i.e., negative *z*-scores) for Factor 1, *We're In This Together*. Only statements with *z*-scores near or greater than 1.00 were included in the table.

Table 13*Ranked Scores for Factor 1, We Are In This Together Z-scores Greater Than 1.00*

No	Statement	Z-score
2	Police do not belong in the school.	-1.90
8	School security staff should be contracted to a private company.	-1.50
3	SROs only belong in the school.	-1.35
25	Police on campus scare students.	-1.33
26	SRO impacts on school climate are not genuine.	-1.17
13	An SROs primary role is to educate young people.	-1.05
16	I feel/felt safe at school.	0.85
6	Teachers are responsible to monitor the school campus to ensure security.	0.95
4	SROs and police should be present in the school.	1.17
29	All school personnel share responsibility for school safety.	1.39
5	Administrators are responsible to monitor the school to ensure security.	1.47
24	The death of a student would devastate the school staff.	1.95

Complete results for the information listed in Table 13 are provided in Appendix. Table 14 displays ranked z-scores for Factor 2, *Keep Us Safe*, and is also located in Appendix.

Table 14*Ranked scores for Factor 2, Keep Us Safe Z-scores Greater Than 1.00*

No.	Statement	Z-score
26	SRO (School Resource Officer) impacts on school climate are not genuine.	-1.98
2	Police do not belong in the school.	-1.61
22	SROs serving in triad approaches increase liability/school policy vulnerabilities.	-1.38
13	An SROs primary role is to educate young people.	-1.13
8	School security staff should be contracted to a private company.	-1.12
28	SROs implementing the triad approach (law enforcement, counselor, educator) serve as a conduit to mental health professionals.	-1.04
6	Teachers have a responsibility to monitor the school campus to ensure security.	-1.00
3	SROs only belong in the school.	0.81
9	SROs must be members of the local police department.	0.86
7	SROs and local police must be trained in CIT (Crisis Intervention Training).	0.91
15	I feel/felt safe on campus outside the building.	1.16
4	SROs and police should be present in the school.	1.86
24	The death of a student would devastate the school staff.	2.10

Complete results for the information listed in Table 14 are provided in Appendix. Table 15 displays ranked z-scores for Factor 3, *Teachers Teach*, and is also located in Appendix.

Table 15*Ranked scores for Factor 3, Teachers Teach, Z-scores Greater Than 1.00*

No.	Statement	Z-score
24	The death of a student would devastate the school staff.	-1.70
8	School security staff should be contracted to a private company.	-1.57
2	Police do not belong in the school.	-1.45
3	SROs only belong in the school.	-1.31
12	An SROs primary role is to serve as a counselor.	-1.26
25	Police on campus scare students.	-1.14
16	I feel/felt safe at school.	0.95
17	I feel/felt safe in the hallways.	1.00
21	I feel/felt safe in my classroom.	1.14
23	Staff are focused on teaching and not confronting a policy violator.	1.60
9	SROs must be members of the local police department.	1.68
10	Teacher's job is to teach, not serve as a security guard.	1.73

Factor Interpretation*Identifying Similarities*

Demographics, factor arrays, and other information gathered during the post-sort and follow-up questions contributed to the interpretation of viewpoints. A correlation analysis evaluating the relationships between the factors shown in Table 16 demonstrates a moderate correlation between Factors 1, 2, and 3.

Table 16*Correlation Between Factor Scores*

Factors	1	2	3
1	-	.517	.388
2	.517	-	.365
3	.388	.365	-

As indicated below, nine out of the 18 participants (50%) were identified in Factor 1, five of the 18 participants (27.77%) were identified in Factor 2, and three of the 18 participants (16.67%) were identified in Factor 3. The factor characteristics are shown in Table 11 and contain the reliability (i.e., Composite Reliability) and error messages (i.e., S.E. of Factor Z-Scores) for each of the factor arrays. As mentioned previously in the Varimax Rotation section, factors are weighted averages that indicate close alignment among participants.

Table 17*Factor Characteristics*

Factors	1	2	3
No. of Defining Variables	9	5	3
Avg. Rel. Coef.	0.8	0.8	0.8
Composite Reliability	0.97	0.95	0.92
S.E of Factor Z-scores	0.16	0.22	0.28

As indicated above, 17 participants produced results with good reliability and standard error measurements.

Analysis of Factors

Understanding the Meaning of Viewpoints

With the exception of one participant, participants fell into one of the three factors based upon similarities in perspectives. Participants in Factor 1, *We're All In This Together* felt that the death of a student would devastate the school staff, and the primary responsibility of safety on the school campus is up to administrators, but all school personnel have shared responsibility.

Participants in Factor 2, *Keep Us Safe* shared that the death of a student would devastate the school staff, but also felt strongly that SROs and police should be present in the school. They also mentioned that they feel/felt safe on campus outside the building. Interestingly, the participants in Factor 2, *Keep Us Safe* did not discuss the primary safety of the building being up to a specific individual or group.

Participants in Factor 3, *Teachers Teach* had very differing perspectives than the individuals who loaded into Factor 1 or Factor 2. These participants felt that the teacher's primary role is to teach, not serve as a security guard towards policy violators. They also strongly agreed that SROs must be members of the local police department.

Participants in all three factors agreed that there was a role for a law enforcement presence on campus, with two of the factors, *We're In This Together*, and *Keep Us Safe*, specifying SROs instead of patrol officers.

The Unfactored Outlier

One individual, participant 9WNT, reported information back to the survey that did not load significantly with any of the other participants in the three factors. There was no evidence to indicate that the participant intentionally reported the data incorrectly, but perhaps the individual did not understand or follow directions. The remaining participants all loaded into one of the three factors. As such, the quantitative data from this participant has been removed, but the qualitative data from this individual remains a part of the study.

Summary

The participants in the study fell into three factors: *We're In This Together, Keep Us Safe, and Teacher's Teach* (with one outlier). There was an overwhelming affirmative response in regard to the importance of school safety and security, and the common theme of the significance of an SRO's presence was clearly evident. Each participant was able to share their perspective on having an SRO in their building, along with the safety measures and mental health resources available to students. All respondents in the study stated the grave necessity of school safety, as well as communicated the reassurance that an SRO presence often represented in their building. In the following chapter, additional discussion of these results and connection to existing research will be explored.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Summary of Findings

School safety and security are extremely important issues as students experience distrust regarding how their teachers handle violent episodes (Brooks, 2020). This study was generated from personal observation as a school administrator as schools continue to harden and adapt their security practices in response to increased school violence and mass casualty events. Exposure to an environment in which a school resource officer (SRO) implements a novel triad role (law enforcement, counseling, and educating) sparked an interest in investigating and sharing the experiences and perspectives of administrators, teachers, recent graduates, and SROs who work in rural, suburban, and urban settings to determine their viewpoints on school safety, the role of the SRO, and if the SRO when implementing a triad approach contributes to school achievement. The triad approach practiced by some SROs is not widely known. As such, little research exists on how SROs contribute to school safety or to school achievement, and how they function outside of law enforcement roles.

The data collected in this study include quantitative results from Q-sort analyses, as well as qualitative data from follow-up questions. The quantitative portion was completed in one phase over the course of two months. Q-sort data was gathered to gain viewpoints on school safety and the role of the SRO. Once the quantitative data was collected, responses to additional qualitative follow-up questions were also gathered. Sampling was purposeful, selecting three administrators, three SROs, six recent graduates and six teachers from rural, suburban, and urban school districts throughout Columbiana, Mahoning, and Trumbull Counties in Northeast Ohio.

Research Question 1: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives regarding school safety?

Teachers and recent graduates were the majority of participants, followed equally by SROs and administrators. The study revealed the greatest number of teachers, SROs and

administrators were statistically loaded into the *We Are In This Together* factor. Recent graduates had the greatest number of participants loaded into *Keep Us Safe*, while the two remaining teachers and one recent graduate loaded in the *Teachers Teach* factor.

The *We Are In This Together* factor was expressed by respondents who indicated that school safety is an administrative expectation, but that this responsibility should be shared across school employees. This perspective could be attributed to administrators, SROs, and teachers who have participated in building safety training, and who also participate in statewide lockdown and security drills. Moreover, many of the individuals who loaded into *We Are In This Together* shared approval and expectation of an SRO being assigned to the building, further expectation that assigned SROs build relationships with students, and anticipation that safety features like limited entrances and security hardware are installed, as well, contributing to an overall feeling of safety in the building.

The recent graduates who constituted the majority of *Keep Us Safe* participants shared how school safety was not a great personal concern during their time in their respective schools, as they felt they had SROs whose presence could eliminate any threats to the building. *Keep Us Safe* recent graduates also recalled how the visibility and presence of the SRO contributed to a broadly safe and orderly school environment. Notably, unlike for the *We Are In This Together* factor, fewer administrators and SROs loaded into *Keep Us Safe*, potentially due to their inherently more first-hand perspective on the processes and protocols that uphold school safety and security.

Finally, the group of *Teachers Teach* respondents was predominantly made up of teachers who felt that the responsibility of school safety should be left to the SROs, and that SROs should be members of the local police department. Those loaded into *Teachers Teach* felt that building staff members should focus primarily on teaching tasks. *Teachers Teach* respondents expressed that SROs are the primary driver of school safety, and several respondents

noted that seeing an officer in the lunchroom or walking the halls made them feel safe and experience less worry throughout the school day.

Research Question 1 can begin to be significantly addressed through these quantitative factor data and, further, through the qualitative responses derived from the first follow-up question asked of the participants: “Is (was) school safety a concern for you? If so, why?” The responses to this question highlighted the high priority of school safety among many of the study participants through the recurrence of certain phrases and sentiments, such as “*it is a main concern to me;*” “*yes, because school shootings keep happening;*” and “*yes, it is an identified priority for our school*” (IO8M). Along these lines, one rural teacher (F1YF) stated:

...school safety is a concern to me as it is to anyone who teaches. With mass-shootings and other types of school violence occurring in the United States, I want to make sure that my students and I are protected in the case of emergency.

An administrator in a suburban district (X2KV) shared:

Absolutely. The efficacy of a strong education is questionable when the student body, staff, and families feel [as] if their school is unsafe. School curriculum, events, and activities fall to the wayside if the person's mindset is primarily focused on their safety.

In contrast, several other study participants indicated that school safety was *not* a primary concern to them. One recent high school graduate from an urban school (9WNT) stated:

...school was never a safety concern to me at all. Accidents happen at times and teenagers can make some questionable decisions but the staff in my school did a good job managing this behavior and making sure we were all safe at all times. We also had a resource officer who stayed at our school all day which was very reassuring.

Likewise, a rural high school graduate (ZCI2) shared:

...school safety was never a concern to me due to an SRO being there. Every time I walked into the building, and lunchroom, I would see a cop, and it made me feel very safe knowing nothing would happen to anyone.

Consequently, this research question can also be approached specifically through the lens of the SRO's perceived impact on school safety via the qualitative responses to the second follow-up question: "What is (was) the primary role of the SRO in your building?" All respondents in the study answered this question along a similar theme, describing that they had an SRO assigned to their building with whom they interacted to some degree. This is because all participants either worked in or attended variously located (rural, suburban, or urban) districts in the tri-county area that had an SRO presence. One rural administrator identified ensuring "*the physical safety of our students*" as the crucial role of the SRO (4LPC), while a teacher in an urban district emphasized order and maintenance of "*positive police presence*" (IO8M).

Finally, this second follow-up question also revealed the prominence of the theme of law enforcement throughout the participant pool's perspectives on school safety and security, as investigated under Research Question 1. Phrases such as "*maintaining order*" (06DO), "*maintain safety*" (HWBK), and "*keep everyone safe...making sure that everyone was safe*" (8TO5) arose frequently in the follow-up question responses. One [participant] noted, "[Quote re: concern about law enforcement]," suggesting, on the one hand, a level of awareness and concern around the application of law enforcement in service of school safety for some participants. Meanwhile, a recent graduate stated, "*school safety was never a concern for me I believe that liberty high school did a wonderful job on implementing security protocols such as resource officers at the front of the building every day*" (9WNT), indicating, on the other hand, a sense of trust for other participants and a perception of successfully executed law enforcement through policies like SRO assignment.

Research Question 2: What are educational professionals', recent graduates', and SROs' perspectives about the impact of SROs on student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement?

Research Question 2 can also begin to be answered through the qualitative responses to the first follow-up question: "Is (was) school safety a concern for you? If so, why?" As

mentioned, the responses to this question highlighted the high priority of school safety for many study participants with common phrases like, *“it is a main concern to me;”* *“...because school shootings keep happening;”* and *“... it is an identified priority for our school”* (IO8M), as well as the effusive concern and disquiet expressed in the extended responses of the rural teacher (F1YF) and suburban administrator (X2KV) cited in the summary of Research Question 1.

However, recall that several other participants indicated that school safety was *not* a primary concern for them, and these respondents tended to cite the safety/security role of the SRO as a significant reason for that perspective, if not specifically the SRO’s potential impacts on student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement. One recent high school graduate from an urban school (9WNT) commented that *“school was never a safety concern...at all”* and that the presence of a resource officer who remained at the school all day *“was very reassuring.”* A rural high school graduate (ZC12) similarly shared that *“school safety was never a concern...due to an SRO being there”* and that seeing the officer in the building throughout the school day made the respondent feel *“very safe.”*

This research question can also be further addressed through the qualitative answers generated from the second follow-up question: *“What is (was) the primary role of the SRO in your building?”* All participants’ responses depicted a similar dynamic, which emphasized the simple impact of the visibility of an SRO on campus over other, arguably more active, functions of the role. One rural administrator shared that *“the primary role of the SRO in our buildings is the physical safety of our students, especially at drop off and pick up times”* (4LPC). A teacher in an urban district simply responded that *“the SRO’s role is to maintain order and provide a positive police presence”* (IO8M). A recent suburban graduate described that *“the primary role of the SRO in my building was to ensure safety among student and staff and eliminate any possible threats”* (HWBK).

As discussed in regards to Research Question 1, these types of responses to the second follow-up question also revealed that in buildings with an SRO presence, the theme of law

enforcement dominated responses about the SRO's role. Phrases such as “*maintaining order*” (06DO), “*maintain safety*” (HWBK), and “*keep everyone safe...making sure that everyone was safe*” (8TO5) appeared commonly across participant answers, while explicit mentions of impacts on student engagement, climate (outside of law and order), connectedness, and achievement were less common. One recent graduate (LLBC) shared that their SRO “had a good rapport with students and was sometimes able to act as a counselor and preemptively deescalate conflicts. As a police officer, he also enforced the law when necessary,” hinting at a potentially more varied SRO role. However, answers more commonly followed the pattern of Participant F1YF's assessment of the SRO:

My school's SRO exists mostly as a formality. He patrols the building, occasionally checks in with students, and serves as a reminder that in case of emergency, we have personnel to protect us. As such, our SRO has little impact on our building's academic achievement.

Research Question 3: Do the perspectives of educational professionals, recent graduates, and SROs differ from one another?

Research Question 3 can be most effectively answered through the descriptive participant data from the three factor loads, which allow the researcher to identify which stakeholder group(s) included in the study most strongly resonated with each perspective.

Individuals who loaded into Factor 1: *We Are In This Together* were primarily SROs from suburban and urban settings and administrators from rural, suburban, and urban locations. These participants perceived school safety as an administrative expectation but believed that this responsibility should be shared collectively across all school personnel. They were receptive to the placement of SROs in schools and expected them to both build positive relationships within the school community and effectively interface with additional physical security measures, such as limited entrances, to help ensure overall school safety.

Those who loaded in Factor 2: *Keep Us Safe* were predominantly suburban and rural recent graduates, along with a rural teacher and an urban teacher. These respondents expressed that school safety was not of great personal concern to them. They also generally felt that the presence and visibility of their SROs sufficed to deter significant threats of violence in the school environment.

Finally, individuals loading into Factor 3: *Teachers Teach* were primarily urban and suburban teachers, as well as one rural recent high school graduate. These participants felt most strongly that SROs were the primary drivers of school safety and that the core responsibilities of other school personnel should be centered around teaching tasks.

Overall, the perspectives of educational professionals, recent graduates, and SROs do seem to vary some, but do so in a manner that is also inflected along geographic/demographic lines (e.g., both suburban recent graduates loaded into *Keep Us Safe*, while both urban recent graduates loaded into *We Are In This Together*). Notably, of all four stakeholder groups, administrators' and SROs' perspectives appear to be the most closely aligned both internally and with one another, as all participants from both groups (regardless of other geographic/demographic influences) loaded into *We Are In This Together*. In contrast, no teachers at all loaded into *We Are In This Together*, with that group being split evenly between *Keep Us Safe* and *Teachers Teach*. Meanwhile, recent high school graduates loaded into all three categories, with the most falling under *Keep Us Safe*. In this way, there are some observable differences between the perspectives of educational professionals, recent graduates, and SROs in regard to school safety and the role(s) of the SRO that support the need for further research in this area.

Interpretation of Findings

This study provides perspectives of administrators, teachers, recent graduates, and SROs who work in Northeast Ohio amidst the backdrop of a turbulent period of ongoing school violence and safety concerns that exists across the United States. In addition, it seeks to

contribute to conversation around the unique role of the SRO coming into question as policing in schools has been demonstrated to contribute to the school to prison pipeline, particularly through the application of racially/ethnically disproportional, exclusionary, or otherwise punitive disciplinary practices, most often carried out by insufficiently trained officers (Heise & Nance, 2020; Peak, 2015).

When school personnel and recent graduates in this study interacted with an SRO in the building, they frequently reported feeling that all members of the school community had a responsibility to keep the campus safe, indicating a sense of collective support and security being enhanced by the presence of an SRO. Relationships between the SRO, staff, and students were frequently referenced by respondents as contributing to school safety and related aspects of school climate. Some school personnel and recent graduates also shared that school safety was not a great personal concern, and that this was because they had confidence that their SRO could protect them from harm.

In contrast, the participants were not fully aware of SROs implementing the full range of the triad model (law enforcement, mentor, and teacher) in their building or even that SROs had responsibility beyond handling law enforcement duties. For example, Participant O6DO named “*maintaining order*” as the primary role of SROs on campus, while Participant HWBK identified “[*keeping*] *everyone safe*.” Participants’ responses also demonstrated that educational professionals’, recent graduates’, and SROs’ perspectives on the impact of SROs on student engagement, climate, connectedness, and achievement did not vary greatly, as most respondents from various backgrounds loaded into the *We Are In This Together* factor, which emphasized school safety as a shared responsibility of all school personnel, as directed by administration.

Individuals participating in the study additionally shared that there was quite limited evidence in their personal experiences that could speak to the impact of SROs on student engagement, climate (beyond safety), connectedness, and achievement. Participant IO8M shared that SROs contribute to a “*positive police presence*,” but did not further elaborate on what was

meant by this usage of “*positive*.” Other participants frequently also used words and phrases such as “*felt safe*,” “*comfort*,” and even “*wonderful*” to describe the presence of their SRO, reiterating the non-specifically ‘positive’ overall perception of the SRO among participants and the importance of the relationship between the SRO and the respondent.

Recent graduates, SROs, teachers, and administrators who participated in the study did not make a connection between physical security mechanisms and the human role behind these systems. Furthermore, respondents explicitly noted that there seemed to be some unfamiliarity or lack of awareness of what physical safety systems exist in the school setting. Participant LLBC who loaded into the *Keep Us Safe* factor stated, “*I know my school had some surveillance cameras, external door locking mechanisms, and smoke detectors. I am not sure if there were additional safety resources.*” Participant UROS, who loaded into the *We Are In This Together* factor noted, “*to my knowledge we currently have surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, smoke sensors, door prop alarms, ID systems for visitors, and projectile resistant film.*” Respondents who loaded into all three factors were able to list several physical safety measures present, but it is unclear whether this was common knowledge, or was communicated to all parties throughout the school setting. Furthermore, not one respondent linked the role of the SRO to their interface with the physical safety resources at the school.

Study participants also discussed the mental health resources available at their respective school or the school they attended, and respondents from all three factors noted the presence of counselors or support personnel that were available to students. There was nothing to distinguish responses from the various factors, as factor respondents were consistent in their answers across the participant pool. The SRO was not listed as being a mental health resource by recent graduates, teachers, SROs themselves or administrators. Furthermore, none of the survey respondents indicated that they differentiated the counseling role in the triad model to other professionals who would traditionally provide students with support (i.e. school counselors).

Individuals who participated in the study also responded that, while there is a relationship between the SRO, individuals who work at the school, and the student body at large, there is limited information and awareness regarding the SRO implementing the triad model, particularly the teacher and mentor components. Nonetheless, participant X2KV from the *We Are In This Together Factor* noted:

The SRO has created an environment where the students and staff feel very comfortable approaching him and asking him for advice, information, and his opinion. He has answered questions regarding the law and expectations, helped students and staff receive counseling and counseling resources, and [promoted] student achievement. Multiple at-risk students who were not attending school as consistently as they should were helped on to a better and more consistent path thanks to our SRO. Some of these students would not be on the path to graduate if not for his direct intervention. This is also evident with our higher achieving students that frequently seek the SRO out to invite him to various events. Many students also use their relationship with the SRO for guidance on future planning and career goals. The SRO has also brought in thousands of dollars in scholarship to help our students.

This individual's response suggested a benefit to SROs having an expanded role in the school community and potential to further build out awareness of and reliance on an SRO practicing the triad model. Other respondents spoke optimistically of future incorporation of the SRO triad model in their school setting, such as Participant HWBK from the *Keep Us Safe* factor, who stated:

I feel as though if this [triad model] was implemented there would be an increase in academic achievement because studies have shown that when people [are] in trouble with the law, they actually are more successful after if they are given resources and educated.

However, a member of the *Teachers Teach* factor (N74O) did not see a connection, stating, "I do not see a correlation with the resource officer particularly and academic achievement. We do

have models that may be helping, but not directly with the SRO.” Overall, results from the study indicate that the triad model is not fully implemented and/or incompletely understood by participants across the region that was surveyed.

The applicability of Care Theory was discussed to determine if the presence of law enforcement in the form of the SRO contributed to injustice or additionally fueled the school to prison pipeline. Upon further assessment, Care Theory was supported as being appropriate to the intended role of the SRO, particularly as envisioned with the triad model, as Noddings indicates that people who are committed to justice are dedicated to doing the right thing by everyone (Noddings, 2010, p. 392). As such, an effective SRO, operating in-line with the expectations of Care Theory, would not be exacerbating injustices, such as the school to prison pipeline. This conclusion was supported by the study, in which respondents who varied by county, role, and demographic background did not indicate through the survey or follow-up questions that the presence of law enforcement in the school setting was seen as contributing to injustice or over-referral to the juvenile justice system.

The study identified three major factors based on the participants’ Q-sort results. The *We Are In This Together*, *Keep Us Safe*, and *Teachers Teach* factors all supported the application of Noddings’ Theory of Care to the role of the SRO. Notably, though, the experiences and perspectives of recent graduates, SROs, teachers, and administrators are solely based on the specific circumstances surrounding their employment in their school system and the overarching response of schools to an increasingly violent society.

The *We Are In This Together*, *Keep Us Safe*, and *Teachers Teach* factors shared largely similar perspectives on the importance of keeping students safe, the need to maintain a law enforcement presence in schools, and the fact that the death of a classmate would devastate the staff. This application of the Theory of Care and the importance of justice within school culture reflects the importance of all individuals present in the school setting. Respondents in all three factors also indicated their support of maintaining an SRO presence in the school, and that the

SRO should be a member of the local law enforcement community, in particular. While the *We Are In This Together* and *Keep Us Safe* factors emphasized an individual and collective responsibility for safety and security in the building, *Teachers Teach* respondents shifted more of the responsibility of building safety to administrators and law enforcement personnel.

Furthermore, respondents in the *Teachers Teach* factor also did not feel that the presence and participation of the SRO or implementation of the SRO triad model in the school setting had an impact to school achievement.

Respondent behaviors were attributed to external factors, such as the demographic setting of their school, the involvement (or lack thereof) of the SRO in their building, and the culture and academic achievement of their respective school. Participants' individual values or personas were not examined in this study; however, their perspectives on their institutions' use of the SRO role, implementation of school safety strategies overall, and the lens through which they viewed them are exposed.

Context of Findings

The findings from this study help to fill the research gaps around recent graduates,' SROs', teachers', and administrators' perspectives on school safety in this era of enhanced risk of violence and the role and potential impacts of the SRO implementing the triad model. Previous research on the role of the SRO has been limited to the role of law enforcement in schools and the overidentification of minority and poor students who were charged and directed to the school to prison pipeline.

This study established a relationship between the SRO's presence and the foundation upon which the triad model could be implemented by way of building relationships. Respondents across factors noted the importance of the presence of an SRO, and also the importance of SROs building relationships not only with school employees, but with the student body as well. The study also found that when the SRO is present in school, participants did not feel unsafe, and the behavior in the building was well-managed, contributing to a positive learning environment and

school climate. The recent graduates, SROs, teachers, and administrators in the study all noted the importance of SROs getting to know the students and being responsive to their needs, as well as overall necessity of their role in the school setting in promoting the crucial goal of the school: to educate young people.

Recent graduates, SROs, teachers, and administrators who participated in this study were only represented across three counties in Northeast Ohio. While the study did consist of a diverse demographic sample, the participants in the study were representative of the region and were overwhelmingly white, and middle class (or came from middle class backgrounds).

Implications of Findings

A positive school climate and safe learning environment are fully reliant upon the relationships which exist between the SRO, students, teachers, and administrators. Students who can focus their attention to their education and do not have to worry about safety undoubtedly will perform better than classmates who are fearful for their personal safety. Participants in the *We Are In This Together*, *Keep Us Safe*, and *Teachers Teach* factors indicated that the SRO has a role in maintaining and promoting school safety. While the *We Are In This Together* and *Keep Us Safe* factors agreed on the importance of direct involvement on behalf of each individual and responsibility of all stakeholders for maintaining and promoting a safe learning environment, the *Teachers Teach* factor felt that their responsibility was instruction of students, and that responsibility for building safety should be delegated to others (administrators, or the SRO).

The terrible massacre and deadliest school shooting in Texas history that took place at the elementary school in Uvalde in 2022, which claimed the lives of seventeen students and two teachers, has highlighted the need for effective law enforcement presence and strategic response to threats now more than ever before (Dey et al., 2022). According to the US Justice Department (2024) “cascading failures of leadership, decision-making, tactics, policy, and training including by district-employed police officers were responsible for the massacre.” US Attorney General Merrick Garland responded, “the report concludes that, had law enforcement agencies followed

generally accepted practices in an active shooter situation and gone right after the shooter to stop him, lives would have been saved and people would have survived” (Education Week, 2024).

Though studies have not been conducted to determine if the relational status of the SROs assigned to Robb Elementary in Uvalde contributed to the crisis, trust, communication, and strong working relationships certainly could have hastened the response to the intruder and lives could have been spared. The tragedy is nothing if not a cautionary tale and an opportunity for other school communities to do better, however they can. The results of this study can be generalized to other populations and districts.

Limitations of the Study

Q-Methodology gains the perspectives of participants and is generalized to other populations which can be viewed as a limitation. The study participants represented various genders, ethnicities, and geographical locations, however, the sample consisted mainly of White/Caucasian respondents from a three-county region in Northeast Ohio. The Q-Methodology utilized by way of Q-Method Software gathered all responses and maintained anonymity, however there were some issues that respondents had with the sorting activity. Although video links were provided to the participants, as well as information to contact the researcher if participants needed additional assistance, confusion and misunderstanding might still have been present and affected some of the results stemming from the participants.

This study is reliant upon participants loading statistically into three factors. Eighteen participants completed the Q-sort, but one participant did not load statistically into one of the three factors. This might be attributed to the participant not completing the sorting activity. Follow-up responses that were collected from the participants were analyzed and coded by the researcher, which might be analyzed differently from another individual’s perspective.

Future Directions

Future research studies should expand the perspectives of recent graduates, SROs, teachers, and administrators to additional districts who have successfully implemented the triad

model. Expanding this study to compare Northeast Ohio to larger, more diverse population centers in other geographical regions would also produce data that could be assessed for contrasting and/or comparable perspectives, if any exist. In addition, exploring districts who have implemented the triad model of the SRO long term could provide valuable insight as to whether this approach should be more fully adopted and incorporated throughout districts nationwide.

Future research could also explore the perspectives and relational aspects that the *We Are In This Together* and *Keep Them Safe* factors highlighted to emphasize the importance of the SRO's presence to school community, and how all school members work together to promote and maintain school safety under these perspectives.

Future research should be expanded to include the role that school counselors play to gain their perspectives. School counselors have a unique perspective and can be examined to see how their role can interface with an SRO employing the triad model. School counselors often serve as members of building threat assessment teams and should be included in future research to determine when the SRO, employing a triad approach, can delegate and name additional members to the crisis team that can assist staff and students in case of emergency. Additional research can be conducted to determine the efficacy of crisis plan development if a SRO is taking the lead, in contrast with school administrators being primarily responsible.

Future research should also be expanded to include the perspectives of parents, and their contribution to the school community. As members of the educational team, parents bring a unique perspective regarding their expectations of school safety, and more importantly, their expectation of the SRO in the school setting. Parents who are non-educators, administrators, or law enforcement individuals themselves might have a completely different viewpoint, one that is worth exploring as their perspective is removed from the educational setting.

Areas of additional research can be expanded to explore the contribution of SROs to restorative practices and buy in to determine, when employed effectively, if districts will see a decline in disciplinary referrals and exclusionary practices. Additional research and work to

develop a curriculum from a leading trade organization, such as NASRO, should be researched, developed, taught, and further analyzed to train the next generation of SROs to be not only aware of, but trained in restorative practices which will ultimately impact and improve school climate, connected, engagement and student achievement.

Conclusion

The United States faces ongoing threats of school violence, and innocent victims will be perpetually subject to an increasingly violent society until there is large-scale cultural change. Nevertheless, though the next generation of students, teachers, administrators, and SROs will need to continue to meet this challenge head on, the importance and potential of the relationship between the SRO and the school community cannot be overstated.

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Appendix A**IRB Approval**

Sep 7, 2023 10:17:13 AM

Karen Larwin
Teacher Ed and Leadership St

Re: Exempt - Initial - 2024-28 Perspectives of Administrators, Teachers, SROs, and Recent Graduates on School Safety and the Role of the School Resource Officer: A Mixed Methods Study

Dear Dr. Karen Larwin:

Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board has rendered the decision below for Perspectives of Administrators, Teachers, SROs, and Recent Graduates on School Safety and the Role of the School Resource Officer: A Mixed Methods Study

Decision: Exempt

Selected Category: Category 3.(i)(A). Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection.

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,

Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate

Hello,

Thank you so much for helping me with my research study. First, you will watch a short video on how Q-Sort Studies Work (reference the link below), then click on the link to the actual Q-Sort.

When you are done, please e-mail me at mark.zura@boardmanschools.org. You will receive a \$10 Starbucks Card for helping me. If possible, please complete this activity by next Tuesday at the latest. This should not take longer than 10-15 minutes to complete.

Thank you so much for your assistance,

Mark Zura

Q Sort Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kswd0RFKlfl>

Q Sort Study: <https://app.qmethodsoftware.com/study/11796>

Appendix C

Informed Consent to Participate

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student from Youngstown State University (YSU). I am conducting a research project to investigate perspectives of school resource officers, administrators, teachers, and recent graduates on school safety and the role of the school resource officer in rural, suburban, and urban schools. In this research project, you will be asked to sort statements based on whether you agree, disagree, or are neutral with them. You will be asked to answer a few questions to clarify your responses when the sorting activity is over. Along with your responses, I will need to collect information to describe you. This demographic information includes: current role, race/ethnicity, gender identification, age range, education level, and city of your school district. We will not report your school district information but are using it for typology (e.g. rural, suburban, urban). You will be asked to provide this information and answers to a couple of open-ended questions prior to completing the sorting activity.

You may be at risk of harm because of this research. The harm includes: the sorting activity you will complete asks about school safety and roles of the school resource officer and you may have negative emotional feelings when completing it. The likelihood that you will be harmed is minimal because the topic of school safety and the role of the school resource officer is not viewed as having a strong, negative, emotional response. If you do feel uncomfortable, please reach out to the National Help Hotline at (800) 662-4357. The benefits to you from completing this study are gaining insight into your own feelings on school safety and the role of the school resource officer. Also, you will reflect on how safe your own building is, and if any changes are needed. Your privacy is important to me and the researcher handling the information collected will make great efforts to keep it confidential. The data collected will be reported in the research project but will be deidentified. I plan to present the results of the research project to YSU faculty and a student audience. The results of this research project may also be published in professional journals or online. You do not have to be a part of this research project and can say no without losing any benefits that you are entitled to. If you do agree to participate in the research project, you can stop participating at any time. If you wish to withdraw from the research project, please tell me or the contact person listed below.

If you have questions about this research project please contact Mark Zura (xxxx@student.yzu.edu) or Dr. Karen H. Larwin (xxxx@ysu.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact the Office of Research Services at YSU (330-941-2377) or at YSUIRB@ysu.edu.

By participating in this study and answering the questions, I am giving my consent for my data to be used. I understand I may quit at any time.

Appendix D

Thank You to Participants

Dear Participant,

Thank you so much for participating in my research study. I am so thankful that you have shared your precious time, effort, knowledge, experiences and perspectives with me. You are a part of my doctoral journey, which is very important to me. I am hopeful that together we can improve safety for our students, staff members, and faculty in a positive manner.

Thanks so much,

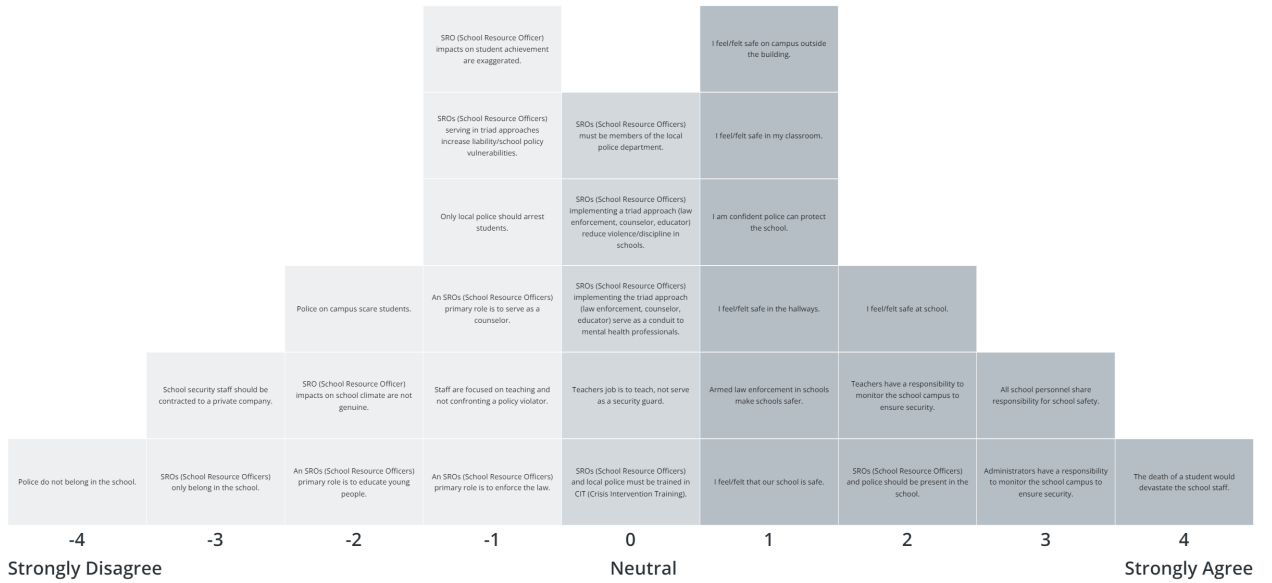
Mark Zura

Appendix E

Factor 1: *We Are In This Together*

Figure 1

Model Sort for Those Who Loaded Significantly on Factor 1

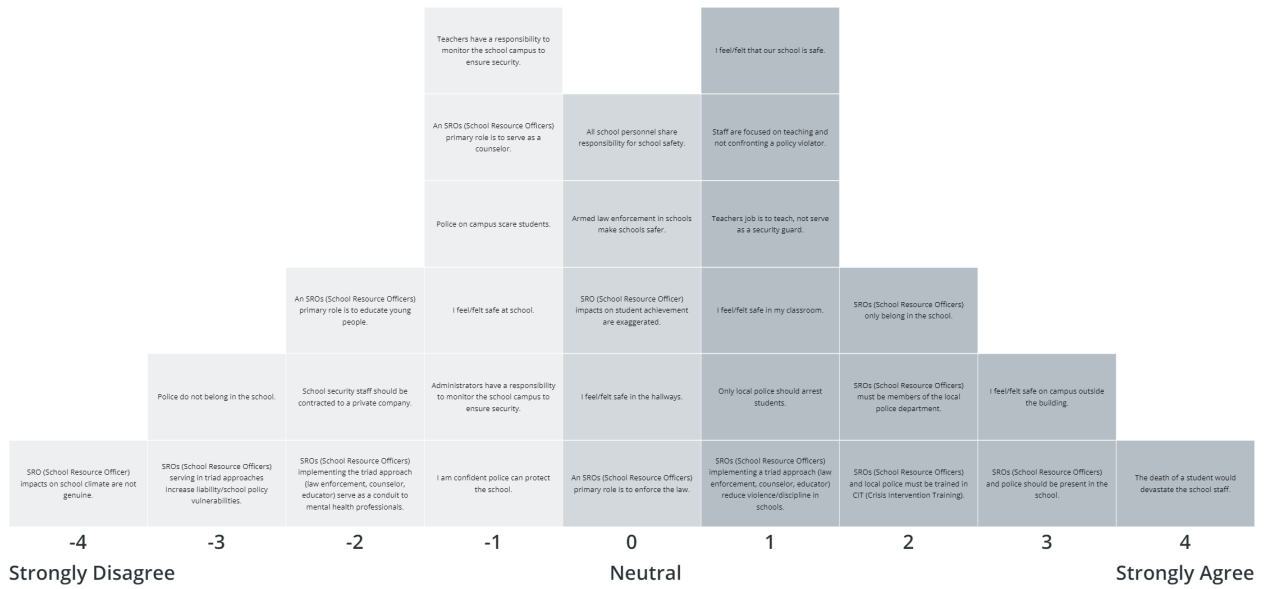


Appendix F

Factor 2: *Keep Us Safe*

Figure 2

Model Sort for Those Who Loaded Significantly on Factor 2, *Keep Us Safe*

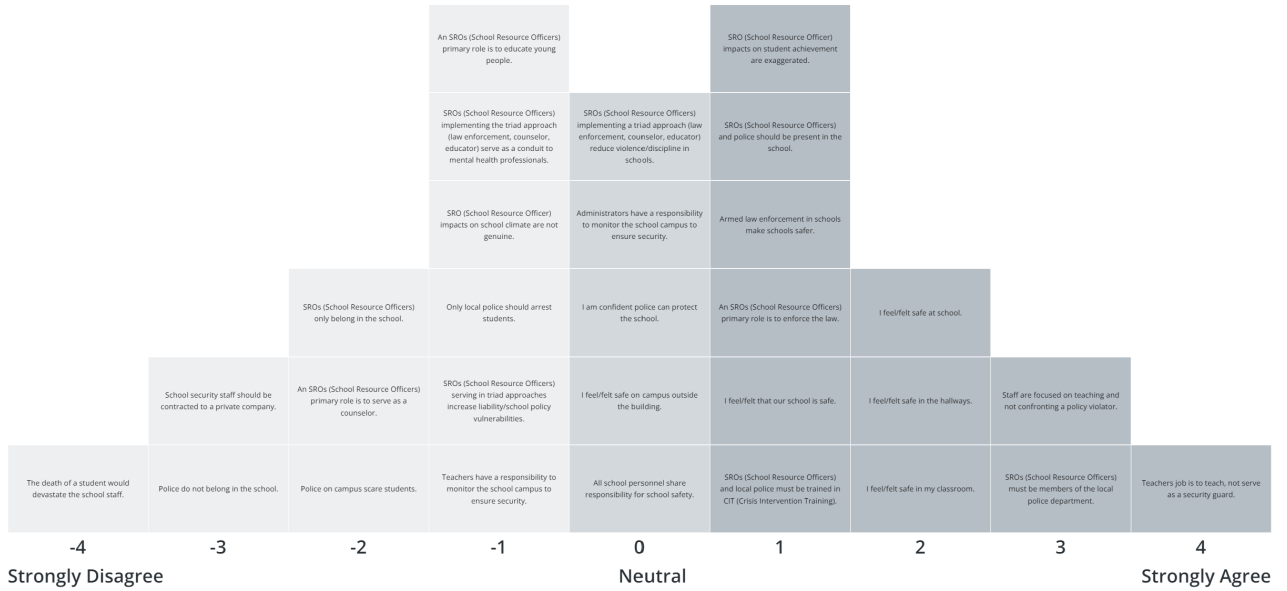


Appendix G

Factor 3: Teachers Teach

Figure 3

Model Sort for Those Who Loaded Significantly



on Factor 3, Teachers Teach

Appendix H

Coding-School Safety Question

Study Code	Factor #	Is(was) school safety a concern to you? If so, why?
06DO	3	School safety is a concern to me because everyone needs a safe environment to work and learn.
UR0S	1	As a school district employee, I have always felt safe while in any of our buildings.
4LPC	1	School safety is a major concern for me. When students do not feel safe physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, it inhibits their ability to engage in meaningful learning. Children need to be in a school environment where they can focus on growth without fear or major distractions.
N74O	3	Yes, of course school safety is a concern for various reasons. The first reason is because there have been too many instances in other schools where unsafe events have happened. Guns seem to be easier to obtain and students and adults seem to have more mental issues. We do our best to hinder unsafe items from being brought to school but there is no sure way to do this and we do not have metal detectors currently.
X2KV	1	Absolutely. The efficacy of a strong education is questionable when the student body, staff, and families feel if their school is unsafe. School curriculum, events, and activities fall to the wayside if the person's mindset is primarily focused on their safety.
HWBK	2	School safety was something that I always worried about because of the many unknown possibilities but I always felt safe in my high school.
RC7X	1	School safety is a concern to me as it is the primary function and area of focus in my job as a School Resource Officer.
0M28	1	I think safety is a concern for all schools. It is an identified priority for our school.
IO8M	2	Yes, because school shootings keep happening.
DVXX	1	Yes. Because morals and the family unit isn't like it was in the past. Parents are too lenient and some parents are not even present in the children's lives.
I7TO	1	School was never a safety concern to me at all. Accidents happen at times and teenagers can make some questionable decisions but the staff in my school did a good job managing this behavior and making sure we were all safe at all times. We also had a resource officer who stayed at our school all day which was very reassuring.
LLBC	2	School safety was not a great personal concern for me because I felt our school was in a safe area and had a competent administrative team. However, I was also a white, middle class honors student, so I had the privilege to be distanced from issues like physical fights, drugs, etc.

9WNT		No, school safety was never a concern for me I believe that liberty high school did a wonderful job on implementing security protocols such as resource officers at the front of the building every day.
8T05	1	Yes because everyone does an equal education opportunity.
ZCI2	3	School safety was never a concern to me due to an SRO being there. Every time I walked into the building, and lunchroom, I would see a cop, and it made me feel very safe knowing nothing would happen to anyone.
F1YF	2	School safety is a concern to me as it is to anyone who teaches. With mass-shootings and other types of school violence occurring in the United States, I want to make sure that my students and I are protected in the case of emergency.
PAIK	2	Yes as I believed that school safety was always an important thing to have just in case something crazy happened.
KCQU	1	School safety is a concern every day. Unfortunately, the world has become an even more dangerous place. There is always a sense of concern. I work in an older building with a lot of doors. Oh..... school safety is a CONCERN. I would be surprised if anyone said school safety was not a concern.

Appendix I

Coding –Primary role of the SRO in your building?

Study Code	Factor #	What is(was) the primary role of the SRO in your building?
06DO	3	The primary role of the SRO in our building is to help maintain order and be a resource to administrators, teachers, staff members, and students.
UR0S	1	I would imagine the primary role of the SRO is to assist in the maintaining adequate security within the building.
4LPC	1	The primary role of the SRO in our buildings is the physical safety of our students especially at drop off and pick up times.
N74O	3	Our SRO is here to deal with our students first hand. He is here for our protection and theirs as well as for deescalation of situations as they arise. He also builds relationships with the teenagers to maybe defer any potential trouble and build trust.
X2KV	1	The SRO is a central point for safety and security. Having someone in the school allows for consistent security, while also proving a fast access of communication with first responders. This is coupled with the feeling of security and comfort that is created by having an SRO on campus.
HWBK	2	The primary role of the SRO in my building was to ensure safety among students and staff and eliminate any possible threats.
RC7X	1	My primary role is working to provide a safe and positive learning environment for our students. This is facilitated by building relationships across the student body that consist of daily communication and interaction, conducting physical security operations i.e. verifying doors being secured, staff having access to security protocols and training, and being present during times of large gathering.
0M28	1	Safety and security of students and staff, assist administrators in investigations, help dissect ORC.
IO8M	2	The SRO's role is to maintain order and provide a positive police presence.
DVXX	1	To maintain the safety and security of the children and staff. To make sure no criminal offenses occur.
I7TO	1	The primary role of the SRO in our building was to keep us safe in case an accident were to happen. If there was a fight breaking out you knew the officer would be there to relieve the chaos and de-escalate the situation. Of course, they offered other help even if you needed someone to talk to they were always friendly and open to conversation.
LLBC	2	The SRO in my building worked alongside the administration to ensure the safety of students and staff. He had a good rapport with students and was sometimes able to act as a counselor and preemptively deescalate conflicts. As a police officer, he also enforced the law when necessary, though I did not perceive that as his primary role.
9WNT		To keep a safe environment throughout the school.

8T05	1	To keep a safe environment for students and staff.
ZCI2	3	The primary role of the SRO was to keep the children safe, as they would watch the lunchroom and places where other groups of large people were. The cops would keep good relations with teachers, and they would make sure nothing would happen.
F1YF	2	The SRO is there to ensure student and faculty safety. He stays in the building to protect us from possible intruders, investigate any situations involving drugs/contraband and break up student conflicts.
PAIK	2	Making sure that everyone was safe and he was always patrolling the building for anything out of the blue.
KCQU	1	To keep students and staff as safe as possible during the course of the school day

Appendix J

Coding-Triad Model

Study Code	Factor #	If your SRO implements/implemented the triad model (law enforcement, counseling, educating), has/had your building experienced an increase in academic achievement? How do you know?
06DO	3	I am not aware if our SRO implements the triad model.
UR0S	1	I do not know whether or not this model has been implemented, nor am I aware of its effectiveness.
4LPC	1	Our SRO does not currently implement the triad model. However, we made strides this year to include education as part of his role.
N74O	3	I do not see a correlation with the resource officer particularly and academic achievement. We do have models that may be helping but not directly with the SRO.
X2KV	1	1) yes 2) yes 3) The SRO has created an environment where the students and staff feel very comfortable approaching him and asking for advice, information, and his opinion. He has answered questions regarding the law and expectations, helped students and staff receive counseling and counseling resources, and promote student involvement. Multiple at risk students whom were not attending school as consistently as they should were help on to a better and more consistent path thanks to our SRO. Some of these students would not be on the path to graduate if not for his direct intervention. This is also evident with our higher achieving students that frequently seek the SRO out invite him to various events. Many students also use their relationship with the SRO for guidance on future planning and career goals. The SRO has also brought in thousands of dollars in scholarship to help our students.
HWBK	2	I feel as though if this was implemented there would be an increase in academic achievement because studies have shown that when people are in trouble with the law, they actually are more successful after if they are given resources and educated.
RC7X	1	I do not have knowledge of academic achievement growth or reduction during my tenure here.
0M28	1	Academically we have remained the same.
IO8M	2	NA
DVXX	1	No

I7TO	1	I would say yes considering the resource officer walks around the halls all day. This reassures the students are where they are supposed to be at all times and in class. With the more students in class and not roaming the hallways this boosted academic achievements considering they are learning and not just walking around.
LLBC	2	I do not know if the SRO at my school officially subscribed to the triad model.
9WNT		I don't know if the triad model was implemented in our school district.
8T05	1	I'm not sure.
ZCI2	3	The SRO's at my school never completed the triad model, they were just in the building to keep people safe.
F1YF	2	My school's SRO exists mostly as a formality. He patrols the building, occasionally checks in with students, and serves as a reminder that in case of emergency we have the personnel to protect us. As such, our SRO has little impact on our building's academic achievement.
PAIK	2	Yes since our self esteem would've been greater which would've resulted in better grades for all students.
KCQU	1	N/A

Appendix K

Coding-Physical Safety Resources

Study Code	Factor #	What are/were the physical safety resources at your school? (e.g. metal detectors, surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, ID Systems (Raptor), sound sensors, smoke sensors, etc.)
06DO	3	surveillance cameras, smoke sensors, and ID systems.
UR0S	1	To my knowledge we currently have surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, and ID Systems (Raptor).
4LPC	1	Our physical safety resources include surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, smoke sensors, door prop alarms, ID systems for visitors, and projectile resistant film.
N74O	3	We have surveillance cameras in many areas, hallways and parking lots. We lock our doors during the academic day, and we have a security entrance with a person attending for visitors to enter and exit .
X2KV	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) surveillance cameras 2) ID system (raptor) 3) walkie talkies for administration and some staff 4) smoke detectors/fire alarms 5) alarm system 6) multiple safety kits 7) Special wheel chair evacuation chairs for the stairs 8) some fob magnetic doors 9) door locking mechanisms 10) class room go bags 11) AEDs
HWBK	2	Some safety resources at my school were surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, ID systems and smoke sensors.
RC7X	1	Cameras, door locking mechanisms (magnetic locks w/fobs), visitor management systems, first aid and bleeding control kits strategically placed across the building.
0M28	1	Security cameras. We are currently upgrading our security systems to include new cameras, door locks, and ID systems.
IO8M	2	Cameras, door locks (regular key locks), ID system, smoke detectors
DVXX	1	<p>ID/access cards</p> <p>Cameras</p> <p>Door locking systems</p>

I7TO	1	Some physical safety features that were at my school included surveillance cameras, sound sensors, smoke sensors, and locks on our doors. the doors were only able to be opened if you were buzzed in by the ladies at the front desk.
LLBC	2	I know my school had some surveillance cameras, external door locking mechanisms, and smoke detectors. I am not sure if there were additional safety resources.
9WNT		The safety resources that I am aware of in my school were surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, and smoke sensors.
8T05	1	Surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, smoke sensors.
ZCI2	3	There were surveillance cameras, door locking mechanisms, and smoke alarms at my school.
F1YF	2	My school utilized mainly security cameras, door-locking mechanisms, and typical sensors.
PAIK	2	We had smoke sensors, sound sensors, cameras, and locking doors.

Appendix L**Coding-Mental Health**

Study Code	Factor #	What are/were the mental health resources at your school? (e.g. clinical counselors, school counselors, school psychologists, behavior coaches, social workers, etc.)
06DO	3	Red Zone, social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, and clinical staff.
UR0S	1	To my knowledge, the available resources at our schools include clinical counselors, school counselors, school psychologists, and behavior coaches.
4LPC	1	The mental health resources include school counselors, school psychologists, clinical counselors and behavior coaches.
N74O	3	We have guidance counselors, one "at risk" counselor and now have two to three days of actual clinical counseling available. We do have school psychologist but they deal with testing and IEP etc only. We now have a new behavior position for the district in central office but I am not certain his role yet.
X2KV	1	1) school counselors 2) clinical counselors 3) SRO 4) School psychologists 5) Behavior specialist education teachers 6) Social worker 7) Boys Group and Girls Circle (peer counseling sessions)
HWBK	2	The mental health resources at my school were school counselors and a crisis counselor.
RC7X	1	Our High School staffs one clinical counselor, several school counselors, and a school psychologist, as well as working with social workers assigned to our school by Mahoning County entities.
0M28	1	We work with two outside counseling organizations in addition to having two school counselors.
IO8M	2	Counselors, social worker, psychologist
DVXX	1	School Counselors School Psychologists
I7TO	1	The mental health resources we had at my school included school counselors and social workers. We may have had other mental health resources that I wasn't aware of but those are the only two I know of.
LLBC	2	When I was a student there, my school had only school guidance counselors. I understand students now have some access to a clinical counselor.
9WNT		We had school counselors
8T05	1	School counselors
ZCI2	3	There were school counselors at my school.

