

School Resource Officers and the School to Prison Pipeline

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School Resource Officers and the School to Prison Pipeline

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I. Introduction

Abstract

The modern school can present a vast amount of problems that teachers and staff are expected to handle. Considering teachers are placed within the school to focus on the education of youth, individual problems from students should be handled by professionals within the building which includes School Resource Officers. This introduction of police inside of schools has had resistance by those who believe in the School to Prison Pipeline theory and becomes reality when police are enforcing school policy on top of criminal behavior. Successful School Resource Officer programs focus on investigating criminal behavior to ultimately achieve the goal of safety in the school as well as feeling more comfortable in reporting criminal behavior to the police. This paper will address the pipeline theory as well as focus on successful School Resource Officer programs as positive examples of having police inside of schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to address having School Resource Officers (SRO's) within the school environment and to decrease the idea that SRO's bridge the gap to the School to Prison Pipeline (STPP). When critical incidents started being addressed within schools after Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris targeted the Columbine High School and killed twelve students, the first reaction from schools and law enforcement was to enforce zero tolerance policies leading people to believe that having SRO's only puts students in the juvenile justice system. When SRO's are utilized to enforce school policies and not criminal behavior, the STPP becomes a reality. Today, SRO's are a necessity to address critical incidents that are occurring within the school, however school administrators and SRO's should know when they need to be

utilized and to build relationships with students instead of a bridge to the STPP. This paper will define the STPP and how police departments can have effective SRO programs to become closer with the community they serve.

Methodology

The method of approach for this paper will consist of gathering information from credible sources through the UW – Platteville library. These sources include online periodicals, articles from magazines and book reviews through the period of 2005 to 2016. Sources will be used to gather information related to effective SRO programs throughout the country to give examples of how SRO's should operate within a school. Information will also show that when used correctly, the SRO can build bridges with the community instead of destroying them.

Statement of the problem

When children are sent to school, parents have an expectation that the school will keep their children safe. Schools need to adapt to situations that are continually developing in order to meet this expectation. These situations can range from a student being bullied, a student having a medical emergency or an extreme threat of an active shooter within a school. Establishing an SRO program within the school is the most effective way to accomplish the goal of having a safe school. Although it is not a definite solution, having an officer within the school reduces the response time that police have in responding to a critical incident. Opponents of establishing an SRO program refer to the STPP as to why SRO's should not be implemented within the school. Fowler (2011) studied schools within the state of Texas and observed patterns of children as young as six years old given citations for behavior in the classroom. Fowler then makes the connection that children in the courtroom are more likely to be incarcerated in the future as a

result of having SRO's within the school. However, effective SRO programs do not criminalize minor student misbehavior and SRO's should not be used to enforce school policies.

Dillon's (2009) research described multiple articles showing that experts in education, criminal justice and mental health found a link between a high school dropout and a higher risk of being incarcerated. Additionally, Mallet (2015) showed that the use of zero tolerance policies in schools that were originally meant to address firearms and school violence, then were expanded to student behavior in the classroom, thus expanding the SRO umbrella to arrest students for minor misbehavior instead of schools addressing the issue of behavior. This ultimately fed into the STPP and opposition to an SRO in the school as the deciding factor as to why SRO's should not be in the school environment. In the event SRO's are being utilized to enforce school policies or arresting students for misbehavior in the classroom, it very well could feed into the STPP. However, effective SRO programs are utilized for criminal behavior at the school and to build bridges with the students instead of building a bridge to the STPP.

Summary of Key Findings

The findings of this research define what the STPP entails and how SRO's can be properly developed and utilized to avoid the STPP. The pipeline theory is an outcome of SRO's and schools following zero tolerance policies to enforce student behavior as well as the disapproval of police in schools. By properly defining when an SRO should be used and providing guidance on effective SRO programs, there will be more positive relationships with the community instead of negative ones. This paper will summarize that although there is not enough research to prove SRO's decrease criminal behavior on school grounds, the overall school population feels safer and students and staff are more likely to report a crime when an

SRO is present. The relationship with the student body and ability to report criminal activity occurring on school grounds is the sign of a successful SRO program and is an important aspect in order to avoid being labeled as a contributor to the STPP.

Significance of Research

This paper is meant to address the concerns that parents and the community might have about having police within schools. SRO's are implemented for the overall protection of the student to achieve the goal of keeping children safe. SRO's in the school are meant to be there to educate the students about the criminal justice system, mentor students and enforce laws when needed. These three aspects of being an SRO eventually lead to students feeling comfortable enough to come to SRO's in order to report behavior that could lead to a critical incident. This research is meant to inform the public that SRO's are not meant to be the bridge to the STPP that they are commonly associated with and instead, to be a bridge to having more communication and trust with the community.

Section II: Literature Review

This literature review is divided into three sections, which include defining the STPP, SRO's within the school and recommendations for future SRO programs. The STPP is defined as the theory being developed through history and the reaction from school administrators and SRO's. The second section defines SRO's in the school includes successful SRO programs and when SRO's should be utilized in the school. Finally, the third section ties the STPP and SRO's together to give future recommendations and to avoid an SRO being labeled as a contributor to

the STPP. The third section also addresses what goals and elements of a successful SRO program have and how other SRO programs should be modeled to produce similar results.

I. Defining the School to Prison Pipeline

Discipline within schools has evolved into being described as STPP due to what society expects out of schools and varying school policies. Corporal punishment was a common type of discipline used in the schools until approximately 1960 and varying states still consider corporal punishment as legal. Federal case law resulted in allowing individual states to determine if corporal punishment should be used and pushed schools into finding other types of discipline in states that decided to make corporal punishment illegal. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions were commonly used with zero tolerance policies and the desire to keep schools safe from violent crimes. Research indicates that the use of corporal punishment can lead to depression or no effect in order to correct study behavior and the use of zero tolerance policies can lead students who are expelled or suspended more likely to enter the criminal justice system (Yen & Wang, 2009). The SRO is a common denominator in the equation of schools and the STPP. If an SRO is present within the school, policy should define when and how they are used in order to avoid being labeled as a contributor to the STPP.

Corporal punishment, suspension, expulsion and the use of an SRO to enforce school policies are all options to use for school discipline and has been used at varying times in the history of the United States. At the time of the Vietnam War and the growing trend of civil disobedience, other options for school discipline was explored (Gershoff & Font, 2018). Using both in school and out of school suspensions, more schools began to move away from corporal punishment as a way to discipline students and utilized school suspension for discipline. With

more schools using suspensions, case law directed school administrators on using this type of discipline without violating civil liberties. *Goss v. Lopez* (1975) resulted in administrators informing a student that they have a right to a hearing to dispute any suspensions or expulsions (to avoid violating due process). In regards to other forms of school discipline in states that still allowed corporal punishment, the United States Supreme Court held that administrators do not violate a student's right to due process through the use of corporal punishment. *Baker v. Owen* (1975) involved the mother of Russell Baker telling school administrators not to use corporal punishment on her son. Russell was disciplined through the use of corporal punishment and his mother sued the school district for violating due process and claimed cruel and unusual punishment through paddling. The result indicated that the use of corporal punishment does not violate due process without a notice of a hearing to dispute the punishment since administrators are expected to discipline students who violate school policy and are expected to keep order within the school. It further gave administrators guidelines for the use of corporal punishment, which includes informing students that corporal punishment may be a type of discipline that is used within the school, using corporal punishment as a last resort, having a witness to the use of corporal punishment, and having an option for informing the parents in writing for the reasons of corporal punishment.

In *Baker v. Owen*, the court additionally ruled that the use of corporal punishment does not violate a student's right to protection against cruel and unusual punishment. In *Ingraham v. Wright* (1977), the supreme court ruled that the decision for corporal punishment should ultimately be made by individual states instead of the federal government. This decision led a majority of states to ban corporal punishment, which included Wisconsin banning it in 1988 (Gershoff & Font, 2014). Without the option of using corporal punishment for discipline, the use

of suspensions and expulsions were more likely to be used. Adding to the use of this type of discipline, the 1994 Gun Free School Act addressed violent crimes within schools and students bringing weapons to school.

The Gun Free School Act instructed schools to enact zero tolerance policies which mandated suspensions or expulsions for students that committed violent crimes or bringing weapons to school. Mallet (2015) defined the Gun Free School Act and the use of zero tolerance policies by schools commonly suspending or expelling students who commit a violent crime for a period of one year. Although this policy gave severe consequences to students involved in unwanted behavior, it also grew to administrators giving severe consequences to students who committed other types of offenses besides violent crimes, including violating school policies, fighting, or drug use. Without the student being in the classroom afterwards, it decreased the amount of classroom instruction they received, resulting in students falling behind in school work. Carter (2016) referred to the use of zero tolerance policies and suggested the use of in-school suspensions for minor offenses instead of out of school suspensions. Regardless of having in-school suspensions as an option for students committing low level offenses, the use of zero tolerance policies continued after the Columbine shooting on April 20, 1999.

School shootings occurring within a community leaves parents and students wanting the assurance that the schools children attend are kept safe. SRO's within the school addresses this issue by having a police officer inside the school and reduces the response time police departments have in responding to a call of an active shooter. Cray and Weiler's (2011) research indicated a need for SRO's in a school, showing that of the SRO's they surveyed, 80% reported taking a weapon from a student within one year of the survey. Administrators and teachers are expected to educate today's youth and in order to meet society's expectations of keeping students

safe, SROs are a valuable addition in preventing school violence. With SRO's being in the schools however, it adds the opportunity for the STPP phenomenon to emerge. When weapons are recovered on school grounds, juveniles are often placed in custody for this type of behavior. Students that violate school policy and are then referred to the SRO is not an intended use of an SRO and is where the STPP theory may apply. Mallet (2015) referred to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 to address zero tolerance policies and keeping students in the classroom.

After the NCLB, federal and state funding was dependent on school performance and also encouraged low level students who were likely to be suspended or expelled to be in alternative schools rather than the typical school environment to reduce the probability of them being expelled. Critics of the NCLB looked at the amount of federal funding that went towards having SRO's within the school and the amount of money that went to funding alternative schools (Mallet, 2015). Arguments include reducing the amount of funding that goes towards SRO's and instead directing the funds towards more alternative schools. By directing more low level students towards alternative schools, the amount of in classroom instruction would increase instead of suspending or expelling students. Keeping students in the classroom is an important aspect of the STPP since research has proven a correlation between the use of out of school suspension or expulsion to the juvenile justice system (Novak, 2018). This correlation was primarily connected by discipline being exclusionary and acknowledged that there were many other risk factors that could be associated with the justice system. However, Novak's research suggested alternatives to using suspensions and expulsions as a way to discipline students and correct behavior.

In order to address behavior within the classroom, Carter (2016) argues that implementing a code of conduct within a school to set expectations of students, attempting to finding the root of the problem to address behavior, and clarifying what the consequences of student misbehavior are within the code of conduct can address student behavior. Without the use of corporal punishment, use of suspension and expulsion or the referrals to law enforcement, it is unclear what the appropriate discipline actions should be besides eliminating the use of zero tolerance policies in schools. Considering schools have already established expectations and standards with misbehaviors still occurring, the reality is that the code of conduct will not be able to prevent students from committing serious offenses on school property.

McCarter (2016) references the NCLA as well as using a code of conduct within schools to address student behavior by showing that at the time when NCLA was enacted, public schools were also experiencing high stakes testing, inadequate resources, overcrowding, a diverse student body and an increase in demands for schools teachers. On top of these multiple factors, school administrators are tasked with keeping order within a school. Order and discipline that was commonly used throughout the 1990s included using zero tolerance policies and implementing SRO's in a school. Although McCarter's article stated students should be held accountable for their actions when behavior compromises school safety, McCarter stated the punishment should not be excessive and disproportionately given to students based on gender, race or sexual preference (2016). This aspect of keeping discipline equal is a common theme in many SRO programs and the programs do not target students based on individual characteristics. Regardless, McCarter's article is focused towards a social worker perspective on connecting with students and using a more evidence based model of discipline instead of using SRO's within the school. The evidence based model of discipline that McCarter refers to includes schools using positive

behavior support, behavior interventions and restorative justice. By implementing these alternatives to discipline, McCarter shared that schools can maintain a safe learning environment through these practices without relying on school suspensions and expulsions. Although social workers are a valuable asset within the school, using a student code of conduct will not be able to properly address all the necessary school discipline to hold students accountable for their behavior and prevent future unwanted behavior from occurring. When considering SRO's and their role in school discipline, there should be limitations on when an SRO is used and should not be used to enforce school policies.

Majority of SRO's have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that helps regulate when an SRO is used to help prevent them being labeled as a contributor to the STPP (Cray & Weiler, 2011). SRO's can be a valuable asset to a school environment when used correctly and when used improperly; supporters of the STPP often use examples of SRO's exceeding their role to support their theory. One example includes an SRO being called for two students with emotional and educational disabilities on separate occasions when the students were being physical with staff. As a result, the SRO handcuffed one of the students above the elbows since the child's hands were able to slip through the handcuffs. This action resulted in a civil suit against the sheriff's office for violating an unlawful detention and excessive force based on the SRO detaining the student while using handcuffs in an untrained technique (Shaver & Decker, 2017). In the process of using the handcuffs, the student who was handcuffed above the elbow stated that he was experiencing pain. The SRO who placed the handcuffs on the student testified that pain was not likely since the chain link connecting the handcuffs were the length of the child's chest. This was proven to be false and the practice of handcuffing children above the elbows is not a trained technique. Training has been given to SRO's and police to prevent such

violations from occurring. In a civil suit against the sheriff's office, the civil court ruled that the use of handcuffing above the elbows for a small child was unconstitutional since it violated the students fourth amendment in protection against an unlawful detention. This incident can give those who support the STPP theory a reason to reject SRO's within the school. With the particular student being physical with staff and being disorderly in the classroom, the behavior should be handled but in a way that is reasonable. Often times, however, supporters of the STPP will use examples to help strengthen their theory without including all of the details.

Budgen (2017) referred to a civil suit in which a student was arrested for burping in class and was expelled for the rest of the year by the school. In reality, the court case describes that the student was suspended for one day for continuously disrupting the class and his mother elected to take the student out of school (*A.M. v. Holmes*, 2016). This decision was made by the mother after her son was taken to the juvenile detention center for interfering with the educational process in the classroom as well as a later incident where her son was searched by the school for suspected drug transactions. Because of the arrest and subsequent search, the child was pulled from school at the family's discretion and not the schools, as is defined in Budgen's article. Although the arrest of a student for burping in class can be considered excessive on the SRO's part, the civil suit was dismissed by qualified immunity for the arresting officer since there was enough probable cause for the officer to make the arrest. The student's actions were disorderly enough to constitute placing the juvenile in custody.

Along with giving examples of SRO's exceeding their role within the school, Budgen (2017) shares that students lose their civil rights through *New Jersey v. TLO*. This case established urinalysis tests for student athletes, surveillance cameras in schools and school administrators not having to read students their Miranda rights when being questioned at school.

New Jersey v. TLO refers to the defendant and student TLO, who was searched by the school principle after it was reported there was smoke in the bathroom. TLO had drug paraphernalia, drugs and a distribution list inside of her purse as a result of the search and was referred to the police and was subsequently arrested. The outcome of this case gave school administration the right to search students when there is reasonable suspicion there is contraband or criminal activity occurring. This reasonable suspicion standard for school administration helps keep the school environment safe and ensures an expected learning environment for the other students in the building. Further, student athletes who do not want to have a urine test, simply do not need to participate in sports since their main focus should be on their education first. Surveillance cameras that are used within the school are done so in a public place for public schools and are meant to keep the students safe in their learning environment. Finally, school administrators are not agents of the state and are not subject to reading students their Miranda rights prior to any questioning. Additionally, since administrators are unable to place students into custody, this eliminates the need for a Miranda and shows how skewed supporters of the STPP can be in order to find ways to support their theory. Despite the STPP supporters, SRO's within the schools are not going away anytime soon and current guidelines and examples of successful SRO programs are found throughout the country.

II. SRO's within the school

The presence of a police officer inside of a school is essential to the overall safety due to the amount of students in a school and the amount of teachers that are in the building to meet the demands of the educational expectations. Teachers and administrators are expected to educate the youth in schools, while adding school safety on top of an already stressed workload for those

in education, SRO's can be a vital addition to the school environment by providing school safety. SRO's are not in the school environment to be heavy enforcers of the law, but rather someone that students can approach for guidance or help. They can educate the overall student body on aspects related to criminal justice. Sharing of information with the SRO, school and the community is important to building the bridge between the police and society by also learning what the community expects out of a police officer inside of the school. The SROs assigned to schools are an important position and the assigned police officer should understand what the school expects as well as identify what problems are within the school prior to the school year starting. Successful SRO programs can help bridge the gap between police and society so long as the SRO is following department policy and meeting the expectations of the public. By helping teachers focus on their professional goals of educating the students within the school, SRO's can help the overall school by addressing other concerns occurring in the school.

Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, Yang's (2015) article addressed the demands of teachers in schools by showing that teachers, along with nurses, have the highest amount of stress and employee burnout when compared to other professions. The high amount of burnout comes from a high work load, pressure to develop relationships with students and long hours which leads to depression as well as a passive feeling towards life and work. Among these many factors, teachers who see a lack of discipline within the school leads to additional frustration and a greater chance that the teacher loses their passion for teaching and burnout from education. When addressing the STPP theory, an SRO can be used to address criminal activity within the school but shouldn't be used to address school discipline. When teachers experience a lack of discipline within the school, having an SRO as a resource on potential solutions can be useful to avoid having the teacher take on all of the problems a student may face while at school.

Landberg & Ciolfi (2016) shared recommendations on how to solve problems in a school and to avoid referring students to the juvenile justice system, which ultimately puts additional pressures on teachers. Recommendations include teachers finding a problem, developing a behavior plan for the student, visiting their home and suggesting community resources for the family. Based on prior research on the demands of teachers as well as their long work hours, tasking teachers to find solutions to their students' problems is not an ideal or even realistic expectation to ask of teachers when they are already overloaded with the expectation of educating today's youth. Instead of taking the challenges of addressing student problems themselves, coordinating with other professionals within the school environment is a much more realistic approach which includes working with the SRO as well as social workers within the community. In order to guide SRO's on how they should be modeling their program and connect with students as well as working with other teachers in the school SRO's are assigned to, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) provides a basic model for SRO's to follow.

NASRO provides an example of a three tiered model for SRO's to follow the includes SRO's being an educator, informal counselor and a law enforcer within a school (NASRO, 2012). An SRO completes the tier of being an educator by speaking to students in the classroom about underage drinking, dating violence, property crimes, gun safety, traffic safety or other topics that the SRO has professional experience in. The topics that an SRO can speak to students about can be geared towards the needs of the schools. Depending on the crimes within specific schools, an SRO might be more geared towards gang prevention while another school might be more focused on sexting or bullying. The role of being an informal counselor on campus includes students being able to approach the SRO for questions about the justice system, community resources, referral to social workers or guidance and mentoring. SRO's that are

selected should understand the importance of always having an open door for students in order for them to feel comfortable in approaching them for questions and being able to confide in them for help. Building relationships can lead to the student being better off by addressing issues at home or in the school to ultimately help with their education. In the final tier of being a law enforcer, it is important that the SRO and school understand when an SRO is needed, such as violent crimes occurring on campus versus classroom management. Incidents involving weapons, drugs and alcohol are common offenses that may occur on campus where an SRO is needed. Other incidents such as a student misbehaving in class or violating school policies should be addressed at the school level and avoid law enforcement action.

When an SRO is implemented in the school environment and on campus however, a survey conducted by Theriot (2009) found that the presence of an SRO led to a 52% decrease in the arrest rate for assaults and 72% decrease in arrests involving possession of a weapon on school property in a three year study from 2003 to 2006. These statistics do not definitively relate the decline in crime to the presence of an SRO on campus since there are multiple factors that are also present in the SRO program. These factors include the implementation of different school discipline policies, different crime prevention programs enacted through the police department as well as environmental crime prevention through school campus. Additional factors that can make it difficult to show that the decline in crime was because of the presence of an SRO is that there is not enough information on how much crime was present without an SRO since schools did not always notify the police when certain behavior was occurring. Since it is difficult to compare before and after information on the presence of an SRO, the decline in crime shown in the survey can help show that the SRO may have been a contributor, but unable to say the presence was the sole reason for decline in crime. Even with an SRO on campus, it is

important that the SRO understand how to be successful in the school to make an effect on crime statistics. To further define how an SRO should be operating on school campus, successful SRO programs have Memorandum of Understandings (MOU's) with the school district they work for.

Cray and Weiler (2011) research on successful SRO programs included having an MOU on defining the role of an SRO within the school. This included the times when an SRO should be called and when the SRO is expected to take action regarding referring students to the juvenile justice system. These MOU's recommend training for SRO's going into schools to better understand the adolescent mind as well as understanding the need to build relationships with students. Cray and Weiler (2011) shared that the training for SRO's in understanding how a child's brain develops is important to understand that misbehavior is common and does not always need to be criminalized to correct the behavior. This training should also include school administrators to understand how an SRO should be operating. Incidents that get put into the grey area of SRO action can include classroom management. Cray and Weiler (2011) found that 43% of schools they surveyed reported a lack in classroom management training. Along with their research, Raible and Irizarry (2010) found that classroom management is the greatest weakness for teachers in today's society when compared to when corporal punishment was still present. Although SRO's are not intended to be classroom management supervisors or enforcing school policies, many teachers reported better behavior and an overall feeling of safety in the school when an SRO was in the building (Theriot, 2009). Although SRO's are not in the school environment to enforce school policies, SRO's can be an asset to teachers by maintaining a presence within the school to attempt to reduce the misbehavior in the classroom. By having a successful SRO program, schools can help address the high burnout rate among teachers in

schools by having additional resources to address the discipline in classrooms. With the option of having SRO's in the building for teachers to address concerns that may be happening with a student's home environment, this option could lead to less problems within the classroom itself. Teachers not having to address a student's home environment problems eliminates the role of the teacher taking on additional responsibilities that previous research suggests as to how to better handle classroom management and allows the teacher to focus on their job of education. An MOU can also be influenced by the input of the community in which the SRO is being implemented.

In a survey conducted by Lambert & McGinty (2002), how an SRO should be utilized in a school differed between building principles and SRO's. The survey resulted in the principles replying that SRO's should be considered as a strict disciplinarian as well as the belief that SRO's should be firm when conversing with students. Of the SRO's that were surveyed, a majority of them believed that their role as an informal counselor was more important than being a strict disciplinarian and rated their role as being firm with students was less important than building relationships with the students. As a result of this survey, recommendations included the building principle being included on SRO interviews and selection processes in order to clearly define what the principle and school district is expecting out of the SRO they ultimately hire. Besides the principles and SRO's, Theriot and Cueller's (2016) research regarding current SRO's showed that teachers and community members want to have an SRO in the building so long as the role is clearly defined. The move towards criminalizing student behavior is an unwanted result of an SRO in the building and the role of the disciplinarian should be clearly defined before the SRO position is set in place, ideally to define that the disciplinary action should be handled at the school level before the SRO addresses student behavior. Community

members also expect that the SRO should be respecting students' civil rights and should not be violating fourth amendment rights in the school environment. With these guidelines in place, SRO's are a valuable resource that teachers, students and administrators can all benefit from. Of those that oppose SRO's being utilized, supporters of the STPP theory vary on how the role of an SRO should be used.

In order to move away from using SRO's in a disciplinary role, supporters of the STPP theory suggest using a more positive based approach to correct and address student behavior. One of these models is addressed in Sugai and Horner's (2006) article which is referred to as a school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS). This model is divided into three main components of prevention, theoretically sound evidence-based practice, and system implementation. These components ultimately guide schools on using personnel and funds to address the problem with student behavior, suggesting possible courses, evaluating if the course is working to correct the problem and reevaluate to change course if the behavior is not changing. Martens and Andreen (2013) research in this positive behavior support approach gave promising results in using this program since it can be implemented towards a large number of students in order to correct the problem. In the schools that Martens and Andreen studied, the three tiered model was used to develop a check in and check out with a school counselor or teacher each day while at school. While checking in and out, the student would talk about behavior during the day and the results would be positive feedback to reinforce positive behavior and to acknowledge or correct unwanted behavior. This approach for correcting behavior is supported by thorough research in correcting student behavior, however it cannot address all behavior that turns into criminal actions on school grounds.

Judy Owens (2015) suggested using more positive based approaches to handle student behavior instead of referring students to the SRO for discipline. Owens studied SRO's in the Meridian, Mississippi area to which she referred to them as a taxi service to take students to the juvenile detention center for violating school policies such as dress code violations or missing the bus to go to school. In Owen's article, SRO's are viewed as stalking the playground and hallways in order to take more students to the detention center and ultimately make schools a part of the criminal justice system. To correct this use of SRO's as disciplinary enforcers for school policies, Owen's suggests the use of positive based approaches and the diverting of funds to education and counselors instead of funding SRO's within the school district.

Along with positive based approaches for student behavior, McCarter (2016) suggests schools implement and rely on a student code of conduct in order to set expectations within the school to guide student behavior. McCarter argues these approaches should be used instead of referring students to the SRO or even suspending and expelling students since in the school year of 2011 to 2012, three million students were either suspended or expelled. This practice of missing one day of school can increase the risk of students repeating a grade, dropping out of school or entering the criminal justice system. When looking at both sides of opinions in supporters of SRO's and the STPP, keeping students inside of the school is a common goal so long as unwanted behavior from students does not disrupt the learning opportunities for other students. When the behavior disrupts the classroom to prevent learning, consequences for students actions or behavior plans should be utilized to prevent future behavior from occurring.

When using a code of conduct or positive based approaches in schools, the reality of students committing criminal acts on school property is still present and despite the hesitation in having an SRO on school grounds, the SRO is there to protect the overall student body. The

decline in the amount of weapons being brought to school and the decline in violent crimes occurring within the school can be attributed to the presence of the SRO in the school. The practice of SRO's being a taxi service to bring students to the jail is not a practice that is favorable among successful SRO programs and is not a trait found common amongst SRO's. This is not a common trait because of the successful models of SRO programs across the country as well as proper training for those entering the schools.

III. Recommendations for successful SRO programs

Supporters of having an SRO within the school or those who are strongly against having police inside of schools ultimately come to the reality that SRO's are becoming more common inside of schools. To continue having community support for SRO's and to acknowledge some of the negative aspects of having an SRO, schools that are looking to start an SRO program or continuing their program should do so with the goal of keeping that SRO program a successful one. Successful SRO programs start before the SRO's are placed in the school by setting expectations of the SRO, establishing an MOU, knowing who to hire, following other SRO programs that prove to be successful as well as learning from other programs on what does not work.

The role of an SRO should be clearly defined before they are placed in the school in order to dictate on when the SRO should be used and to keep everyone in the school environment informed on the SRO not enforcing school policies. The MOU between the school and police department should be detailed and clear that the SRO should respond to criminal activity within the school environment and to leave school discipline as it pertains to students violating school policy to school administration. Thomas, Towvim, Rosiak and Anderson (2013)

provide key components of an MOU which include goals and objectives, roles, process for selecting SROs, training requirements, information exchange, evaluation, student rights, integrating the SRO, transparency and accountability. Similarly, McCallion and Nathan (2014) suggest identifying what problems the SRO needs to address prior to the school year beginning. Identifying the problems and establishing goals can help dictate what the role of the SRO is supposed to be and eliminate the instances where an SRO is not needed by directing department resources to fix the problems identified early on in the school year. Training requirements are a key component of establishing a successful SRO program in order to educate the SRO on social programs located within their area, understanding the adolescent brain as well as attempting to educate SROs on fixing the overall problem (instead of referring or arresting students for incidents that occur at the school). Educating the public is important to having an SRO at the school in order to ensure that public expectations and concerns are met. These expectations might be the decision of having an SRO in uniform, whether to have the SRO armed or what types of incidents the SRO is expected to handle. These decisions should be made and sent to the public to notify the community of having police at the school to eliminate the bias or false information that the public may perceive as to having a police officer inside of the school. Additionally, the process of selecting an SRO should be a well thought out selection and should include school administration as well as the police department.

Finn, McDevitt, Cassiter, Shiveley & Rich (2005) surveyed 19 SRO programs that differed by the population of the school districts. Results of the surveys and observations of these SRO programs found that in the selection process, retired officers or officers that were injured were less effective than SROs who were younger in the department and had more ambition to interact with the student body. Retired or injured officers were originally offered as SRO's,

however, the school districts that were looking at the hiring process requested a younger officer in order to connect more with the student body. Of the SROs that were selected in the 19 programs surveyed, common problems that arose included conflict between the SRO and building administrators. Tension arose when administrators felt the SRO fell within the schools chain of command since the SRO was working inside of the administrators building. In reality, the SRO still falls under the umbrella of the police department this and can caused tension between building administrators and the police department. Decisions on whether to arrest a student or how to handle certain situations within the school the SRO's worked in, at times drove more of a wedge between the school and the police department. To avoid this tension, administrators that have certain expectations or qualities of an SRO should be present in the SRO interview process to be clear on what the SRO's role within the school is as well as seeking out individuals who will meet their expectations. Training for both SRO's and school administrators can be useful to ensure that the school and police department are following similar processes considering additional research indicates there is a misconception on what the role of an SRO might be within the school by administration.

Finn and McDevitt's (2005) research on SRO programs included school administration thoughts towards the SRO in the building as well as crime statistics within the school. The common questions administrators had included who exactly is in charge, who makes the decision on when to arrest and the inability of the SRO to be accessible at all times. As administrators learned that the SRO still falls under the police departments supervision and the decision on making an arrest or referring juveniles to the justice system remains with the SRO, the relationship between the SRO and administration commonly grew to be a positive one. In the SRO programs that were surveyed, there was no significant research that definitively proved the

SRO was decreasing crime. However, the desire to have an SRO within the school grew to be a necessity as the relationship between the police, school and students overall increased to have students and staff feel more comfortable in reporting criminal activity. In Finn and McDevitt's (2005) research, respondents reporting two and half times more likely to go and report a crime to an SRO versus not having a police officer inside the building. Although there was no significant statistics to show that the SRO decreased crime, their research indicated more anecdotal evidence as to why an SRO is a valuable asset inside of the building. Other areas of research for having an SRO inside of the building was diverse in why schools felt it necessary to have one.

McCallion and Nathan's (2014) article on law enforcement officers in the school referenced a survey that was sent out to schools and police departments to determine why the respondents felt the need to have an SRO in the school or why an SRO was not placed in the school. Of those that responded having an SRO, a quarter responded the SRO was placed in the school due to recent media on school shootings, another quarter responded an SRO was placed to address social disorder, and the other half responded other reasons, such as community policing or addressing drug problems. Of the schools that responded that did not have an SRO, 55% of schools stated there was no need for one while 71% police departments within the particular school district replied that there was a need for one, but it was not within the budget to place an SRO within the school. Additionally, the survey found that when the SRO was placed inside of the building, schools and police departments were more likely to have an emergency plan set in place for police and school responses in the event of a critical incident inside of the school. Similar to Finn and McDevitt's research, McCallion and Nathan's (2014) research found that there was no indication that SRO's decreased school violence, however there were positive perceptions towards the police when implementing SRO's as well as a greater perception

towards school safety. Despite there being no concrete statistics, the benefits of having an increased relationship with school districts, the student body and subsequently the community is worth having an SRO inside of the school. The perception of a safer school allows teachers and students to focus on why they are in school to begin with and can be achieved in different ways.

Finn, McDevitt, Lassiter, Shively and Rich's (2005) researched 19 different SRO programs that differed in population resulting in a survey showing community perceptions as well as how the SRO divided their time within the school. The perception of having a safer school differed with varying crime rates and the amount of time the SRO spent in the law enforcement role increased with the high crime rate. In an average of larger cities with a high crime rate, half of the SRO's time was spent in law enforcement, a third in counseling and the remainder in the education role. The education is necessary in building the relationship between teachers and students to allow the SRO to be seen as someone else besides an enforcer of the law. Classes that the SRO generally taught in larger populations included D.A.R.E. and classes that focused on gang prevention. These classes and having the SRO inside of the building did show there was a decrease in gang involvement in the schools after implementing the SRO program (Finn et al, 2005). Other examples of how SRO's connected with the school population with the 19 programs surveyed included SRO's being involved in parent teacher conferences, having an open door during passing periods, always being a visible presence within the school, being at school events and encouraging positive behavior. As a result of the connection and relationship with the school, the survey also indicated that when school districts were analyzing the budget, a majority refused to take the SRO out of the budget due to the relationships that were already built. These examples of successful SRO programs have a common factor, in that the school population felt a greater sense of safety when the SRO was present, are able to feel

more comfortable in reporting crimes to the police and have a greater trust in the police department. Other SRO programs that the community refers to as a taxi service is not desirable and not the goal of establishing a successful SRO program.

Barnes' (2016) research found that SRO's can bridge the gap within the community if they are used correctly. This includes handling criminal activity on campus. Barnes' research found that a common problem was teachers and staff knowing what criminal behavior actually entailed. In the SRO programs that were studied, the overall school reported feeling safer and therefore more able to focus on education. This feeling of security is important to the student body and cannot be achieved through the use of arresting students on a daily basis for minor behavior. The ultimate goal of successful SRO programs is the feeling of security, the relationship with the police and the ability to be able to have a police officer in the building to report criminal activity. Although the research that has been conducted so far cannot support a decline in criminal activity when an SRO is present (due to the inability to compare data from previous years without an SRO), current research can support the feeling of security and ability to focus on education.

IV. Conclusion

School discipline has evolved and developed along with society, in particular since corporal punishment is not socially or legally acceptable in a majority of states. Without the use of corporal punishment, the reality of having to discipline students to control behavior and ensure a safe learning environment gave administrators different approaches for school discipline. One of these was the referral of school discipline to the SRO. Opponents to having police in schools a reason to developed the STPP. This theory of using police in schools and

ultimately making schools to become part of the justice system gains credibility when the use of SRO's are improperly applied. Unsuccessful SRO programs include SRO's being used to enforce school policy instead of focusing on more serious criminal behavior.

These successful programs have shown that with SRO's in the school, students and staff have the feeling of safety and security. Due to data and information that researchers currently have, the ability to show that the presence of SRO's cannot definitively prove the decline in crime on school grounds are solely based on police presence. Despite not being able to prove SRO's are the only factor in decreasing crime, police presence within the school does have positive effects. With the ability to provide the security for the school environment, it is well worth having an SRO in the building to support teachers who are already overworked in their profession, as well as students who need to focus on their overall education. With continued use of the SRO in the school, positive examples of how SRO's should be operating can decrease the false image of having a police officer in the school and reduce the amount of supporters for the STPP.

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