The Perceptions of Staff and Families on the Role of a School Resource Officer in Schools and What Steps Administrators Can Take to Support

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: The Perceptions of Staff and Families on the Role of a School Resource Officer in Schools and What Steps Administrators Can Take to Support

In a world full of divided opinions and experiences with law enforcement, school districts are struggling to decide whether to employ a School Resource Officer (SRO). There is history of the integration of police in schools in response to a growing need for safety in schools related, in part, to the rise of school shootings. The tension surrounding whether or not to hire an SRO has become more apparent since the death of George Floyd, which occurred in 2020, at a time when schools were shut down due to the pandemic. A School Resource Officer is typically a uniformed member of law enforcement, paid for by the school district and the police department. There is minimal research conducted about the role, purpose, and impact of an SRO, as well as minimal guidance on undersanding the context and needs of a school district and their local community, when making a decision around this role. A mixed methods study involving 303 survey participants and 25 interview participants of diverse roles, races, and ethnicities was conducted. Survey findings identified that there is value in the role of SRO, but a need for more clarity and communication around the specific duties and presentation (e.g., what they wear and whether they are armed), with significant differences in support for SROs identified by gender and primary role (e.g., parent vs school staff). Semi-structured interviews extended survey findings by revealing that depending on the community, there may be a need to build trust and relationship in this role prior to consideration of hiring, or potentially with a current hire. It was clear throughout the study that finding the right candidate for the role is vital to the success of an

SRO. Mixed methods results had implications for guidance for school districts' decision making around whether and how best to integrate School Resource Officers into school communities.

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DEDICATION

This work is first dedicated to my kids, Conor and Parker, and my husband, Patrick. Thank you for believing in me, encouraging me, and for putting up with me while I pursued this crazy dream of becoming Dr. Kelly. Second, I want to dedicate this work to the woman who is like a sister to me and stuck with me through thick and thin and encouraged me when I was wanting to quit: Tanya Ristoff, I could not have done this without you. I also want to dedicate this work to the best cheerleaders, my friends who listened to me talk on and on about this work: Stacey, Veronica, Mary, Becca, Kate, Emily and Hilary, my bookclub (Overbooked: Books on the Side), and my colleagues in the Forest Grove School District. In addition, I want to dedicate this work to my family by blood: my mom Carmen, my dad Jeremy, my brother Guillermo, and my chosen family: my mother-in-law Laurie. And to Tom (father-in-law), we miss you.

Lastly, to my ancestors in heaven, Abuelo, Abuela, and Grampa. I come from you, and I feel your love.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most people can agree that schools need to be safe. There is a collective understanding that for students to be able to learn, there must be a high standard of safety. Where opinions vary is when we look to define safety: is it physical safety? Emotional safety? Who deserves that sense of safety? As an educator, at times I have heard the opinion that if a student has made a mistake in the past, then that student no longer deserves the same protections as a student who has not made mistakes. In addition, opinions vary greatly when it comes to the approach to making schools safe: more cameras? student supervisors/hall monitors? anti-bullying policies? anti-hate speech policies? The discussion around physical school safety is a newer conversation. It used to be that the only focus around schools was academics and learning, but then came a new world that included school shootings.

Although there is a long history of school shootings (K12academics [2023] lists the history of school shootings starting back in the 1700s), there was a sharp increase in the 1990s. Interestingly, this increase coincides with the rise of social media and quick access to news. I remember very clearly when the school shooting at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon happened in 1998. I was a Junior in a high school that was located approximately two hours away. I vividly remember looking around the cafeteria after that event, thinking "what if that happens here? What would I do? Where would I go?" My personal perspective of safety in schools changed with that event. I am certain that I am not alone in this respect.

Another important shift in the discussion on school safety is that in more recent history, society has a much stronger grasp of social emotional health and trauma, and therefore, the conversation has been extended to include how we protect students' emotional safety. Among the list of ideas discussed for ensuring safety in a school is having a police officer on school

grounds. In Oregon, a police officer assigned to work in a school is typically called a School Resource Officer (SRO).

School Resource Officers are hired by the local police department and the school district, working together. Any spending over a certain amount must be approved by the school board, so they must make the decision to vote for or against this position and approve it for an SRO to be hired. The perception people have of law enforcement in general, and law enforcement in schools in particular, is core to the question about whether they belong in our schools. Prior experiences, trauma, or lack of trauma can frame the perspective of all key stakeholders and community members in relation to hiring a School Resource Officer.

For the sake of transparency and academic accountability, it is important for me to share my personal and professional perceptions and experiences here. I am fully aware that my lived experiences play a part in my individual opinions on this topic. In my lifetime, I have not been arrested, nor have I had negative experiences with the police. Although my mom, a Puerto Rican, experienced racism throughout her life, my brother and I have not experienced the same kind of racism (our skin is light, and we look white). Regardless of my firsthand experiences, however, I am very aware of the unique experiences others have had with the police that may not have been like mine. I am aware that many people from the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community, for example, have had negative experiences with the police, and that there exists a history of police brutality that I have not personally experienced.

My upbringing did not give me a lot of context around what it is like to work with a School Resource Officer because I did not have much experience with this role. In fact, I did not understand the role or the desire to have SROs in schools until I became a middle school administrator. As a middle school administrator, I have now had experiences where I have had to call the police for a plethora of reasons including students using or selling drugs, assault, reports

of abuse, trespassing, etc. My colleagues at the high school in the same school district have had to contact police more frequently than I have, for similar reasons.

I grew up in a neighborhood and school community where most students were white middle class, and I now work in a school with a different demographic than what I grew up with. Many families and students with whom I work have had negative experiences with either an SRO or law enforcement more generally. In my experience as an administrator, I have learned that there are times where school officials must call the police when a student has broken the law or I have reason to believe that a threat is imminent, so part of what I was interested in exploring is how school personnel and communities can best work with law enforcement in all our different contexts, in a way that makes it possible for everyone to feel safe and respected around police even if they have made a mistake. With this goal in mind, I approached this topic eager to step out of my firsthand experiences and learn from others.

The Forest Grove School District where I work had an SRO for years with an office at the high school. If we needed them at the middle school, they would come to work with us. Having this SRO with us for several years in a row meant that we had the opportunity to forge strong communication patterns with one another. The SRO knew school policy well, where the boundaries were in terms of law versus school discipline. The SRO had strong relationships with high school staff and students, middle school administrators, and the district office. Part of her role when hired was to help us know if/when our students or their families were involved in something in the community so that we could be aware and supportive in the school setting. During the years in which the SRO worked in the district, I grew accustomed to having her there and grew to count on her support.

Things changed in the spring of 2021. In response to the stories from people in our community whose experiences meant that they felt less safe with police on campus rather than

safer, the school board voted not to renew the SRO's contract. The intent behind non-renewal was not bad—it was in response to the stories from members of the community. As the school board explained, we are in the business of students and staff feeling safe on campus so that learning can happen and having police on campus was reportedly having an adverse effect on many. Our SRO was not voted down because of any issue people had with the officer assigned to our school—she was well received by administrators, students, and the community alike. Rather, the decision was made due to the larger community response to events happening across the United States and news reports related to police brutality and racial profiling. Given the negative focus on law enforcement in the media, the school board thought that not renewing our SRO's contract would be in the best interest of students.

We went without an SRO for two years (2021-2022 school year and 2022-2023 school year). In those two years, we learned how vital the relationship with our SRO is. Every time we called for non-emergency law enforcement help for events that were not considered a 911 call (e.g., drug deal or request to pick up drugs, assault where students were medically doing ok and separated from one another, a need to report abuse, etc.), the police did their duty, and they showed up. However, we had 29 different officers come by within the first year. This made continuing steady communication, relationship building, consistency and boundaries a challenge.

For example, we had two identical incidents at our middle school and two different officers responded to these two incidents. In one case, the student was talked to and then was able to resume class like normal. For the other case, the student was read the Miranda Rights and referred to the Juvenile Department. Because of this, and other similar experiences, it was important to increase communication between the school district and law enforcement. "Communication between school leaders and SROs sometimes occurred after scheduled work hours or on an as-needed basis to prevent school violence. Frequent communication and

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interactions helped to build rapport, familiarity, and confidence in the school leader-SRO collaborative relationship. Sharing information and receiving feedback on a continual basis allowed the school leaders and SROs to know that their information was valued and appreciated" (Bowman, 2021, p. 4).

We began a monthly meeting with the local chiefs of police (Forest Grove and Cornelius) that helped with this gap. In those meetings, we were able to talk through the challenges we were each experiencing during this change and produce some solutions along the way. In the end, our school district determined that an SRO was the right path for us. This was a lengthy process including discussions and perspective taking (as well as perspective giving) that ended in a tough decision. It was tough because we knew that there was no way to make every person feel happy and supported in this decision; however, we did succeed in ensuring voices and perspectives were heard. As part of the agreement to hire, the police department and school district worked together to create an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). This was a new process for us, but the document outlined clearly what was agreed upon including the type of training the SRO would have, and whether they would wear a bullet proof vest or carry a firearm. The IGA was necessary for all parties to feel that their concerns were heard and were being considered when moving through the hiring process.

When the Forest Grove School District made the decision not to reinstate our School Resource Officer in 2021, many of my fellow administrators and I gathered and put together information on our own experiences with and without an SRO in our building. It shocked me how little research and information I could find on this topic, which motivated my desire to research it for my dissertation study. Since then, additional research has been published, but there is still an insufficient amount available to provide guidelines on what steps to take or data to consider when deciding whether to support the use of SROs in a school district. School

Boards, superintendents, and school administrators need to understand the diverse perspectives of our stakeholders: families, students, employees, community members, and law enforcement. There is a significant need for research to guide school leaders in this area.

In my dissertation, I studied the perceptions of stakeholders (school leaders, staff, law enforcement, community businesses and families) related to the potential benefits and drawbacks of having school resource officers (SROs) in schools and the recommendations from those stakeholder groups about the qualifications and training an SRO should possess to enhance their productive deployment in school settings. Through my research, I hoped to be able to produce recommendations for school districts to consider when making the decision of whether to hire an SRO. For those districts that choose to hire an SRO, I hoped my study would provide insights into recommendations for items to be included in an Intergovernmental Agreement for those hired as SROs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

To propose new research, we must first understand the history and what research has been done already. I searched on multiple University search engines, including ProQuest, ERIC, Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. I found the highest number of research articles in the ERIC database, using the following keywords in my search: "SRO," "School Resource Officer," "school safety," "perceptions of staff about school resource officers," "perceptions of parents about school resource officers," "police officers in schools," among others. In my search, I found 16 research articles, all published in the year 2000 or later. These studies were conducted all over the country, in urban, rural, and suburban areas. In my search, I was particularly interested in the history of SROs, the perceived and defined purpose of the role, and what we know about safety in schools.

History of SROs

The role of the School Resource Officer (SRO) is not new. In fact, it has been around since the 1950s, but there was an increased interest in the 1990s when school shootings began to be more prevalent (Weiler, 2011). In 2011, about 35% of schools had an SRO. The increase in the 1990s was also due to initiatives such as the *Safe Schools Act of 1994*, as well as a 1998 amendment to the *Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968* which encouraged partnerships between schools and law enforcement (Counts, 2018). *The Safe Schools Act of*

1994, HR2455, was an act to help local school systems be free of drugs and violence by the year 2000 (govinfo.org, 2023). The 1998 amendment to the *Safe Streets Act of 1968* included the ability to use grant funding to further connect law enforcement with schools (congress.gov, 2023). The role of SROs continued to grow quickly throughout the 1990s because of added funding and access, but also after events such as the tragic school shooting at Columbine High School in 1998 (Heise, 2021, p. 737).

Although there is a relative rarity of school violence, officials everywhere are feeling pressure to improve the safety of students and staff. Beger (2002) stated that "an increasingly popular 'quick fix' strategy is to hire police and security guards." With this, I go back to the perceived purposes of the SRO. Is it to stop a school shooter? Or does the role go beyond that?

Purpose of SROS

In exploring whether to hire an SRO, it is important to understand this position's intended and perceived purpose. Although the topic of school shootings and prevention of such horrific events is hot, that is not the focus of this dissertation. However, there are perceptions that one SRO placed in a building could potentially stop a school shooter. Regardless of perception, there has not been much research that shows that these measures have prevented a school shooting (Follman, 2022).

There appears to be good consensus about the responsibilities of SROs. As early as 2003, Murray noted that the duties should include the counseling of students, teaching, and performing law enforcement activities. Some topics for education by SROs include drug prevention, conflict management, and career planning (Murray, 2003, p. 43). A decade later, these same responsibilities were cited by James (2013), when listing three broad categories in which SROs' activities could be placed: "(1) safety expert and law enforcer, (2) problem solver and liaison to

community resources, and (3) educator." Neither case suggests that an SRO should step into an administrative role and provide discipline as pertains to school rules.

In 2002, Beger noted that SRO were quickly becoming more common in public schools, that they were armed and uniformed, and were tasked with patrolling school grounds, assisting with investigations and, at times, arresting students who have committed a crime. Fast forward to May 25, 2020, when 46-year-old George Floyd, a black man, was arrested in Minneapolis after a store clerk alleged that Floyd had paid with a counterfeit $20 bill. Floyd was handcuffed and pinned to the ground by his neck under the knee of Officer Chauvin for 9 minutes. This event was filmed by bystanders and went viral on social media. The viral videos and the bodycam from law enforcement show Floyd taken out of his car to speak with police, then led to the back of the squad car to have further conversation. When asked to get into the squad car, Floyd refused, stating that he had claustrophobia. As law enforcement worked to get Floyd into the car, he repeatedly said that he could not breathe. Unsuccessful at forcing Floyd into the car, the police officers took Floyd to the ground, where one of the officers pinned him down with a knee on Floyd's neck. Floyd continued to say that he could not breathe and called out for his mom. Bystanders began to question law enforcement's actions. After several minutes, Floyd went limp. Six minutes into the 9-minute hold, the officer could not find his pulse. A few minutes later, an ambulance came to get Floyd, and that night he was pronounced dead. The cause of death was cardiopulmonary arrest and deemed a homicide. Floyd had medical conditions, in addition to fentanyl and methamphetamine in his system, that contributed to but were not the primary cause of his death (nytimes.com, retrieved September 3, 2023).

The videos from the bystanders went viral, and then the protests and riots began. Protests took place in 140 cities, and the National Guard was activated in 21 states. In most cities, the protests were not peaceful but rather destructive to cities (nytimes.com, retrieved September 3,

2023). It is now more than three years later, and cities are still recovering from these protests and riots.

People from all over the nation were divided in discussion in support of, or against, our law enforcement after the event itself, as well as they faced the aftermath. Questions arose on the validity of the role of law enforcement, as well as the impact on people of color, as George Floyd was a black man and Office Derek Chauvin was a white man. These questions trickled to our schools, and more people began considering the impact that an armed official on campus could have, particularly on our students of color. Communities were questioning whether hiring a School Resource Officer was helpful or hurtful.

School Safety and Climate

How do we define "safety" in schools? Safety is not simply being safe from an intruder, but also the physical and emotional safety of students that comes from ensuring that we are keeping fights, drugs, alcohol, and bullying outside of our buildings. Safety in school means creating an atmosphere where students can learn. Therefore, it must be a broader definition than what some may perceive. With this broader definition of safety, how does an SRO help promote school safety? In Riverside County, California there was evidence that SROs were effective in high schools (77% of principals rated them *highly effective*), but there was more research needed throughout California to determine how SROs reduce school violence and help ensure student safety (Murray, 2003).

The role of an SRO can promote safety, or can do the opposite, depending on the outlined and perceived purposes. For example, for those who may have experienced trauma from law enforcement, having a uniformed officer on campus may not promote a feeling of safety, whereas for others simply having this person visible on campus does promote safety. Defining how an SRO can promote safety in different aspects of the school day such as increasing

educational experiences, visibility, the ability to respond quickly to immediate needs, and building trusting relationships, can help to promote safety.

Mental Health Concerns

The role of the SRO can continue to help promote a healthy climate and safety regarding student and adult mental health concerns that may arise. Law enforcement interacts with situations where there are mental health concerns daily, and as early as 1999 there were trainings and specialists working with law enforcement on strategies for working with people experiencing crisis (Williams, 1999). Later, in 2022, it is noted that there was an increase in the number of law enforcement agencies providing training. Police report coming across multiple types of mental health situations, including depression, affective disorders, schizophrenia, and drug related issues (Lorey, 2022). However, not all encounters are dangerous, so it is important that officials can assess the situation thoroughly. According to Balfour (2021), about 5%-15% of 911 calls are behavioral health emergencies. Balfour notes that all law enforcement staff and 911 dispatchers are trained in mental health needs and strategies. This should include the training of our School Resource Officers.

In 2019, Herbert spoke to assuring the safety of students in schools, including risks such as suicide, drugs, and fights and the need for mental health and counseling services for our youth. In addition, he states that the expression of anger (verbal assaults and fighting) is viewed as a public health concern. Let us imagine that there is an assault on campus where a student ends up in the hospital. One could argue that said assailant needs mental health support. But the law says that they should also be charged. So, then the question becomes: how do we wrap our services around this person and support them in all ways? For educators, the goal is to help students be the best version of themselves as they grow up. Communication is key to success in a situation such as this. We need to facilitate open conversation with all who may offer care,

including mental health support, school counselors, outside providers, police, parents, teachers, administrators, and the child. There must be a plan for both preventative and reactive communication. This includes having strong clarity on one another's roles, skills, professional obligations, and boundaries so that expectations are met (Bowman, 2021).

As Theriot (2014) found in surveying middle and high school students, "These officers are tasked with making schools safer, yet the effect of interacting with SROs on students' feelings of safety needs more investigation." Theriot (2014) found that there were two groups of students, one who felt safe and another who did not. Theriot found that "interacting with SROs was unrelated to these feelings of safety; instead, African American students and victimized students felt less safe than white males, students with more school connectedness, and students with more positive attitudes about SROs felt safer" (Theriot, 2014, p. 132). Regarding another population, Native American populations are twice as likely to be arrested by school resource officers in Montana (Walker, 2021) than white students. As these studies illustrate, many students, particularly students of color and students with disabilities, experience disproportionate discipline, including disproportionate police contact, which can contribute to distrust and fear of police by members of these groups (Welsh, 2018). An SRO impacts those in the building (Stateler, 2021), both positively and negatively, though for students who already have experienced police bias, building rapport with an SRO may be challenging. Even for students without negative experiences with police, some students may feel ambivalent about an SRO being in the building, not understanding the purpose of that person, while others will see the role as someone who will bring safety to the school community in case of a big event such as a shooting (Layton, 2022). When school districts are determining whether to contract an SRO, it is imperative that they know that there will be some students, staff, and families who will feel less

safe, and must find ways to meaningfully engage those groups in the decision-making process with this feeling.

Building relationships and trust

The literature speaks to how the role performed by an SRO can impact the school climate. If an SRO is building relationships and trust, it can be positive. However, if the person in the SRO role is more of a disciplinarian, without social and emotional skills to inform personal interactions, it can be seen as negative (Stateler, 2021). Support and roles may also shift in other contexts. A school's climate varies from school to school including challenges in rural and urban learning environments, but clear expectations for the SRO's role can support forming positive relationships between SROs and students. In a smaller building, an SRO may find that they can be more visible and feel that they can have a higher number of interactions with students and staff. In a bigger building or more urban setting, this may look different (Stateler, 2021).

Because of these variances and experiences, communication and clarity of roles is key when an SRO is introduced to a school setting. Each district may have different expectations for this role. Cook (2019) addressed the importance of clarity of expectations, stating, "In some cases, the parents were unrealistic about safety and security measures paradigms, policies, and productive relationships with SROs in their child's school. Very few parents had positive thoughts on SROs in their child's school. The results of this study could lay the foundation to start these much-needed conversations between educators and parents on how parents can be more involved as well as a better explanation of what school safety realistically looks like" (p. 124). The lack of clarity and understanding of the role can create an environment that does not promote safety when it comes to having an SRO on campus. The school district has a

responsibility to communicate clearly with families and the community about the SRO and their role. This will both offer clarity for the community and set up the SRO for success.

In accordance with the literature, student, parent, and community voices clearly need to be heard in these decisions regardless of how the final vote ends up. As a researcher, I wonder what prompts negative thoughts and resistance to SROs? Was it a particular experience or is it a general fear? Digging into these fears can help decide whether to bring on an SRO and if the district decides to, what they need to consider.

Training

Articles I found while searching for research on the history of the SRO and discussion of school safety provided some insight into the kind of training that an SRO may need. Police and SROs have an immense amount of training overall. However, the training needed for an SRO may be greater than that required of a typical role in law enforcement. Like the shift in duties for teachers and other school personnel, police are experiencing a shift in needing to be able to understand and support mental health, specifically with youth. The local police agencies are "starting to include topics such as adolescent brain development, trauma-informed care, mental health, and conflict mediation" (Herbert, 2019, p. 89). Police have had to respond to situations where adults need support in de-escalation regularly; however, many times there is not the same level of training for working with juveniles. Sometimes the support looks the same, but not always. De-escalation techniques that work for adults may not be as effective with youth. Training also means that there need to be techniques to minimize conflict overall, as well as an understanding of what an appropriate response to youth looks like (Herbert, 2019).

Training may also vary based on the context of a community. Much like many other organizations, a one-size-fits-all recommendation will not work when determining the best fit for a school district and a police department (James, 2013). Understanding the intricacies of your

community and neighborhood is key to successful decision making. Cultural norms and bias training should be required in all settings, including a clear understanding of what culture looks like in the community being served. Understanding the historical context of a community and considering what the role of police in the community has looked like thus far is important. It is also important to consider what, historically, discipline has looked like for a school. In addition, we should answer the question: What needs repairing before we move forward either way? What do we need to grieve in the process of implementing this change? Creating the time and space to have a clearly defined partnership between stakeholders can deeply impact the program's success (Lambert, 2000).

This literature tells us that for an SRO to be successful in their role, the resources need to be built in, including the time for in-depth discussions, time to create a framework, and regular conversations with the school administrators (James, 2013). Being able to create an attractive program with proper communication, training, and support must be part of the planning and decision making about whether to employ an SRO.

Gaps in the Research

There is ample research on the history of SROs and much on what their role in schools should be, but how they are utilized is not clear. Perceptions of SROs in research seem to be varied, which I would expect, but what is missing are some guidelines and steps on what all to consider. In addition, much of the research was conducted prior to the pandemic (2020 and earlier), and there are many additional events (such as the murder of George Floyd by police) and context that may add to the thoughts, opinions, and perspectives of stakeholders. With more research, we can share whether and how police could be more effectively utilized in schools, as we know that schools are investing a lot of money into safety. At the same time, as noted by Kelly (2017), we can use this information to help facilitate or improve positive interactions with

our youth. My goal is not to convince school districts either way, but rather to share the stories and perspectives of others to support school districts in making an informed decision on the matter.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

My research questions are: What are useful considerations for school districts when determining whether they will hire an SRO? What are important considerations for school districts once they decide to hire and onboard a new SRO to best set up the SRO and district for success?

Methodology

I chose a sequential mixed methods research design for this dissertation, beginning with a survey to cast a wide net of perspectives and experiences followed by individual semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2015). I chose this method as I wanted to gather a broad range of perspectives across a wide audience about perceptions and understandings regarding the role of SROs. The qualitative interviews then provided deeper insights into those perceptions and understandings. During both the quantitative and qualitative phases of my study, I heard from participants about their experiences with police and SROs and was able to conduct analyses that illuminated how these experiences varied due to factors such as race, gender, primary social role (e.g., parent, teacher, community member), and socioeconomic status. The design of the qualitative portion of my study is considered a Narrative Inquiry, telling the stories of others, and making sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2015). There is power behind telling our stories and there is much information and knowledge to be gained in hearing one another's perspectives about how we experience the world.

When the Forest Grove School District started the journey in 2021 to determine whether to bring back an SRO, there was limited research to guide the process or decision-making. Since that time, many school districts have been working through the decision of whether to have an SRO on their campuses. My hope was to translate study findings into guidance that could be of use to school districts and communities engaged in making a decision of whether or not to hire an SRO. Additionally, I hoped to investigate in this study what kind of person is the right fit for the SRO role and how might stakeholders create a process where the community and school partners can successfully employ someone who matches that need. In addition, regardless of which direction a district chooses, how can we continue to have conversations about what this means for safety for our students?

This study was reviewed by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board, which determined that it qualified as exempt because it posed no more than minimal risk to participants, and all the research procedures fit within one or more of the exemption categories in the federal IRB regulations.

Phase I: Survey

In phase I, I administered a survey using Qualtrics that required participants to provide informed consent before responding to survey questions. The questions were a mix of Likert Scale questions, yes or no, and open-ended questions (see Appendix A for survey). At the end of the survey, there was a question offering respondents the opportunity to sign up for a 45-minute semi-structured interview. This survey provided me with important general information to help me explore "statistically significant differences in concerns and involvement based on gender (and) race" (Merriam, 2015, p. 47). I gathered demographic information such as race/ethnicity, gender, and primary role to explore the differences in perceptions based on these subgroups. Further, the responses to the survey helped to inform my later interview questions, ensuring they were the right questions to ask to get more in-depth information on my topic.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

In planning for this research, I wanted to gather a range of perspectives from staff who work directly in education, families of students who are currently in school, law enforcement, school resource officers, and community members. Anecdotally, and in the literature, people of color more often have shared negative experiences and perspectives when it comes to law enforcement. Therefore, I found it to be extremely important to have a sampling of responses that included Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations, as well as white. I recruited for this research by sending the survey via emails and text message to friends and family, posting it on my personal social media (Facebook and Instagram), and disseminating it

through the Oregon Alliance of Latino Administrators conference via a QR code and the conference app. In casting a wider net, I was able to hear from ethnically and racially diverse participants and from participants with diverse primary roles.

Survey Participants

In Phase I, participants ($n = 303$) were aged 18 and older. Approximately one-third (30%, $n = 82$) of participants identified as male with two-thirds identifying as female (67%, $n = 181$). The level of education of participants ranged from high school graduates to doctoral degrees, with most participants (98%, $n = 264$) having completed at least some college. In relation to ethnicity and race, 15% of participants identified as Hispanic ($n = 41$), 23% of participants identified as people of color ($n = 70$; including Hispanic participants), and 79% identified as white ($n = 212$). In the state of Oregon, population estimates show that in 2023, there were approximately 85.9% white only, 14.4% Hispanic/Latino (census.gov, 2024); therefore, the sample size is similar in representation. The 303 participants identified as the following:

Table 1
Participant Demographic Data

Primary Role	Parent of student currently in schools: 29% ($n = 79$)
	Staff working directly in schools: 35% ($n = 96$)
	Law Enforcement (non-SRO): 6% ($n = 17$)
	SRO: 3% ($n = 8$)
	School Board Member: 0% ($n = 0$)
	Community Member (no relation to schools or LE): 12% ($n = 32$)
	Staff member not directly working in schools (e.g., District Office): 7% ($n = 18$)
	Contracted Services: 1% ($n = 2$)
	Primary role not listed: 7% ($n = 19$)
Gender	Male: 30% ($n = 82$)
	Female: 67% ($n = 181$)
	Non-Binary: 0% ($n = 1$)
	Transgender: 0% ($n = 0$)

	Prefer to self-describe: 0% ($n = 1$)
	Prefer not to say: 2% ($n = 5$)
Level of Education:	Below High School: 0% ($n = 0$)
	High School: 2% ($n = 6$)
	Some College: 9% ($n = 25$)
	Associate Degree: 8% ($n = 22$)
	Bachelor Degree: 23% ($n = 63$)
	Master Degree: 44% ($n = 120$)
	Professional Degree: 6% ($n = 15$)
	Doctoral Degree: 7% ($n = 19$)
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian/Alaskan Native: 3% ($n = 8$)
	Asian: 3% ($n = 7$)
	Black/African American: 1% ($n = 3$)
	Hispanic/Latino: 15% ($n = 41$)
	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 1% ($n = 2$)
	White: 79% ($n = 212$)
	Multi-Racial: 3% ($n = 9$)
	Prefer not to say: 3% ($n = 8$)
	Other: 0% ($n = 0$)

Measures

Survey items were designed to query participants' understanding and perceptions of the role of the School Resource Officer. Questions ranged by topic, including questions focused on SRO appearance/uniform (should an SRO wear full uniform or a "soft" uniform) and past experiences with SROs. Similarly, I asked about whether an SRO should be armed on campuses. This set of questions were on a Likert Scale with responses options ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*).

The set of four questions that followed were to gauge positive and negative experiences of the survey participants, or of someone they may know regarding SROs, as well as law enforcement. I chose to separate SRO from law enforcement to see if I would see a difference in responses between the two. Answer choices for these questions were dichotomous (*yes/no*).

Last, I included open-ended questions that included opportunities for participants to elaborate on their understanding of the role, concerns, and barriers regarding the role, what kind of training an SRO should have, and a general question asking about other considerations (such as whether the person will actually be able to add safety to a school, if there is truly a need based on safety data, etc.) when it comes to the decision-making process regarding the hiring of an SRO.

Statistical and Qualitative Analyses of Survey Data

To detect potential differences between sub-groups, I began by transforming key sociodemographic variables. I created a new variable reflecting parents as primary role ($n = 75$) vs. primary roles other than parents ($n = 184$), and another for school staff as primary role ($n = 109$) vs. roles outside of schools ($n = 150$). I created a dichotomous variable reflecting BIPOC (1 = respondents who reported being Latinx or 1 or more races other than white) and white participants (2 = white). There were 25% BIPOC participants ($n = 70$) and 75% white ($n = 212$). I also re-computed my gender variable to be dichotomous (1 = male; 2 = female) through recoding as system missing seven participants who reported being non-binary or preferring to self-describe or not to report. There were 67% female ($n = 181$) and 30% male ($n = 32$). Though the identities and answer choices of these participants are important, statistically, their very low numbers would have prevented me from reliably detecting and interpreting any findings related to them. I also computed a dichotomous variable reflecting participants who reported being school staff as their primary role versus not school staff. The designation of primary role as working in schools included those who reported working directly in schools and those who worked in a school district, such as district office level staff (42% working in schools, $n = 109$; 58% not working in schools, $n = 150$). Finally, I computed a dichotomous grouping variable

reflecting whether a participant would support their school district having an SRO (1 = *No*; 2 = *Yes*).

Chi-square analyses were conducted to investigate relationships among dichotomous sociodemographic variables and four dichotomous items reflecting experiences with SROs and law enforcement (e.g., I have had positive experiences with SROs; I have had negative experiences with SROs; I have had positive experiences with law enforcement; I have had negative experiences with law enforcement). Chi-square analyses also were used to detect potential differences between participants who reported they would support vs. not support an SRO in their school district in relation to their reports of prior experiences (positive vs negative) with SROs specifically and law enforcement in general.

I ran independent sample *t*-tests to examine potential differences in sociodemographic characteristics of race and ethnicity (e.g,, BIPOC vs white), primary social role (e.g., parent vs non-parent, school staff vs. non-school staff), gender (women vs men), and support for SROs on school campuses (yes vs no) in relation to eight categorical variables (1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*), reflecting constructs of interest (e.g., SROs should wear bulletproof vests on campus; I would feel safer if an SRO was on campus; SROs should wear regular clothes; SROs should wear uniforms on campus; SROs should be armed; SROs should be an important liaison). In cases when the normal theory assumption of equal variances was violated, appropriate corrections were made to the *t*-values. Given the number of chi-square and *t*-tests I have run, I will perform a Bonferroni correction to ward against Type 1 error. This involved dividing .05/35 (# of tests run), which equals 0.0014. Based on the Bonferroni correction, I reported all *p* values, but when interpreting results of chi-squares and *t*-tests, I interpreted as significant only those tests where relationships were significant to the level of $p < .001$.

I used a combination of Dedoose and Google Sheets to analyze the open-ended data from the survey and look for emerging key ideas. I used these key ideas to inform prompts as part of my semi-structured interview protocol. The overall evaluation of SROs on campuses was much more positive than I had expected, and many of the responses leaned toward ensuring that the right type of person was hired, rather than whether the role should exist. I kept this notion in mind when entering the next phase of my study.

Phase II: Qualitative Interviews

Phase II semi-structured interviews were approximately 30 minutes long and conducted virtually via Zoom. I interviewed 25 participants, all of whom re-consented via a short survey created on Qualtrics prior to being recorded and transcribed (using OtterAI). I began each interview with my IRB approved questions; however, I was able to ask probing follow up questions informed by survey findings that provided greater nuance and depth to my initial observations.

Participant Selection

For this phase, I reached out to all participants from the survey who had indicated they would be interested in participating in an interview ($n = 82$). Of those 82, 31 responded to my initial recruitment email. Even with reminders, some participants did not attend the interview with me because they either were unable to or had forgotten. For each non-attender, I reached out one more time to see if they would be interested in rescheduling the interview with me. Of the nine non-attending participants, three agreed to reschedule, and we completed an interview. The remaining six did not complete an interview.

Semi-structured interview data

The 25 interview participants, who were all aged 18 and older, ranged in their primary roles, with almost half (48%, $n = 12$) being educators. Gender was split almost evenly between

33

male (44%, $n = 11$) and female (52%, $n = 13$), and the proportion of my study sample who were

BIPOC remained consistent between the survey and interview phases at approximately 24%.

Table 2

Interview Participant Demographic Data

Role:	Parent: 28% ($n = 7$)
	Educator: 48% ($n = 12$)
	Law Enforcement: 20% ($n = 5$)
	Community Member: 1% ($n = 1$)
Race/Ethnicity:	White: 76% ($n = 19$)
	BIPOC: 24% ($n = 6$)
Gender:	Male: 44% ($n = 11$)
	Female: 52% ($n = 13$)
	Non-Binary: 4% ($n = 1$)

Data Collection Procedures

During Phase II, participants signed up for a time that worked for both of us using

Calendly as a resource to align schedules. Connecting my calendar, Calendly, Zoom and Otter.ai

created a level of ease in ensuring each participant had the meeting on their calendar including

the zoom link, and that Otter.ai would collect the transcript. Participants received several emails

from me. The first email was to recruit for the interview, with my Calendly link included for

scheduling purposes. I used the Bcc option on email to ensure anonymity in this process. Once a

participant scheduled an interview with me, Calendly would automatically send them an email.

However, I also followed up with an email including a link to the short Qualtrics consent

(Appendix D) to be recorded during the interview, a reminder of the date and time, and the Zoom

link. Semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Qualitative Analytic Strategies

I purchased a subscription to Otter.ai to transcribe the interviews. The 25 transcripts

ranged from 4-19 single-spaced pages each, totaling 170 pages. Member checking was

conducted by sending members a copy of their transcription and giving them a deadline to read

and determine if they would like to add or clarify anything. None of the 25 participants requested

any changes to their transcripts.

I used Dedoose 9.2.006 software for my qualitative analysis. Before beginning coding, I

added responses from the survey open-ended questions to my interview data. For my first cycle,

I used open descriptive coding to capture key ideas and elements of participants' experiences and

perceptions as described in the interview, assigning basic labels to data to give an overview of

key topics found in the notes (Saldaña, 2013).

In addition, I applied a code called "great quotes" whenever a statement from a

participant stood out to me. These initial codes provided a foundation for further analysis and

exploration of the data, including basic vocabulary and topics to lay the groundwork for deeper

investigation throughout the coding process (Saldaña, 2013).

A method recommended by Bailey (2018) is to stay on top of coding and to not code all

at once at the end. In my first cycle of coding, I focused on both the survey open-ended questions

and the interview transcripts and created parent and child codes in Dedoose (see Table 3). I

noticed that many of these codes had overlapping patterns, and I took a second pass through

these and created a subset of codes, looking at how often those patterns appeared in my initial

coding. In my analysis, all the coding and patterns were attached directly to excerpts from

interviews and open-ended survey questions. The following patterns formed in my analysis:

clarity of the role, *community*, *education*, *exposure to the role*, *interaction with youth*, *liaison*, *prevention*, *relationship*, *right fit*, *trauma*, *trust*, *visibility*.

From this coding, I created 788 excerpts. I transferred these excerpts to Google Sheets to examine further for patterns and themes. My Excel sheet included headers "Participant Code," "Transcript," "Initial Code," and "Memo." The "participant code" was a code I created to protect anonymity, but also to be able to easily determine demographic data. "Transcript" was the excerpt itself. "Initial Code" was the code attached to the except in Dedoose. My next pass, I added notes in the memo to give me more information. For example, if I coded something "personality," I added a couple of words or a phrase that gave me more information, such as "trust" or "likes kids." The participant code I used to protect anonymity included the participant number (1-25), their primary role (P = Parent; E = Educator [school roles]; L = Law Enforcement), Ethnicity/Race (B = BIPOC; W = White), and gender (M = Male; F = Female; X = Non-binary). This would lead to a code such as for participant #1: 01PWM, which allowed me to quickly see a demographic within that participant, but also ensured a layer of anonymity and protection for the participant.

Table 3
Initial Codes Used in the First Cycle

Code	Description
Personality	Any commentary on characteristics that would or would not make for a good candidate for SRO. E.g./kindness and the ability to work with others versus unapproachable
Barriers	What may be a "stuck point" for hiring an SRO, including funding, lack of candidates, emotional safety
Experiences	Any kind of personal experiences had by participants
Importance	Why this role may be important

Media	Any mention of media
Onboarding	Any mention of SRO onboarding practices (or ideal practices)
Appearance	How an SRO appears and what is visible: Uniform, tools, armed or not
Reaction Time	Mention of response time to on-site needs (or lack thereof)
Relationship	Mention of relationship-building
Role	Comments on the purpose of the SRO role (ideal or current practice)
Safety	Physical, Emotional, Psychological Safety
Training	Mention of training (ideal or current practice)
Visibility	Mention of the visibility of the role- number of campuses (ranging from all to none), visibility within a school, and within a community

Next, I took the Initial Codes and Memos and did a frequency count to see how often the memo showed up in the Initial Code (see Table 4 for an example of this).

Table 4

Initial Code Frequency Count

Initial Code	Memo	# of Appearances
Appearance	clarity	13
Appearance	full uniform	23
Appearance	mixed	1
Appearance	neutral	3
Appearance	no full uniform	1
Appearance	safety of officer	1
Appearance	soft uniform	10

| Appearance | tools | 9 |
| Appearance | trauma | 1 |

In this example, the memo "clarity" came up under the code "appearance" 13 times. From this information, I then created yet another tab that I called "Level 2 by Pattern." where I took the memo column and organized it alphabetically, then I combined those memos and organized it by frequency counts. In the example displayed in Table 5, the memo "clarity" came up under 7 codes, for a total of 42 times.

Table 5

Frequency Counts by Memo

Memo	Count	Total
clarity	13	42
clarity	1	
clarity	8	
clarity and communication	2	
Clarity of role	4	
clarity of role	11	
clarity of role	3	

I used this data to then begin to determine patterns and sub-patterns in a tab in Google Sheets that I labeled "Level 2- Emerging Patterns." In this tab, I took these patterns and re-attached excerpts to them. Most of the excerpts I pulled for this portion were from my code "great quotes," as those were participant statements that I found to be particularly interesting or telling when it came to each pattern.

From this process, I was able to determine cross-cutting themes and come up with my coding scheme (see Table 6).

Table 6

Coding Scheme

Sub-Pattern	Pattern	Themes
PTN1.a Ability to build relationships and connect, approachable PTN1.b Likes kids and interacting with youth PTN1.c The right fit for the job	PTN1: The personality of an SRO can impact the success of that role	TH1. Having a solid hiring process, with input from stakeholders, that leads to finding an SRO who is the right fit for the school district and community supports the success of an incoming SRO
PTN2.a Clear communication PTN2.b Wear a full uniform PTN2.c All parties must understand the role, responsibilities and boundaries	PTN2: Clarity on the role	TH2: Ensuring a strong vision, with clear roles and responsibilities that is communicated well to all stakeholders contributes to the success of an SRO
PTN3.a visibility, be in most buildings PTN3.b role as an educator, consult, resource PTN3.c visibility in the community	PTN3: Prevention	TH3: Visibility and a strong focus on education and prevention goes a long way
PTN4.a Healing from negative experiences and trauma PTN4.b Exposure to the role and visibility	PTN4: Trust	TH4: Many stakeholders have reservations due to historical experiences and trauma and there is a strong need to build trust
PTN5.a Connected and visible to the community PTN5.b Honor and understand the history of the community PTN5.c Include community voice/input PTN5.d Know local resources/systems	PTN5: Community	TH5: The context of each community matters. The role and type of person in it must match the community's needs.

Phase III: Mixed Method Data Analysis

Throughout the analysis process first in the quantitative phase, followed by the

qualitative phase, I reminded myself of the research questions at hand and had them available to

keep the study's purpose at the forefront of my mind. I knew heading into this process that I was seeking a variety of perspectives when it comes to School Resource Officers in buildings including looking for: What is positive? What is negative? What patterns are there within a range of experiences?

Further, in the interviews I hoped to understand on a deeper level those elements that could help a school district determine whether they would like an SRO in their buildings. I wondered what I might glean from these interviews about what to consider when hiring an SRO, such as training, appearance/uniform, and barriers.

To bolster my study's trustworthiness, I took steps to ensure member-checking and triangulation. Member-checking in this study meant that after I had copies of the transcribed interviews, I emailed copies of the interview transcript to each participant and gave them the opportunity to review the transcript and clarify any points they had made to ensure that I captured their responses accurately. Triangulation in this case was ensuring that I used three distinct methods: A qualitative portion of a survey, a quantitative portion of a survey, and interviews to get stories and perspectives from individuals. I also used socio-demographically diverse respondents in various roles to triangulate my data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Phase I: Quantitative

In Phase I, I used a Qualtrics survey, which yielded responses from 303 participants, to address two research questions:

1. What are useful considerations for school districts when determining whether they will hire an SRO?

2. What are important considerations for school districts once they decide to hire and onboard a new SRO to best set up the SRO and district for success?

Analysis

In my first pass looking at data, I wanted to know more about participants' perceptions and understanding of the role of SRO itself. Participants ratings regarding their understanding of the role of the SRO (*"I understand the role of the school resource officer")* indicated that most (77.9% rated themselves a 5 or above on the scale 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) felt they understood the role of the SRO. After this self-assessment of level of understanding, I posed this important statement with the option to answer, '*yes'* or '*no'*: "*I would support my school district having a School Resource Officer*." The dominant answer was yes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Yes or No response to "I would support my school district having a School Resource Officer"

I would support my school district having a School Resource Officer.
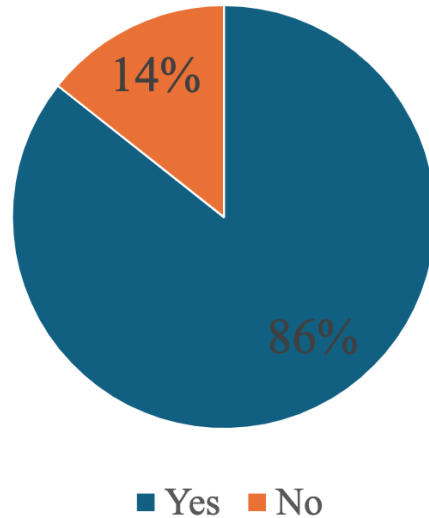
Chi-square tests revealed that there were no significant differences by ethnicity or race (X^2 [$n = 205$] $=.57$, $p=.581$) or by level of education (see Table 7) between respondents who answered "yes" versus "no" in response to the question of whether they supported SROs in schools. As a reminder, given the Bonferroni correction, below I will only discuss results of $p < .001$.

Table 7

Support for an SRO Related to Level of Education

Variables	Two-Part Support for SRO in School	n	Mean (SD)	Difference t
Highest Level of Education	No	32	5.69 (1.2)	1.37
	Yes	191	5.34 (1.37)	

However, there was a strong trend association by gender (X^2 [1, n = 217] =3.40, p = .05) and primary role (X^2 [1, n = 223] =3.80, p=.06). Of "no" respondents, over four-fifths (82.1% or n = 23) were female, and 17.9% (n = 5) were male. In comparison, of those who responded "yes" in support of having an SRO in their district, 64.6% (n = 122) were female and 35.4% (n = 67) were male. Of "no" respondents, 28.1% (n = 9) were school staff and 71.9% (n = 23) were primary roles other than school staff. In comparison, those who responded "yes" in support of having an SRO in their district, 46.6% (n = 89) were school staff, and 53.4% (n = 102) were in primary roles other than school staff. There were no statistically significant differences by ethnicity/race or by level of education in response to whether they support the district hiring an SRO. It is important to note all questions were optional so participants could skip any question they did not want (or feel comfortable) to answer, so although there were 303 participants, some of the questions had fewer responses.

Table 8

Gender Participant Chi-Square Data

Response	Male	Female
No	7% (n=5)	16% (n = 23)
Yes	93% (n=67)	84% (n = 122)
Total	100% (n=72)	100% (n = 145)

In other words, significantly more women than men opposed SROs on campuses, and significantly more respondents whose primary role was parent than school staff opposed SROs on campus.

Participants' more general support, or lack of support, for SROs in schools related with other key constructs regarding SROs. The means in Table 9 are based on the Likert Scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Table 9

Support for an SRO Related to Likert Scale Questions

Variables	Two-Part Support for SRO in School	*n*	Mean (SD)	Difference *t*
SRO should wear a bulletproof vest.	No	31	1.81 (1.19)	-14.86***
	Yes	190	5.5 (1.73)	
I would feel safer if an SRO was on campus.	No	32	1.28 (.52)	-35.55***
	Yes	191	6.17 (1.41)	
An SRO should wear regular clothes on campus.	No	31	5.32 (1.78)	8.72***
	Yes	191	2.58 (1.60)	
An SRO should wear a uniform on campus.	No	32	2.84 (1.92)	-8.52***
	Yes	191	5.54 (1.61)	
SROs make students feel less safe on campus.	No	32	5.78 (1.34)	12.55***
	Yes	191	2.08 (1.57)	
SROs should be armed.	No	32	1.34 (1.13)	-18.95***
	Yes	191	5.75 (1.66)	
SROs are an important liaison to schools.	No	32	2.03 (1.47)	-16.54***
	Yes	190	6.51 (1.05)	

*$p<.05$. **$p<.01$. ***$p<.001$.

There are significant statistical differences in responses on the variables depending on whether the person supports or does not support the district having an SRO. For example, for the question "I would feel safer if there was an SRO on campus," the mean response for those who do not support having an SRO on campus (on a scale of 1-7, 1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*) was 1.28, whereas the mean response for those who do support SROs on campus was 6.17.

Similarly, I ran another *t*-test with the variables in relation to the participants who reported their primary role as working in schools as compared to those who reported their primary role as working outside of schools (see Table 10).

Table 10

School Staff as Primary Role as Related to Likert Scale Questions

Variables	Primary role school staff vs. Roles outside of schools	*n*	Mean (SD)	Difference *t*
SRO should wear a bulletproof vest	School Staff	109	4.81 (1.93)	.660
	Roles outside of schools	150	4.63 (2.30)	
I would feel safer if an SRO was on campus	School Staff	109	5.40 (2.03)	1.22
	Roles outside of schools	152	5.08 (2.24)	
An SRO should wear regular clothes on campus	School Staff	109	3.02 (1.79)	-1.216
	Roles outside of schools	151	3.30 (1.99)	
An SRO should wear a uniform on campus	School Staff	108	5.12 (1.80)	1.21
	Roles outside of schools	152	4.83 (1.99)	
SROs make students feel less safe on campus	School Staff	109	2.65 (1.90)	-1.23
	Roles outside of schools	152	2.96 (2.07)	
SROs should be armed	School Staff	109	5.09 (2.10)	1.73
	Roles outside of schools	151	4.61 (2.38)	
SROs are an important liaison to schools	School Staff	109	5.99 (1.57)	2.37*
	Roles outside of schools	151	5.44 (2.19)	

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Given the Bonferroni correction, there were no statistically significant differences in this table.

Next, I ran a *t*-test to compare those who reported that their primary role is a parent versus a role other than parent to see if there were any significant differences in key constructs (see Table 11).

Table 11

Parents as Primary Role as Related to Likert Scale Questions

Variables	Parents as primary role v role other than parents	*n*	Mean (SD)	Difference *t*
SRO should wear a bulletproof vest	Parents as primary role	75	4.12 (2.38)	-2.64**
	Role other than parents	184	4.95 (2.00)	
I would feel safer if an SRO was on campus	Parents as primary role	75	4.68 (2.43)	-2.37*
	Role other than parents	186	5.43 (2.00)	
An SRO should wear regular clothes on campus	Parents as primary role	75	3.59 (2.03)	2.18*
	Role other than parents	185	3.02 (1.84)	
An SRO should wear a uniform on campus	Parents as primary role	75	4.49 (2.04)	-2.47*
	Role other than parents	185	5.14 (1.84)	
SROs make students feel less safe on campus	Parents as primary role	75	3.35 (2.14)	2.68
	Role other than parents	186	2.62 (1.91)	
SROs should be armed	Parents as primary role	75	4.12 (2.44)	-3.01**
	Role other than parents	185	5.09 (2.15)	
SROs are an important liaison to schools	Parents as primary role	75	5.05 (2.36)	-2.88**
	Role other than parents	185	5.92 (1.73)	

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

In this data, it is important to note that this says, "primary role." Many participants had multiple roles, but the survey asked them to choose just one. So, many educators may also be parents, but when asked to pick one, they may have chosen to respond from the point of view of an educator instead of a parent. After the Bonferroni correction, none of the analyses showed statistically

significant differences. An interesting point here is that on a scale from 1-7, both parents and non-parents as primary role rated the question "*SROs make students feel less safe on campus*" as a mean of 2-3, which is on the side of disagreeing with that statement. In other words, both parties typically disagree that SROs may make students feel less safe on campus.

The chi-square results are shown in Table 12. After the Bonferroni correction, only the first three analyses comparing the two-part support question (*I would support the district hiring an SRO*) with their report of whether they have had positive or negative experiences was statistically significant, which is not a surprise. However, participants responded to these questions separately, so many could have said they have had both negative *and* positive experiences with SROs/law enforcement. Further analysis revealed that 84 participants (32%) reported having both positive and negative experiences with SROs.

The last part of the survey included open-ended questions. Upon an initial pass of these open-ended answers, I gathered patterns and ideas for coding and solidified the questions I had determined for my interview phase. The patterns revealed in this first pass were around: safety and security, relationship, liaison, expectations and understanding of the role, community, training, and finding the right candidate for the role. I also used this opportunity to do a first pass of magnitude coding and found most open-ended responses to be positive regarding SROs.

Table 12

Chi-Square Results

Comparison	Chi-Square test result
Support for SROs on campus, positive experience with SRO	X^2 (1, $N = 223$) = 73.44, p =<.001
Support for SROs on campus, negative experience with SRO	X^2 (1, $N = 223$) = 30.07, p =<.001

Support for SROs on campus, positive experience with LE	X^2 (1, $N = 223$) = 32.04 p =<.001
Support for SROs on campus, negative experience with LE	X^2 (1, $N = 222$) = 3.91 $p = .067$
School staff, Support for SROs on campus	X^2 (1, $N = 223$) = 3.80, $p = .056$
School staff, positive experience with SRO	X^2 (1, $N = 259$) = 9.08, $p = .003$
School staff, negative experience with SRO	X^2 (1, $N = 259$) = 1.71, $p = .204$
School staff, positive experience with LE	X^2 (1, $N = 260$) = 2.67, $p = .142$
School staff, negative experience with LE	X^2 (1, $N = 259$) = .938, $p = .359$
Parents, Support for SROs on campus	X^2 (1, $N = 223$) = 9.64, $p = .004$
Parents, positive experience with SRO	X^2 (1, $N = 259$) = 10.50, $p = .002$
Parents, negative experience with SRO	X^2 (1, $N = 259$) = .002, $p = 1.00$
Parents, positive experience with LE	X^2 (1, $N = 260$) = .076, $p = .820$
Parents, negative experience with LE	X^2 (1, $N = 259$) = .009, $p = 1.00$

Upon learning about differences in participants who supported versus did not support SROs on campus, I re-analyzed survey open-ended responses for participants who said they do not support SROs in schools. These "no" participants repeatedly mentioned concerns about bias, intimidation, trauma, school-to-prison pipeline, lack of training, use of excessive force, lack of a clear purpose for the role, and a lack of data to support that an SRO helps to create a safe

environment. Some participants questioned if the funding would be better used in other roles within the school district.

One participant wrote, "Funding for SROs should be used for preventative education services for youth, and more counselors, more after school opportunities for Social & Emotional development. There should also be an increased effort on creating a positive school environment" (Participant OFB). The comments on trauma included "Their presence can (re)traumatize students with negative home or community encounters, it makes school much more hostile and unwelcoming for vulnerable populations including Black/brown immigrants and alternative lifestyles..." (Participant PFW). Another anticipated "traumatized children due to armed SRO grilling them without parental notification and with no school staff present" (Participant PFW). Concerns about bias included "Consistently marginalized student populations will be further oppressed, and students are at greater risk for being physically harmed with unnecessary force" (Participant PXW). Many of the comments made included personal stories of experiences that were negative either for themselves or others they knew.

Phase II: Qualitative Results

In the interview phase, 13 participants were women and 11 were men. However, unlike the results from the survey, the stories from all participants trended toward positive appraisals of SROs and in support of having an SRO on campuses.

For the qualitative phase, I ran four cycles of coding (Descriptive, In Vivo, Magnitude, and Axial) and my interview transcripts resulted in the identification of five clear themes.

1. **Theme 1: To support the success of an incoming SRO, have a solid hiring process. Community and stakeholder input is vital to finding an SRO who is the right candidate for each unique context.**

Throughout my conversations with applicants, this theme was apparent across all interviews and was cross-cutting throughout the responses. When speaking about the type of person who needs to be hired for this role, it came up often that first and foremost, the applicant needs to want to do this job. Participant 06WLM shared, "I think we need to make sure that we get officers there who want to be there, and who want to build relationships with both staff, and students. And the parents." In experiences where the role of the SRO has gone well, participants shared that the people in those roles truly loved to be there and enjoyed working with youth: "Not everybody can relate to kids, not everybody likes kids, not everybody has kids" (02PWF).

Participants shared that their desire would be for this person to already be a member of the community, or someone who can become well-integrated into the community. This person must be someone who can build relationships, connect with others and be approachable. Participant 21PBM shared about his relationship with an SRO:

I'm thinking about one in particular, that it was a bond. You know, as an assistant principal, you work so closely with [the] school resource officer, not because school resource officers [are] involved in every single thing. But because there's a there's this partnership that exists, right, right, like how to approach things, what they know what they hear what their relationships with kids. And so I always viewed them as a positive asset to our school. And somebody that was part of the team.

This closeness and ability to work together as a team, which then builds trust, came up frequently. In both positive and negative responses to the questions, the need for trust arose. Because the role of the SRO can have big implications with the law, in addition to any prior history or trauma someone may have experienced, the community needs to be able to trust the person in this role so that they (adults and students) can feel that they can be vulnerable with an SRO, or to feel emotionally safe on campus. In the comments from those who said "no" on the

question regarding supporting their school district employing an SRO, there was urging for psychological evaluations and extensive background checks as part of this process.

Theme 2: Communication to the community and stakeholders of a solid vision, with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities, contributes to the success of an SRO.

The second theme that arose was around clarity. This is a multi-layered theme, as some discussed clarity about the role itself, asking what does an SRO do? Others discussed the need to know what an SRO can and cannot do within their role (e.g., can an SRO put a student in handcuffs on a school campus?) And clarity about what responsibilities an SRO has as opposed to school administrators or general law enforcement (e.g., can an SRO expel a student?). With this clarity, the importance of high levels of communication came up. The topic of how an SRO should dress (uniform or casual) related to the theme of clarity as well.

I anticipated the theme of communication coming up, especially knowing that there is variability in the understanding of the role of the SRO. Participant 23LWM stated, "I think it's important to share this because some people or a lot of people are misinformed about what the role of the school resource officer is. In fact, in [city], we just had a person make some pretty inflammatory statements about what they believed the role of the SRO was." Participants spoke to this need for everyone to understand what an SRO does, including what they are and are not allowed to do. For example, an SRO does not take on the role of a disciplinarian in a school, that is the administrator's job. The definition of each role (SRO and administrator) must be clear to all stakeholders: staff, students, parents, school board members, law enforcement, SROs, and community members. "What I know about SROs is that their role is seldom well defined. And that's one of the problems that happen with SROs. You just can't assume anything about what it means to have a school resource officer. Because in some areas, they're used like a

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disciplinarian. In some areas, they're not there very often, but it's sort of like, well, we have a, for example, sometimes might have a police force" (Participant 17EWX). In addition, ensuring that both the school district and the partnering law enforcement Office have a shared vision for what the community needs from an SRO came up. Participant 08EWF shared, "What is the vision for the school resource officer? And what are the needs of that school? And if the needs meet, like the vision and the person who you're hiring to do that, then yes, right. And like, at our middle school, I quite honestly even feel like in our upper elementary, it would be great to have at our high school." Once the hiring community has a clear understanding of the role, then the needs of the community can be determined as part of the vision of this role.

The question regarding what an SRO should wear on campus was one I was interested in hearing about because I have heard differing opinions on whether a full uniform makes people feel safer or not. I assumed this would come up under the theme of safety, but I was surprised to find that it frequently came up as important due to the need for clarity of the role. The overwhelming opinion of most was that SROs should be in full uniform to ensure that they are easily identifiable on campuses. There should be no wondering about whether this person is a part of law enforcement. "When I as a parent walk into a school, if I saw an SRO with in full, you know, in their police uniform, I know exactly who they are, what they're here to do and what their function is" (13PWM). In addition, I had a participant share that often it is difficult for neurodivergent students to understand subtleties and for that reason they agreed that an SRO should be in their full uniform.

Theme 3: Visibility, education, and prevention are priority focus areas for this role.

The topics of visibility, education, and prevention came up frequently throughout the interviews. Prevention went hand in hand with visibility, as most of the time when prevention

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was being discussed, it was in conjunction with being present in the schools and community in some way or another. There were many reasons why visibility and prevention were important. Some participants felt that a presence and wearing full uniform on campus could create a visible deterrent to behaviors.

> I feel like when they see an officer coming uniform, then they they're like, immediately like, Oh, snap, like I have to stop like, this is escalating to the point where like, I might not be able to come back out of this and be like, just an easy like, in school suspension or like out of school suspension, like, it won't be something simple. As soon as they see the SRO there or were like, Hey, we're gonna call the SRO and they'd be like, Oh, snap, like, we need to stop. Yeah. That's why I think I've always been on the side of like, having an SRO is very important, not only just for like, just the kids' safety, but just safety in general in the school" (Participant 19CBF).

Others discussed visibility to gain trust and build relationships with students, such as Participant 22EWM. "I want them to interact with the kids, I want them to be out there at recess. I want them to see them."

Participants shared that when SROs are regular, visible members of the school community, students are more likely to go to them to ask questions or seek advice before something happens. 07EBF shared the following:

> I think that some of that healing that needs to happen with our communities who have been impacted by law enforcement, some of that can happen with the right person creating those relationships on campus last, like, only if you need them, like, you know, hanging out at lunch. So, yeah, and they're not like, they're not there to search your backpacks and like, catch you doing something wrong, right? They're there to respond if something happens, but like to just be right and be in community and, and talk about,

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like, what challenges are you seeing why don't you feel safe coming to school, if a student brings a knife to school, it's not always because they address we're like, Yeah, I'm gonna stab somebody like, it's probably because they don't feel safe walking to school. And they need to keep themselves safe, or someone is threatening them at school, and they want some way to defend themselves. But if there's somebody there that's like, that they trust and they could go to Officer and say, Hey, this is what's going on. And, you know, like help me navigate this situation. That's very different and can have that positive impact. But that that takes intentionality. And it takes them being there all the time. Not for one day a week. Yes. So like, work magic. Yeah. It takes time to build relationship and trust. Yeah, once trust is broken, and takes a really long time to restore that.

On the topic of prevention, SROs need the time to be on campuses, getting to know students and staff, forming relationships. This includes being visible in the cafeteria, hallways, and spending time in classrooms. According to participant 12EWF, this also means being visible with the community:

I think anytime a school resource officer can become more a part of the school community is going to be help students and staff feel more at ease and, have an additional trusted adult in the building.... I think any of those types of ways that police can get involved in school functions, coming to welcome school barbecues, coming to sporting events, you know, just the visibility component… makes a huge difference with building those relationships and the and the public relations that is connected to it.

Seeing an SRO in person and forming connections humanizes them in that role and offers the opportunity for them to be known in their role, as well as a person. Prevention through education can be formalized, such as in a classroom, giving a specific lesson on a particular

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topic. For example, an SRO may spend time in Social Studies or Health classes to discuss the effects of Fentanyl. However, prevention also happens organically when SROs are out and about in the school. Students will ask questions about the law, consequences, and the job itself throughout the day. SROs can become a great resource for learning opportunities where students may not feel they can find the answers elsewhere.

Theme 4: Many stakeholders have reservations due to historical experiences and trauma, and there is a strong need to build trust

Theme 4—the need to build trust—emerged as an extremely clear and important theme throughout the interviews. As mentioned in my literature review, there is a history of police brutality in the United States, and many people have experienced trauma with police, both unprovoked and in response to a perceived or actual violation of the law. At times, kids have seen their family members or friends being arrested. In addition, in every profession there are those who make mistakes, or those who should not be in that profession. Knowing that we do not know what any given person has experienced, we should assume that there will be a need for healing and trust in whatever decision is made. All roles (educator, parent, law enforcement, SRO) mentioned trust in the interviews. Some participants have felt a lack of trust due to their own experiences; some have been impacted by events. Regardless of the source, this topic of trust was important, and many participants had insights related to repairing broken trust or building trust. 07EBF speaks to repairing harm to improve upon safety:

> Is there an opportunity to bring them together to build under a shared understanding and responsibility and like bridge that gap? Because sometimes that No, is because of negative experiences. And how can we like repair harm that has been done, so that we're all working together to keep our students safe and family safe for that matter, too.

Participant 06LWM shared an experience in which the SRO and a young man worked through a traumatic event: "And the other thing is to talk is to be open. I mean, the kids, you know, we had a young man at the high school that while I was there, sorrow, his dad was shot and killed by the police. Oh, my goodness. Yeah. So here's the thing. Why did you murder my dad? Well, that's tough. Yeah. You know, but we had we had several discussions on it. And by the end of the school year, I don't think I was his favorite person. Or we were as police officers, but I think he understood our side of things." This participant's story is just one example of how two people with different backgrounds worked to understand one another's perspectives.

Another participant shared their view that there may be prior pre-conceived notions of the role of law enforcement that may impact the level of trust that someone may have:

So like, if you have, for example, a person who has parents that work in the activist community, and they really are opposed to police, right, and there's a lot of narrative at their house about, you know, police brutality and police corruption and all that kind of thing. Maybe it's a person of color, right? And they come to school and they see the SRO. It's really hard for them to have a positive interaction with the SRO because there's all this baggage and I would say like that baggage, so whatever's going on in their own subculture. So like if I guess if their family is not, like friendly with law enforcement, they're going to see all law enforcement in a negative light and that it has a really significant impact on how the interaction goes, in my opinion. Like so if a person's carrying around a negative view of law enforcement as soon as they have an interaction with a law enforcement officer, that negativity is going to kind of bleed through and it does impact them, their relationship and the interaction. (Participant 11LWM)

Many participants felt that when an SRO is trusted, other types of prevention may happen as well. For example, participant 13PWM shared, "if you find the right SRO that is liked by the

student body and is trusted by the student body, the SRO can find out about a lot of things before faculty or staff. Somebody comes to them when, you know, there's a rumor about a gun in a backpack. They go to them when there's a rumor about somebody talking about, you know, suicide. So, there's all kinds of things that a good SRO who has a great connection with the student body can find out and prevent, be preventative instead of reactive. And benefit everyone involved. And I think that gets I think that gets lost a little bit."

Theme 5: The context of each community matters. The role and type of person who is an SRO must match the community's needs.

As I interviewed participants from the various roles, I noticed that there was commentary about each of their respective communities. "Community" in this sense is defined by the area in which the school and the police department reside. Communities can vary in size, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity and each community has its own identity and needs. Participants commented on the importance of SROs connected to the community for various reasons. One reason highlighted was to ensure that the SRO knows and understands the people who live there and the resources available to the people in the community.

Participant 09EBM shared, "we could make sure that that person represents the community that we have. I mean, if we have a community that is predominantly, you know, students of color, we might want to be intentional about hiring a bilingual, bicultural, multicultural person in that role. That doesn't mean that you cannot be a white person, or a member of the LGBTQ plus community, because I've seen those people be effective too. But in order to eliminate that fear factor, you want to get the closest you can to, you know, the identity of the clientele."

In addition, this is a piece when deciding whether to hire an SRO in a school district. A school district must know and understand the community's needs before entering into an agreement. This requires gathering community input. Participant 07EBF noted,

> I think really serve a really important function in our community. And there needs to be adequate funding, not just for the police, but like for SROs to do that community building. They had funding for the police to go to boys and girls clubs to mentor to be positive forces in the community. And I think that that should be a priority everywhere. And I think if police officers were given opportunities to, to know their community, and for their community to know them as people, not just as these figures with guns, I think we would see a lot less of police brutality and violence and tension between the two. But because that intentional community building is not a priority, and we expect people to just respect police and follow rules and like, because that's the expectation we have, I think that's why we continue to see this tension. So I just, I think that they have an opportunity and a responsibility to be positive figures in the community and in schools...funding needs to be a part of that. Funding to put people but funding to train people in a meaningful way. Yeah, and it can't be one without the other, like, you can't just do the training, and then not put them in positions to use it. And you can't put them in positions without training. So yeah, and I also think that this work should really center student and family experiences. Because what they see and feel and think and experience should be like, number one, right?

As this participant shared, there is a lot of value in this connection to the community, and it can vary depending on what the community needs.

Phase III: Combined Results of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

After multiple passes of data analysis and qualitative coding were complete, I was able to see that findings from qualitative interviews and open-ended responses from the survey largely aligned with quantitative results. There also were areas of divergence- there were participants who responded in the survey who did not support the role of the SRO and had specific concerns, for example "school to prison pipeline;" however, those with whom I spoke in interviews were positive and the topic of "school to prison pipeline" did not come up as a concern.

My qualitative data were very positive overall, and in support of hiring an SRO for school districts. Comparatively, most participants said yes to the question on supporting districts in hiring an SRO. Statistically in the quantitative data, there were more women than men opposed to supporting the hire of an SRO; however, when I spoke with both women and men, this difference did not come out in the interviews. The women with whom I spoke were all in support of hiring an SRO.

When responding to this same question of support, those who did not support the hire of an SRO also showed stronger disagreement in the wearing of bulletproof vests, wearing a full uniform, and being armed on campuses. T-test results, however, diverged from qualitative findings relating to a SRO's uniform and being armed. For example, "An SRO should wear a uniform on campus" was rated *disagree* at a mean of 2.84 (on a scale of 1-7), by those who were not supportive of the district hiring an SRO, whereas those who supported SROs had a mean of 5.54 (on a scale of 1-7). However, that same question did not show statistically significant differences when compared to primary role of school staff versus non-school staff.

Lastly, when looking at parents as primary role versus non-parents as primary role, there was once again a statistical difference. When interviewing participants, the subject of uniform could be discussed at length and in more detail and although many participants brought up the uniform as something that could trigger trauma or discomfort for those who have had negative

experiences, I also heard that what is more important is for staff, students, and community members to know clearly that this person is a part of law enforcement. The need for clarity around the role was a topic more discussed than simply the uniform itself.

Although those participants who were interviewed were mostly positive about support for SROs, the qualitative analysis was additive and filled in gaps on understanding these perspectives. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative analyses enabled me to have a clear picture of trends and patterns, see where there were clear statistical differences, and then be able to further understand statistical findings through analysis of qualitative data from interviews. Table 13 presents a summary of my findings from the different phases as well as when combined as a whole.

Table 13
Summary of Findings Across Phases and as a Whole

Quantitative (Phase 1)	Qualitative (Phase 2)	Summary
Those not in support of the role of SRO expressed disagreement with wearing bulletproof vests and full uniform on campus, and students feeling of safety, as well as being armed on campus.	No interview participants were against the role of the SRO in schools. Discussion focused on why the choice of a uniform and being armed were important: clarity around who this person is, and the need for SROs to have the tools they need in case of any event.	Qualitative phase enhanced understanding of Quantitative data.
There were no statistical differences when comparing key domains to respondent race/ethnicity sub-group (e.g, BIPOC vs white), but there were statistical differences when comparing based on gender (e.g., male vs female).	In the interview phase, there were no differences in key domains by interviewee race/ethnicity or gender.	Divergence between qualitative and quantitative results.
The only statistical difference when comparing primary roles in education to other roles was when responding to "SROs are an important liaison in schools." School staff were favorable to this; non-school staff were significantly less supportive.	There were no differences in the question about SROs as a liaison in schools, but rather more of a focus on the need to build relationships and trust with the school and larger community.	Qualitative phase enhanced understanding of the role as liaison and expanded on focusing on relationship building.
Regardless of primary role, participants rated "SROs make students feel less safe on campus" between a mean of 2 and 3 (disagree)	Regardless of primary role, participants shared that SROs help students feel safer on campuses and expanded that the building of relationship and trust helps with this feeling of both emotional and physical safety.	Qualitative enhanced understanding and converged with quantitative results.
There were statistical differences between primary role as parents vs. primary role other than parents among variables. Parents reported some disagreement to agreement (between a mean of 3 and 5) to the topics of wearing a bulletproof vest, feeling safer on campus, wearing regular clothes, wearing a uniform on campus, being armed on campus, and that an SRO is an important liaison to schools.	Participants in interviews shared the need to have a uniform for the role's clarity as well as for the safety of the officer and students. Participants understood why some may feel that wearing regular clothes would seem appealing or less intimidating, but shared that regardless, it was more important to have clarity by wearing a uniform.	Qualitative expanded on why many quantitative responses lingered around neutral.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

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In this study, I explored stakeholder (community, school staff, parents, law enforcement and SROs) perceptions of SROs in schools, seeking considerations for school districts when determining whether to hire an SRO and for onboarding and training if a school district determines they do want to hire an SRO.

To revisit the literature, Beger (2002) stated that "an increasingly popular 'quick fix' strategy is to hire police and security guards" (p. 3). As I conducted this research, I can say that those to whom I have spoken have put a considerable amount of thought into this role and none of the participants shared that they were looking for a quick fix. In fact, I found the opposite. Those with whom I spoke wanted to ensure that the decision around the hire of an SRO and onboarding was intentional and sought to clearly define the role and duties of this person and position.

I studied this problem of practice to gather the perspectives of multiple adults on the role of the SRO in schools. In conducting surveys and interviewing participants, I was able to glimpse patterns in quantitative responses and relate those to certain sociodemographic groupings, as well as discern relationships among important domains (e.g., related to perceptions of SROs, uniforms and weapons of SROs, perceived role of SRO). I had the chance to code transcripts and open-ended survey responses and analyze statistical data to narrow down the themes relevant to the question of SROs on school campuses. I would like to use this information for schools to be able to have a resource to think through (a) whether they would like to hire an SRO and then (b) if they do choose to, what are the steps that can be taken, or what can be considered when hiring for this role.

When we went through our experience in Forest Grove and decided to contract with the Forest Grove police department, this type of research and resources did not exist. In the past several years, the question about whether to have police in schools has been a hot topic and on

the news frequently. People's anecdotes are valuable and create a lot to think through, but it would have been helpful to have research on the patterns and themes that come up and recommendations on how to move forward. This mixed methods research dissertation is intended to help school districts with this process.

I heard a variety of perspectives, many positive, but some included themes of discomfort, past trauma, and a need for healing among some groups, especially within BIPOC populations. Although this conversation is about what we are doing right now in our schools, the conversation cannot move forward without addressing the fact that historical trauma and fear exist. Understanding the perspectives of others—especially those whose experiences differ from my own—is essential to the success of a school resource officer.

After coding and analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, I return to the research questions:

- Research Question 1: What are useful considerations for school districts when determining whether they will hire an SRO?
- Research Question 2: What are important considerations for school districts once they decide to hire and onboard a new SRO to best set up the SRO and district for success?

Considerations for School Districts when Determining Whether to Hire an SRO

Overall, in this study, the response to hiring an SRO was overwhelmingly positive. However, it is important for school districts to note that this research may not represent their unique community. School districts should consider their community's voices when determining whether to hire an SRO. Because there may be a disconnect between the perception of the role of the SRO and the reality of the role itself, school districts should consider having opportunities to learn about the role first, including opportunities to ask questions and perhaps share stories. The need for clarity around the role came up multiple times throughout the study. Some communities

have been historically impacted negatively by police, while others have had nothing but positive experiences. In either situation, there will be a need to understand the implications of both scenarios: hiring an SRO versus choosing not to hire an SRO. Depending on the history and experiences, there may be a need to do some healing in the community prior to considering this process.

Considerations for Onboarding and Training when School Districts have Decided to Hire an SRO

Research Question 1 should be step one for this conversation in a school district. Once the school district has determined they should hire and onboard a new SRO, there are many pieces to consider. When hiring an SRO, there is usually an Intergovernmental Agreement between the school district and Law Enforcement that will detail the expectations that both parties agree to for this role. Before this document's creation, both parties should consider what to include to ensure success of this role.

Appearance

The police department will have regulations around what a school resource officer must wear. A school district should ask what is required, versus where there is flexibility. With this information, it can be determined how a school resource officer will present when working. Some school districts agree on a "soft uniform" that includes a bulletproof vest, polo shirt and a tool belt with a gun, taser, and other tools. Other school districts have chosen to go with the full uniform, including the weight-bearing vest that is typically seen in law enforcement on the streets.

Clarity of the Role

The National School Resource Officer Association defines this role as "a carefully selected, specifically trained, and properly equipped law enforcement officer with sworn

authority, trained in school-based law enforcement and crisis response and assigned by an employing law enforcement agency to work collaboratively with one or more schools using community-oriented policing concepts" (NASRO.org, 2024). School Resource Officers are first considered educators and counselors, then law enforcers. This shows that the purpose and goals of this role have not changed since the early 2000s, which according to Murray (2003, p 43) should be around counseling, teaching, and performing law enforcement activities and listed by James (2013) as "(1) safety expert and law enforcer, (2) problem solver and liaison to community resources, and (3) educator."

When considering the on-boarding and hiring of an SRO, it is vital that there is a vision in place from both the school district and the law enforcement agency about how this role should look. When that is determined, every stakeholder should understand the role and boundaries of that role. For example, if a student makes a threat on social media, the SRO and administrators may work on the investigation together; however, the SRO would not be the school disciplinarian. If the student were to be suspended or expelled because of their online threat, that would come from the administrator, not the SRO. Similarly, if there is a need for charges to be placed on that student, that would come from law enforcement, not from administrators in the buildings.

If the emphasis and vision for an SRO is prevention and visibility, there needs to be clarity on what that can look like in the school district. Will the SRO be stationed at the high school full time, going to the other schools only as needed? Will they teach lessons to students? Will they be at the front doors to greet students in the morning and the cafeteria at lunchtime? These details are important for consideration around visibility and prevention.

Training

Literature tells us that for an SRO to be successful in their role, the resources need to be built-in, including the time for in-depth discussions, time to create a framework, and regular conversations with the school administrators (James, 2013). Beyond the training itself, SROs, law enforcement supervisors, and school administrators need the time to have these conversations. However, a vital part of the success of an SRO is the training. All SROs are required to attend the annual NASRO conference. This conference is extensive, so it is important that the school district understands what is involved so that they might prioritize school district-based training and not overlap unnecessarily. When SROs are required to do school district training, it is noted that this may be more powerful if the SRO does this in partnership with staff from the school district. The types of training that came up in my research were: mental health, de-escalation strategies, training on working with youth (including child development), training on working with students receiving special education services, understanding school policy, understanding the juvenile justice system, equity/bias, trauma-informed practices, restorative practices, and collaborative problem solving.

Finding the Right Fit

Being able to hire the right person for the position is essential to the success of this role. When a person applies to be an SRO, they have passed extensive background checks, have already been hired by the police department, and have years of experience, including required police academies and training. Law enforcement agencies can then hear what it is that school districts and the community are looking for when it comes to the type of person and skillset they want for this role and help to screen out anyone who may not fit the need. Together, law enforcement and the school district can craft interview questions that will get to the heart of what they are looking for. However, there should be the ability to pull an SRO from this role if it turns out they are not the right fit for the position.

Limitations

There are potential threats to validity within this study. To reduce threats, I used triangulation by using multiple sources of data (survey with Likert Scale, yes or no questions, open ended questions, as well as interview data) to confirm emerging findings. In addition, I used member checks which are a form of validation, allowing participants to review transcripts and clarify or expand on anything by responding to me via email. To seek diversity for the study, I recruited BIPOC participants. This could also be a limitation to the study.

The limitation that surfaced during my study was that although I was able to recruit the same proportion of BIPOC adults to white adults as represented in Oregon to my study, it may be wise for future studies to overrecruit for BIPOC people given the diversity of people, experiences, and perspectives contained within this group. I was intentional about reaching out to all groups, and it would be interesting to see if a larger sample size could enhance the generalizability of these data and findings. Similarly, a larger sample size could provide clarity about the role of gender (which in this study was shown to be a trend) in relation to perceptions of SROs.

Another limitation was that those who chose to interview with me were all participants who were positive and in support of the role of an SRO. Although I had survey participants who said "no" to supporting a district in hiring an SRO, those who were opposed did not choose to participate in an interview with me. Because I made the survey anonymous without the ability to reach out unless a participant volunteered, I did not have a way to intentionally reach out to that group for more information.

Implications for Practice

Despite the limitations, this research suggests important implications for school districts considering whether to hire an SRO. The conversation around this role is not as simple as saying

yes or no to hiring the person in the role. It requires work and a deeper understanding of the local community. The start of looking at whether a school district is ready to discuss this topic could be the simple question, "*Would you support your district in hiring an SRO*?" Those participants whose responses were "no" to this statement also disagreed that students feel safe with an SRO on campus, they disagreed that SROs should wear bulletproof vests and full uniforms, and be armed on campus. Because so many of the responses seemed to be able to be predicted with participants responses to that initial question, having the school district start with this as a simple poll may be a good beginning. The other implication is that we often make assumptions about how a community may feel about these topics, and these data show that it is necessary to do the work and ask the questions, without making any assumptions.

Table 14 provides a summary of implications derived from each phase of the study, as well as implications from the study as a whole.

Table 14

Mixed Methods with Implications

Quantitative (Phase 1)	Qualitative (Phase 2)	Implications
Those not in support of the role of SRO expressed disagreement with wearing bulletproof vests and full uniform on campus, and students feeling of safety, as well as being armed on campus.	No interview participants were against the role of the SRO in schools. Discussion focused on why the choice of a uniform and being armed were important: clarity around who this person is, and the need for SROs to have the tools they need in case of any event.	Understand how the communit... Understand the history of traum... the community.
There were no statistical differences when comparing key domains to respondent race/ethnicity sub-group (e.g, BIPOC vs white), but there were statistical differences when comparing based on gender (e.g., male vs female).	In the interview phase, there were no differences in key domains by interviewee race/ethnicity or gender.	When considering who to have... decision process, ensure that th... races, ethnicities and roles.
The only statistical difference when comparing primary roles in education to other roles was when responding to "SROs are an important liaison in schools." School staff were favorable to this; non-school staff were significantly less supportive.	There were no differences in the question about SROs as a liaison in schools, but rather more of a focus on the need to build relationships and trust with the school and larger community.	Consider what the school distri... liaison between SROs and scho... Consider what should happen v... happens at school (What is the ... SRO? What is the process if th...
Regardless of primary role, participants rated "SROs make students feel less safe on campus" between a mean of 2 and 3 (disagree)	Regardless of primary role, participants shared that SROs help students feel safer on campuses and expanded that the building of relationship and trust helps with this feeling of both emotional and physical safety.	Understand the history and con... define what safety means for th...
There were statistical differences between primary role as parents vs. primary role other than parents among variables. Parents reported some disagreement to agreement (between a mean of 3 and 5) to the topics of wearing a bulletproof vest, feeling safer on campus, wearing regular clothes, wearing a uniform on campus, being armed on campus, and that an SRO is an important liaison to schools.	Participants in interviews shared the need to have a uniform for the role's clarity as well as for the safety of the officer and students. Participants understood why some may feel that wearing regular clothes would seem appealing or less intimidating, but shared that regardless, it was more important to have clarity by wearing a uniform.	Understand the purpose of the u... considerations for if an SRO w... Understand the non-negotiables... when considering what an SRO...

Recommendations

  Prior to beginning the hiring process, stakeholders need to reach consensus on whether it is the right decision to hire an SRO. Consensus does not mean that 100% of people agree, rather "Consensus is reached when all stakeholders have had a say and the will of the group has emerged and is evident, even to those who disagree" (DuFour, 2010, p. 228). If a school community decides police in schools make sense, how do we do this well? A process should be followed for input gathering among several entry points—prior to consideration, while decision making, as well as during the hiring and on-boarding process.

  Based on study findings, the following are recommendations for school districts considering whether to hire an SRO and how best to proceed with a hire, if so decided:

1. Understand the implications of this role in the community given perceptions of SROs shaped by:

  a. Trauma and prior experiences (positive or negative)

   i. Input gathering- what is the perspective of your community?

   ii. What kind of healing, exposure, or learning must occur? This question should be revisited throughout the process.

2. Input gathering and education on the role to ensure larger community and school level buy in:

  a. School districts and law enforcement must work together to determine the role itself and ensure that it is clear to all stakeholders and the local community.

   i. E.g. discussion question: What should the job of the SRO be? What falls under the scope of their responsibilities and what does not? What tasks would they lead (e.g., placing charges on a student) versus what tasks must they defer to school administrators (e.g., discipline)?

ii. This input can inform critical components in a job description.

iii. What kind of person should be in this role and how can we recruit a candidate that matches the need (professional and interpersonal qualities and skills they possess)?

3. School district, in partnership with law enforcement, should write the intergovernmental agreement

    a. Must be attainable and realistic

    b. Include stakeholder input

        i. E.g., Determine what an SRO should carry and wear (Consider an easily identifiable uniform and the tools an SRO may need to do their job well).

    c. Training practices

        i. What does law enforcement and SRO training already require? What needs to be added from the school district?

    d. A supervision plan and a process for review of success of the SRO/School District partnership.

        i. Include a plan for if the SRO is not the right candidate for the school district (or vice versa)

4. Create an interview process that will get to the root of understanding the candidate and whether they will be the right fit given the context of the community.

    a. Selection and interview committees: who should be included?

        i. Variety of roles (parents, school district personnel at different levels and jobs, law enforcement), races/ethnicities, genders

5. Onboarding including:

  a. A list of required training for an SRO (both included in law enforcement and school districts)

    i. Trauma informed practices

    ii. Anti-bias training

    iii. De-escalation strategies for both kids and adults

  b. A plan for continued support, trainings, meetings, and refinement within the role

    i. Who are the people who SRO's should go to for clarification?

    ii. What do regular check ins look like?

    iii. How is the school district and law enforcement ensuring the SRO has the time to complete their responsibilities?

Conclusion

Despite historical and present challenges around the question of whether law enforcement should have a role on school campuses, I have found through this research that even with differing opinions, there is a common thread of the desire to keep students safe at school. Although there may be some discomfort in the process, I believe that school districts can be equipped to make this decision and determine whether to hire an SRO. And, if it is determined to hire an SRO, there are clear patterns and themes to consider at every step.

<div align="center">

Appendix A

Qualtrics Survey

</div>

Background Questions:

What is your primary Role?

- Parent of student currently in school

- Staff member working directly in schools

- Law Enforcement – Non-SRO

- SRO

- School Board Member

- Community Member – no relation to schools

- Staff member working outside of schools (ex/district office)

- Staff member working at schools as contracted services (cafeteria, custodial, bus)

- Primary Role not listed

Demographics

What is your gender?

- Male

- Female

- Non-Binary

- Transgender

- Prefer not to respond

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Below High School

- High School

- Some College

- Associate degree

- Bachelor's Degree

- Master's Degree

- Doctorate

What is your race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)?

- ▫ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ▫ Asian
- ▫ Black or African American
- ▫ Hispanic or Latino/a
- ▫ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ▫ White
- ▫ Multiracial
- ▫ Prefer not to say
- ▫ Other

Scale Questions (1-7; 1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree):

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

1. I understand the role of a School Resource Officer

2. It is important to have a School Resource Officer on school campuses

3. School Resource Officers are intimidating

4. A School Resource Officer should wear a bullet proof vest on campus

5. I would feel safer if a School Resource Officer was on school campuses

6. Being intimidating is a negative quality for School Resource Officers

7. A School Resource Officer should wear regular clothes on campus

8. A School Resource Officer should wear a uniform on campus

9. School Resource Officers make students feel less safe on campus

10. A School Resource Officer should be armed

11. School Resource Officers should be intimidating

12. A School Resource Officer should never be armed

Yes or No Questions:

- o I, or someone I know personally, have had a positive experience with a School Resource Officer

- o I, or someone I know personally, have had a negative experience with a School Resource Officer

- o I, or someone I know personally, have had a positive experience with Law Enforcement

- o I, or someone I know personally, have had a negative experience with Law Enforcement

- o I would support my school district having a School Resource Officer

Open Ended Questions:

- From your experience and perspective, what support would a School Resource Officer add to a school district?

- Tell us about concerns or barriers that may come up when hiring an SRO to the district?

- What issues might arise in a district due to having an SRO?

- What type of training should an SRO have prior to working with students and families?

- What other considerations should there be in the decision-making process as to whether to hire an SRO?

Concluding open ended:

- Anything else you would like to share? (paragraph)

- I am interested in sharing my experiences in a one-on-one interview or focus group with Juliana Kelly. Please leave the following information (only to be used to contact you): Your name, email address, phone number

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Study

Hello, I am Juliana Kelly, and I am who is doing the research on this project. Thank you for agreeing to complete this interview with me. Signing the consent form that shows you agree to the interview and to have the interview recorded. This study is about school resource officers in schools. The role of a school resource officer varies from school to school. I will start by asking some broad questions and then we can go from there.

Interview Questions:

Background Questions:

1. What is your role in the community (parent, community member, staff, SRO, law enforcement)?

2. What is your race?

3. What is your gender?

4. If you are a parent, how old is your child? If you are a staff member, how long have you been in education? If you are a community member, what is your role in the educational system? If you are in law enforcement, how many years have you served?

Knowledge Question:

6. Tell me about what you know about the role of a School Resource Officer.

Experience Question:

7. Tell me about an interaction you or someone you know well have had with a school resource officer.

8. How did this experience make you feel?

9. Please describe the appearance of a school resource officer on campus.

Opinion and values questions:

10. There is disagreement about whether School Resource Officers help students feel safe at school. What is your opinion on student safety as it relates to school resource officers?

11. There is disagreement about whether School Resource Officers belong in schools. What is your opinion on this?

12. Suppose the school board votes against having a school resource officer, what is the best way to handle illegal situations such as students who bring drugs and alcohol on campus, or safety situations such as a fight?

13. Suppose the school board votes yes to having a school resource officer, what kind of training do you recommend they have prior to working with students? For law enforcement: What does your training look like?

14. Is there anything you would like to share with me that I have not asked you about?

Appendix C

Consent for Research Participation – Survey

Consent for Research Participation

Title: The Perceptions of Staff and Families on the Role of a School Resource Officer in Schools and What Steps Administrators Can Take to Support

Researcher(s):   Juliana Kelly, University of Oregon

Researcher Contact Info: 503-939-1463

julianak@uoregon.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully consider this information and the more detailed information provided below the box. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide whether to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider
• **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.
• **Purpose**. The purpose of this research is to gather perspectives about law enforcement and their role in schools. The researcher will pull themes from this work to help guide school districts
• **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last approximately 1 hour.
• **Procedures and Activities.** You will be asked to answer a series of questions on a survey
• **Risks.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include: Psychological risks (e.g., discomfort of prior trauma or memories if experiences have been

negative). There may be risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study.

- **Benefits**. There are no known direct benefits to you from your taking part in this research. While we cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include helping school districts understand perspectives of adults around law enforcement in schools and therefore helping guide important discussions around this topic.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary and the only alternative is to not participate.

Who is conducting this research?

The researcher Juliana Kelly from University of Oregon is asking for your consent to this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of the research is to gather the perspectives of adults on the topic of law enforcement's presence in schools. You are being asked to participate because you are an adult who either works in a school, has children in schools, or is in law enforcement. About 100 people will take part in this research.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your participation will last approximately one hour, during one session.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research?
If you agree to be in this research, your participation will include:
- Filling out a survey
- Permission to skip any question you do not wish to answer.

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your willingness to continue participation in this research.

What happens to the information collected for this research?
Information collected for this research will be used to create guidance for school districts who are determining whether to employ a School Resource Officer.
- Your name will not be used in any [e.g., published reports, conference presentations, etc.] about this study.
- We may publish/present the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?
We will take measures to protect your privacy including conducting interviews in a private setting and not including any personally identifiable information in the dissertation. Despite taking steps to protect your privacy, we can never fully guarantee your privacy will be protected.

We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information including storing data securely and using codes instead of names. Despite these precautions to protect the confidentiality of your information, we can never fully guarantee confidentiality of all study information.

Individuals and organization that conduct or monitor this research may be permitted access to and inspect the research records. This may include access to your private information and interview transcripts. These individuals and organizations include:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research.

What are the risks if I participate in this research?
The risks or discomforts of participating in this research include:

- Psychological risks (e.g., discomfort of prior trauma or memories if experiences have been negative)
- There may be risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study.

What are the benefits of participating in this research?
You may or may not benefit from participating in this research.

- There are no known direct benefits to you from your taking part in this research. While we cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include helping school districts understand perspectives of adults around law enforcement in schools and therefore helping guide important discussions around this topic.

What are my responsibilities if I choose to participate in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible for speaking about your perspective.

What if I want to stop participating in this research?
Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship --with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

- You can request that your information be withdrawn from research.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

There are no costs associated with participation in this research study.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

| Juliana Kelly |
| 503-939-1463 |

An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Research Compliance Services
5237 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-5237
(541) 346-2510
ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions throughout my participation.

I understand that by signing below, I volunteer to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form.

I consent to participate in this study [Yes/No checkboxes].

Qualtrics Survey question

Consent for Interview

Consent for Research Participation

Title: The Perceptions of Staff and Families on the Role of a School Resource Officer in Schools and What Steps Administrators Can Take to Support

Researcher(s): Juliana Kelly, University of Oregon

Researcher Contact Info: 503-939-1463

julianak@uoregon.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully consider this information and the more detailed information provided below the box. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide whether to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider
• **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.
• **Purpose**. The purpose of this research is to gather perspectives about law enforcement and their role in schools. The researcher will pull themes from this work to help guide school districts

- **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last up to 1.5 hours.
- **Procedures and Activities.** You will be asked to answer a series of questions in a one-on-one interview on Zoom
- **Risks.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include: Psychological risks (e.g., discomfort of prior trauma or memories if experiences have been negative). There may be risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study.
- **Benefits**. There are no known direct benefits to you from your taking part in this research. While we cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include helping school districts understand perspectives of adults around law enforcement in schools and therefore helping guide important discussions around this topic.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary and the only alternative is to not participate.

Who is conducting this research?

The researcher Juliana Kelly from University of Oregon is asking for your consent to this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of the research is to gather the perspectives of adults on the topic of law enforcement's presence in schools. You are being asked to participate because you are an adult who either works in a school, has children in schools, or is in law enforcement. About 8-10 people will take part in this portion of the research.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your participation will last approximately one hour, during one session.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research?
If you agree to be in this research, your participation will include:
- Logging into a Zoom call with the researcher, which will be recorded for the purpose of transcription.
- An opportunity to check the researcher's notes/transcription to ensure that what you have said is reflected accurately.
- Permission to skip any question you do not wish to answer.

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your willingness to continue participation in this research.

What happens to the information collected for this research?
Information collected for this research will be used to create guidance for school districts who are determining whether to employ a School Resource Officer.
- Your name will not be used in any [e.g., published reports, conference presentations, etc.] about this study.
- We may publish/present the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?

14

We will take measures to protect your privacy including conducting interviews in a private setting and not including any personally identifiable information in the dissertation. Despite taking steps to protect your privacy, we can never fully guarantee your privacy will be protected.

We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information including storing data securely and using codes instead of names. Despite these precautions to protect the confidentiality of your information, we can never fully guarantee confidentiality of all study information.

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- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research.

What are the risks if I participate in this research?
The risks or discomforts of participating in this research include:

- Psychological risks (e.g., discomfort of prior trauma or memories if experiences have been negative)
- There may be risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study.

What are the benefits of participating in this research?
You may or may not benefit from participating in this research.

- There are no known direct benefits to you from your taking part in this research. While we cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include helping school districts understand perspectives of adults around law enforcement in schools and therefore helping guide important discussions around this topic.

What are my responsibilities if I choose to participate in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible for speaking about your perspective.

What if I want to stop participating in this research?
Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship --with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

- You can request that your information be withdrawn from research.
- You may also request that the recording be destroyed at this time.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

There are no costs associated with participation in this research study.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

Juliana Kelly
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An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

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STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions throughout my participation.

I understand that by signing below, I volunteer to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form. I understand that if my ability to consent or assent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation in this study.

As described above, you will be audio/video recorded during the interview process described above. Recordings will be used for data analysis only.

- Qualtrics question:
    I agree to the use of audio/video recording [Yes/No]

By typing my name below, I consent to participate in this study.

*Qualtrics will include a box for agreement and signature.

School District Guidance for Hiring an SRO

Checklist

Getting started – Who do we Serve?

1. Understand the implications of an SRO given perceptions in the community
2. Consider past trauma and prior experiences (positive or negative)
    a. Who do we serve?
    b. Input gathering – What is the perspective of your community?
    c. What kind of healing, exposure, or learning must occur?

Input Gathering – Community and School Level Buy-in

1. School District and Law Enforcement meet to determine the role
    a. What should the job of the SRO entail?

     b.   What falls under the scope of the SRO's responsibilities?

     c.   What doesn't fall under the scope of the SRO's responsibilities?

     d.   What tasks would the SRO lead vs. a school administrator? (e.g., placing charges on a student vs. discipline)

2. Engage the community for input and education

     a.   Ensure a variety of roles (e.g., s*chool staff*, *law enforcement*, *SROs*, *community members*, *parents*, *students*) and demographics are invited to engage (e.g., *gender*, *socioeconomic*, *BIPOC/White*, *level of education*, *SROs*, *parent*, *students*)

3. Determine what critical components should be in the job description

     a.   What kind of person should be in this role? (professional and interpersonal qualities, skills)

Intergovernmental Agreement

1. Must be co-created by law enforcement and school district

     a.   Consider who should be on this team (school district, law enforcement).

2. Agreement must be attainable and realistic

3. Include stakeholder input

     a.   What should the SRO wear?

     b.   What should the SRO carry?

4. Include training practices

     a.   Consider what law enforcement already requires (e.g., NASRO).

     b.   Consider what should be added from the school district.

5. Determine who will supervise the SRO

6. Create a process for if the SRO is not the candidate for the school (or vice versa)

7. Create an interview process and questions.

     a.   Ensure both school district and law enforcement have input.

     c.   Who should be included in the screening and interview committees?

Onboarding

1. List all required training for the SRO (from law enforcement and school district)

     a.   Trauma informed practices

     b.   Anti-bias training

     c.   De-escalation strategies for youth and adults

2. Create a plan for ongoing support, trainings, meetings, etc.

     a.   Who will the SRO go to for clarification?

     b.   What do regular check-ins look like?

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