



Teaching, Counseling, and Law enforcement functions in South Carolina High Schools: A Study on the Perception of Time spent among School Resource Officers

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Abstract

In this article, the perception of the extent of time spent on the duties of the School Resource Officer Program in South Carolina among school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers, and high school principals was examined. A simple random sampling method was used to conduct the study using a random number generator. Every school resource officer and high school principal assigned to a South Carolina high school had an equal chance of being selected who met the set criteria of not being an alternative school, a charter school, or a correctional facility. The data included 63 participants throughout the state of South Carolina. A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the extent to which school resource officers perform their teaching functions, counseling functions, and law enforcement as perceived by school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers and high school principals. Games Howell analysis was used for those data that demonstrated a significant difference. The results of findings has noted that with an $F(2, 60) = 1.658$ and $p = .199$, no statistically significant difference was indicated when analyzing the data from the three populations in the teaching function. Secondly, an $F(2, 60) = 16.834$, $p = .000$, demonstrated a statistically significant difference was indicated when analyzing the data from the three populations in the counseling function. Finally, that an $F(2, 60) = 16.517$ and $p = .000$, demonstrated a statistically significant difference was indicated when analyzing the data from the three populations in the law enforcement function.

Keywords: School Resource Officer Program, Teaching, Counseling, Law Enforcement.

Introduction

In the wake of tragic incidents, such as school shootings, the subject of school violence has gotten more attention in the past decade than in previous years. According to Bardick and Bernes (2008), children may demonstrate a number of externalizing and internalizing behaviors throughout childhood, yet not every child was at risk of violence. A child who demonstrates a number of violent behaviors with increasing severity, frequency, intensity,

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and duration may be at a serious risk of violence. Young children's aggressive behaviors (for example, hitting, kicking, verbal insults, and threats) had been linked to serious violence perpetration in adolescence (for example, homicide, assault) (Singer & Flannery, 2000) and to domestic violence, criminality, and substance abuse in adults (Farrington, 2005).

Children who react to environmental events with angry and hostile emotions may also act aggressively (Frick & Morris, 2004). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011), during the 2009–2010 school year, 433,800 serious disciplinary actions were taken by public schools with physical attacks or fights being 265,100 of these actions. Consequently, There had been a greater percentage of transfers to specialized schools for distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs and weapons (32%) than firearms (29%), alcohol (22%), and fighting (14%), during the 2009–2010 school term (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). This decrease of fights on school property may be due to the increased presence of school resource officers in high schools.

Criminal justice tools and personnel play an increasingly important role at nearly every stage of the disciplinary process. Whereas police and security officers in schools were not new phenomenon, school resource officers within schools had become the fastest growing law enforcement field (Brady, Balmer, & Phenix, 2007). School resource officers in schools received training specific to educational settings. A 2004 national survey of teachers reported that 67% of teachers in majority–African American or Hispanic middle and high schools report armed police stationed in their schools (Hirschfield, 2008). However, suburban schools, where 60% of teachers work alongside armed police, were not far behind (Hirschfield, 2008).

Generally, accompanying police and security guards were law enforcement methods like bag searches and video cameras. Among preventive practices, metal detectors and personal searches seem the clearest indications of criminalization since they define students as criminal suspects (Hirschfield, 2008). Not surprisingly, the likelihood of metal detectors positively relates to the prevalence of minority students (DeVoe et al., 2005). School resource officers in schools received training specific to educational settings. However, as on the street, any violations of the law were subject to arrest, and school resource officers were not required to obtain permission from anyone to make an arrest (Devine, 1996; Hagan et al., 2002).

Schools have developed various safety plans that address preventing incidence of violence. These safety plans include the entire community becoming involved in school safety. Plans involving the community brought in local law enforcement within the schools. Plans such as crisis management; zero tolerance zones; environmental structure changes; family inclusion; and school resource officers that included a closer relationship with juvenile authorities, community involvement, and listening to students became necessary. According to Wages (2002), school resource officers had been proposed as one of the key components in combating crime in the nation's schools. The primary goal of a school resource officer had been to work side-by-side with students (K–12 grade) as a role model, mentor, counselor, friend, and teacher (Lott, 1999). The secondary goal of the school resources officer was law enforcement. As a result, school resource officers had been important to today's high schools.

In 1997, public schools hosted 9,400 school resource officers within urban, suburban, and rural schools (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000); however, their numbers grew to 14,337 by 2003 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). School resource officers increased

largely because of federal funding that begun under the Community Oriented Policing Schools program. The Community-Oriented Policing Schools program was where urban, rural and suburban schools all vastly expanded the number of school resource officers to improve and/or maintain trust, rapport, and collaboration between law enforcement, students, and school personnel within schools.

School violence in America has not escape the rural states within our nation; as a result, the state of South Carolina had not been exempted from this sort of violence from rural to urban areas within the state. The school resource officer is becoming a vital agent into accomplishing increased safety from violence. According to Riley (1998), the school resource officer had been specifically trained to perform these roles: a law enforcement officer, a law-related counselor, and a law-related education teacher. The school resource officer was not necessarily a Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) officer (although many have received the training), a security guard, or an officer who had been placed temporarily in a school in response to a crisis situation, but rather acts as a comprehensive resource for his or her school (Wages, 2002).

In this paper, the extent to which school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers, and high school principals in South Carolina high schools, perceived school resource officers' functions in teaching, counseling, and law enforcement was examined. The study examined the percent of time that school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers, and high school principals perceive school resource officers' performing the responsibilities of law-related teaching, law-related counseling, and law enforcement as identified during the academic school year of 2009-2010. A quantitative survey research was conducted with school resource officers, their supervisors working within Sheriff and municipal departments in South Carolina, and high school principals within South Carolina.

Literature Review

The Library of Congress (2009) noted that the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, amended in 1998, permitted grants for public safety and community-oriented policing. The amended Act was used to establish school-based partnerships between local law enforcement agencies and local school systems by using law enforcement officers as school resource officers (Library of Congress, 2009). These officers were intended to operate in and around elementary and secondary schools to combat school-related crime and disorder problems, gangs, and drug activities (Library of Congress, (2009).

In some states like South Carolina, school district officials made arrangements with local police and Sheriff Departments to have officers and deputies assigned to serve as school resource officers; however, other states had created their own independent police departments for schools (Brown, 2006; Girouard, 2001). Brown (2006) noted that school resource officers were "a new species of public servant: a hybrid of educational, correctional, and law enforcement official," (p. 593). However, Brown may be incorrect in this assumption. Many law enforcement agencies preferred to stress law enforcement as a last resort when it comes to their presence within the school system (Benigni, 2001; Sterling, 1998). On the other hand, school principals and teachers prefer to stress law enforcement as a first resort when it came to school resource officer's presence in the school system (Lambert & McGinty, 2002; VanCleave, 2008).

Previous research had found that law-related teaching was not considered an important function or task for school resource officers within the school system by school principals and teachers (Benigni, 2001; Lambert & McGinty, 2002; VanCleave, 2008). However, it was just as important as or even more important than law-related counseling and law enforcement by law enforcement (Benigni, 2001). Based upon the triad concept, as a law-related educator, the school resource officer would find many school subjects in which law-related education can be incorporated. Trained in the law, the school resource officer had a unique perspective when translating their experience into the classroom (South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, 2009). According to the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy (2009), an officer's training in the law can be applied to civics and government classes, for example. The school resource officer's teaching schedule should be coordinated with the school administration and the teachers. School resource officers are required to develop an expertise in presenting various law-related subject matters to high school level students (South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, 2009).

As a counselor, the school resource officer serves as a resource to the students, their parents, and the school faculty (South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, 2009). Officers were trained to expect students to approach them with personal, academic, family or law-related problems. Through networking, the school resource officer should be able to refer individuals to the appropriate agencies that can assist them. Law-related counseling is considered the most dynamic aspect of the school resource officer's assignment.

The school resource officer must be knowledgeable of a variety of community and governmental agencies. These officers become resources to their police agencies through providing intelligence on gangs, juvenile crimes, burglaries, drugs, auto theft, vandalism, etc. Commonly, the school resource officer was a clearinghouse of information about topics such as crime prevention, alcohol, other drug abuse, pregnancy prevention, and other public health issues, as well as other public assistance agencies such as rape crisis and domestic abuse shelters. These officers also should act as a positive liaison between students, the school, and family court. However, in today's society, due to the greatest influence on adolescents be their peers, the media, and schools; it was imperative that the school resource officer become more of a law-related educator and law-related counselor than a law enforcement officer within the schools (Sherling, 1998). As a result, these school resource officers must be active listeners and positive role models. According to Sherling (1998), every state within the United States has the School Resource Officer Program along with international countries such as Australia, Canada, and England.

Methods

A simple random sampling method was used to conduct the study using a random number generator. Every school resource officer and high school principal assigned to a South Carolina high school had an equal chance of being selected who met the set criteria of not being an alternative school, a charter school, or a correctional facility. The data included 63 participants throughout the state of South Carolina. Participants represented all four regions of South Carolina; the Upstate region represented 30.2% of the sample; the Pee Dee region represented 14.3% of the sample; the Midlands region represented 41.3% of the sample; and the Low Country region represented 14.3% of the sample. The sample consisted of three group populations; 32 school resource officers; 15 the supervisors of the school resource officers; and 16 high school principals with an overall net response

rate of 60% demonstrated. The response rate was consistent with previous studies on school resource officers (Lambert, 2000; May & Chen, 2007; VanCleave, 2008).

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for the study were that school resource officers do not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by school resource officers. Secondly, school resource officers do not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by supervisors of school resource officers. Lastly, that school resource officers do not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by school principals.

Description of the Sample

The School Resource Officer Program Evaluation Survey data included 63 participants throughout the state of South Carolina. Participants represented all four regions of South Carolina. The Upstate region represented 30.2% of the sample; the Pee Dee region represented 14.3% of the sample; the Midlands region represented 41.3% of the sample; and the Low Country region represented 14.3% of the sample. The sample consisted of three group populations; 32 school resource officers; 15 the supervisors of the school resource officers; and 16 high school principals with an overall net response rate of 60%. The response rate is consistent with previous studies within School Resource Officer Program studies (Lambert, 2000; May & Chen, 2007; VanCleave, 2008). Of the 63 respondents of the survey, 56 (88.9%) were male and 7 (11.1%) were female. Gender was deemed typical of those in law enforcement and high school administrators in the United States. The average age of the respondents was 43.1 years. The School Resource Officer Programs were located 24 (38.1%) in rural areas, 28 (41.3%) in suburban areas and 13 (20.6%) in urban areas. Respondents also were involved with school enrollment where 17 (27%) had a student body with less than 499 students; 15 (23.8%) had a student body with 500 to 999 students; 12 (19%) with a student body with 1000 to 1499 students; and 19 (30.2%) with a student body with more than 1500. Respondents' educational level was that all 16 (25.4%) school high school principals had a master's level or an advance degree and law enforcement officers with 41 (65.1%) with a high school diploma to baccalaureate degree. Only six (9.5%) of law enforcement officers held a master's level degree or higher.

Results

Teaching Functions

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the extent to which school resource officers perform their teaching functions as perceived by school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers and high school principals. With an $F(2, 60) = 1.658$ and $p = .199$, no statistically significant difference was indicated when analyzing the data from the three populations in the teaching function. School resource officers perceive that teaching functions were 14% of their overall functions, supervisors of school resource officers perceive that teaching functions were 17% of the school resource officers' function, and high school principals perceive teaching functions were 10% of school resource officers overall functions.

Table 1.

*The ANOVA results for the extent to which Counseling
 is a School Resource Officer's Function*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7048.849	2	3524.424	16.038	.000
Within Groups	13185.469	60	219.758		
Total	20234.317	62			

Table 2.

*The Games-Howell results for the extent to which Counseling
 is a School Resource Officer's Function*

(I) Occupation	(J) Occupation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
SRO	SRO	10.86207*	3.88887	.021
	Supervisor			
	School Principal	24.98707*	3.98833	.000
SRO Supervisor	SRO	-10.86207*	3.88887	.021
	School Principal	14.12500*	3.62828	.002
School Principal	SRO	-24.98707*	3.98833	.000
	SRO Supervisor	-14.12500*	3.62828	.002

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Counseling Functions

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the extent to which a school resource officer performs the counseling function as perceived by school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers and high school principals. With an $F(2, 60) = 16.834, p = .000$, a statistically significant difference (Table 1) was indicated when analyzing the data from the three populations in the counseling function. Due to the statistically significant difference, a Games-Howell post hoc test had been conducted.

The results of the Games-Howell post hoc analysis (Table 2) indicated that there was a difference between school resource officers and high school principals ($p=.000$) on the counseling function. School resource officers' perceive that 41% of their functions were

counseling; while high school principals' perceive that only 15% of school resource officers' functions are counseling. School resource officers had an 11% difference from supervisors of school resource officers ($p = .020$) on the counseling function. Supervisors of school resource officers perceive at a higher percentage (30%) than school principals ($p = .002$) that school resource officers' functions was counseling.

Law Enforcement Functions

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine school resource officers' law enforcement function. With an $F(2, 60) = 16.517$ and $p = .000$ (Table 3), a statistically significant difference was indicated when analyzing the data from the three populations in the law enforcement function. Due to the statistically significant difference, the Games-Howell statistics (Table 4) revealed that high school principals have a 29% ($p=.000$) means difference from school resource officers in the percent of time school resource officers conducted their law enforcement duties, while high school principals have a 21% ($p=.003$) means differences from supervisors of school resource officers. No statistical significant difference between school resource officers and supervisors of school resource officers on the percent of time spent on the law enforcement function by school resource officers.

Table 3.

The ANOVA results for the extent to which Law Enforcement is a School Resource Officer's Function

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9471.624	2	4735.812	16.517	.000
Within Groups	17203.646	60	86.727		
Total	26675.270	62			

The null hypotheses were rejected due to the results. The null hypothesis, school resource officers do not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by school resource officers was rejected. School resource officers perceived that counseling related functions were their duties within the schools at 41.4%; while they perceived that law enforcement duties were performed at 44% within schools. Secondly, the null hypothesis, school resource officers do not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by supervisors of school resource officers was rejected with law enforcement duties at 52% within schools. Lastly the null hypothesis, school resource officers do not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by school principals was rejected. High school principals perceived that school resource officers used their law enforcement duties 73% of the time spent within schools.

Table 4.

*The Games-Howell results for the extent to which Law Enforcement
 is a School Resource Officer's Function*

(I) Occupation	(J) Occupation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
SRO	SRO	-7.67816	4.98447	.287
	Supervisor			
	School Principal	-29.15733*	5.21627	.000
SRO Supervisor	SRO	7.67816	4.98447	.287
	School Principal	-21.47917*	5.84857	.003
School Principal	SRO	29.15733*	5.21627	.000
	SRO Supervisor	21.47917*	5.84857	.003

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to Huffman (1995), in order for school resource officers to maintain a safe learning environment as educators and communicators, it is expected that they prevent antisocial behavior in juveniles and build a positive relationship between law enforcement and the youth within the community. School resource officers should address the issues of alcohol, drugs, gangs and the law through lectures and class presentations within the schools (Gulen, 2010).

The present study, like other studies (Jackson, 2002; Lambert & McGinty, 2002; Murray, 2003), utilized ANOVA to determine if there has been a significant difference between the three group responses concerning the time being spent on the school resource officers' triad model roles and the duties and responsibilities of school resource officers. Murray's (2003) data indicates that there has been no significant difference between three groups about the amount of time that has been allocated to the triad of school resource officers' roles. The present study found that the teaching function was the least amount of time spent within the triad with no significant difference between school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers, and high school principals, like Murray (2003). However, the present study found that there were significant differences in the times spent conducting counseling and law enforcement duties amongst the three respondent groups. The present study results indicated that high school principals perceived that school resource officers spend more time in their law enforcement duties than counseling and teaching duties. Supervisors of school resource officers perceive that counseling takes more time than teaching and law enforcement.

Gibson (2001) concluded that the role performed by school resource officers tended to vary from school-to-school. Gibson asserts that the inconsistencies in the role expectations and the tasks performed by school resource officers indicated that there is confusion about the specific role of the school resource officer. Gibson's analysis suggests that school resource officers believed that service-oriented tasks were almost as important as the law enforcement related tasks. The present study agrees with this finding. The majority of the school resource officers believed that counseling was their highest with school resource officers' perceiving that 41% of their functions were counseling to students.

The present study examines the extent to which school resource officers, supervisors of school resource officers, and high school principals in South Carolina high schools, perceived school resource officers' functions in teaching, counseling, and law enforcement. The study found, through an evaluation of the School Resource Officer Program, that there was the perception that the law enforcement component overwhelmed the education/teaching and counseling components as to what school resource officers should spend their time on by high school principals. However, there were no significant differences among the three groups about the time spent on education/teaching component. School resource officers and their supervisors both agree with no significant difference that school resource officers spend almost an even amount of time counseling along with performing their law enforcement functions. This study has confirmed Gibson's study (2001) in that the inconsistencies in role expectations has lead to confusion as to the role of school resource officers within the state of South Carolina in how their time should be spent while performing their duties.

Jackson (2002) suggested that the school resource officer did not have a significant impact on students' perception of police and delinquency. Jackson concludes that this weak impact is, at least in part, attributable to the negative contact young people have with the police and their school resource officer. Jackson also concludes that school administrators in Missouri should take the monetary resources being dedicated to the school resource officer intervention and use it for counseling, student-faculty crime prevention programs or delinquency awareness programs. The present study found that there was an over reliance of the law enforcement component and a lack of the education/teaching component. As a result, students within the schools never could fully relate to school resource officers as a teacher or a counselor, but only law enforcement. Jackson found that students viewed law enforcement officers as individuals that only carried them to jail when they misbehaved. The present study also found that high school principals do not perceive the counseling component to be as high as perceived by school resource officers and their supervisors. The trust of law enforcement among young individuals could increase if high school principals allowed school resource officers to time to counsel more and arrest less.

Benigni (2001) concluded that all of the respondents believe that the triad functions are important based upon the survey and the case studies. Nevertheless, there is a discrepancy among the respondents about the specific tasks that are to be performed by the school resource officer. The educational respondents had a higher emphasis on law enforcement tasks and less on counseling and teaching roles by school resource officers. However, law enforcement respondents place a greater emphasis on counseling and teaching functions than do the educators. The present study concurs with the findings of this study.

VanCleave (2008) study also indicates that high school teachers tended to prefer law enforcement related items to law-related counseling and teachings. This data is in

agreement with previous school resource officers' research about individuals within education perception of school resource officers' responsibilities (Benigni, 2001; Lambert and McGinty, 2002) and along with the present study. VanCleave also studied whether or not there was a relationship between personal factors such as gender, age, years of teaching, and marital status that may shape a teacher's perception of the importance of a school resource officer's tasks, attributes, skills, and areas of knowledge. The present study focuses on the evaluation of the School Resource Officer Program rather than the demographic factors that could have shaped the respondents' perception.

The null hypothesis, school resource officers did not perform their law enforcement duties at a higher extent than law-related counseling and law-related teaching as perceived by school resource officers. The null hypothesis was rejected due to the fact that, school resource officers perceived that teaching functions are 14.5% of their overall functions; that they performed their counseling functions 41.4% of the time; and that they performed their law enforcement functions 44% of the time. Supervisors of school resource officers perceived the teaching functions were 17% of the school resource officers' function; that school resource officers' conduct their counseling functions 30% of their time; and that school resource officers' conduct their law enforcement functions 52% of the time. The research study has also found that high school principals perceived the teaching functions to be 10% of school resource officers overall functions; the counseling functions to be 15% of school resource officers' functions; and the law enforcement functions to be 73% of school resource officers functions within their schools. School principals strongly perceived that school resource officers do not spend a large percentage of their time teaching or counseling students about various law related issues.

School resource officers' influences on students were based on the type of contact they have with the students within their schools, especially those students that were considered at-risk. Previous research had found that individuals who have reported some contact with law enforcement within the past had generally held less favorable attitudes regarding law enforcement than individuals who have had no prior contact with law enforcement (Brick, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Cox & Falkenberg, 1987; Hagan et al., 2005). Brick et al. noted that previous research focused primarily on the negative interactions with law enforcement such as some form of social control exerted on an individual by the law enforcement. However, Brick et al found that positive contact with law enforcement has been found to improve individuals' attitudes about law enforcement as a whole. As a result, law-related teaching and counseling may have a much stronger impact on at-risk students than the law enforcement functions of a school resource officer.

Limitations/Delimitations

Participants' responses to the survey instrument represented the perspectives or opinions of school resource officers, their supervisors, and high school principals' perceptions on the extent to which school resource officers spend their time performing their duties within the School Resource Officer Program. Generalization can only be to the larger population of school resource officers assigned to high schools within South Carolina and not nationally, due to a random sample of public high schools with the state of South Carolina. This was due to the fact that, some states have a more structured School Resource Officer Programs; while other states, like South Carolina, allow school districts to decide the structure of their School Resource Officer Program.

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