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**Student Perceptions of the Impact Security Measures have on  
Their High School Experience**

By

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

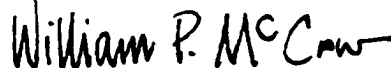
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The University of Montana

2002

Approved by:



Chairman



Dean, Graduate School

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**Student Perceptions of the Impact Security Measures have on Their High School Experiences**

Chairman: William P. McCaw, Ed. D. *WPM*

This qualitative phenomenological study describes the perceptions of students regarding the impact security measures had on their high school experience. A sample of seven subjects was purposely selected from freshmen on The University of Montana campus. Data was collected during one-on-one interviews and examined using a phenomenological analysis as articulated by Colaizzi (1978).

The steps in the analysis of data were (a) extraction of the phrases or sentences that directly relate to the experience from the interviews, (b) extracting the meaning of each phrase or sentence, (c) rewording the meanings of the statements, d) reducing the data by clustering the individual themes found in all the participants' responses to form common themes, (e) further reducing the data by combining the common themes to form general themes, and (f) concluded by moving back and forth between the meaning statements and the general themes forming a revised list that accurately described the meanings in the themes.

This research formed five Common Themes which were: (a) violence or threats of violence at school disturbed and frightened students, (b) students are more comfortable in schools that employ security measures and a particular security measure, the school resource officer program, was viewed as more effective when the officers established relationships with students, (c) security measures have influenced and altered school culture, (d) security measures and violence have changed teacher/student relationships, and (e) students believe that appropriate and comprehensive security measures are necessary in schools. Three General Themes emerged from the common themes and are (a) school culture has been influenced and affected by violence and security measures, (b) students want the opportunity to build open and positive relationships with teachers and other adults in the school, and (c) students perceive that security measures are necessary in schools. The overarching conclusion from this study was: students want to experience a balance in their schools between opportunities for open, positive relationships with adults and experiencing security measures that provide a safe environment without being too intrusive. It is recommended that high schools include student perceptions of security measures and regard students as partners when implementing safety measures.



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

A stranger with a gun is seen in a field adjacent to an elementary school in Montana. The school was immediately placed in lockdown mode, and according to the school's emergency plan, students take cover in their rooms. In another Montana community, an armed resource officer walks the halls of a high school. These situations and incidents of violence that occurred at schools in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon; and Littleton, Colorado have caused schools to take precautions similar to the examples stated above as well as other measures, some of which can be quite intrusive to the students. Schools have attempted to protect students by developing and implementing security measures on their campuses (Friedland, 1999). These security measures were intended to provide a safe environment for students by eliminating violence, weapons, and intruders.

Common security measures that schools have implemented are school resource officers, metal detectors, lockdown procedures, visitor identification procedures, restriction of student movement, increased staff supervision, surveillance cameras, school evacuation plans, and a system for controlling entry of intruders during school hours (Burke & Herbert, 1996; Friedland, 1999; Halford, 1998; Hylton, 1998; Karell, 1996; National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999; Noguera, 1996; Yeagley, 2000). School security measures were intended to increase safety and reduce violence in schools

thereby making the school safe and a more effective learning environment (Adami & Norton, 1996; Friedland, 1999; Halford, 1998; Hylton, 1998; Yeagley, 2000).

School security and safety measures may be making schools safer, but the effect and impact these same measures are having on students in the schools has not been examined.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The violence that seems to be consuming segments of youth in our society has been chronicled on a daily basis by newspapers and television reports. The destructive impact of this violence on the lives of students, teachers, and other staff members has forced schools to focus on safety issues (Buckner & Flanery, 1996; Halford, 1998; Noguera, 1996; Trump, 1999). Schools have been integrating security measures into their culture without taking the time to study the impact on students. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive body of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of the security measures that schools have implemented (National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999). Not only are schools unsure of the impact security measures are having on students, but they are also uncertain as to the effectiveness of the security measures regarding safety (Halford, 1998; Noguera, 1996; Trump, 1999). The impact that increased security measures may have on a student's high school experience has not been determined at this time. It appears that very little if any research exists on the relationship between security measures and the impact on students. However, this study will contribute research to this topic by an in-depth examination of student reactions to security measures implemented in their high schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine the impact that security measures have on a student's high school experience. This research used a qualitative analysis of student perceptions to determine the impact of security measures in schools. It is important that schools understand what impact security measures have on student social interactions at school, student-teacher relationships, student learning, and student perceptions of the security measures that have been thrust upon them by the school. Understanding the impact of security measures on students will assist schools in future planning for safety purposes and in providing the best learning environment possible.

### **Research Questions**

Creswell (1998) recommends that a researcher of a qualitative study reduce their study to a single overarching or "central" question and several sub questions. This research study followed that suggestion with the following central question:

1. What is the impact of security measures on a student's high school experience?

This central question was supported by the following eight sub-questions:

1. What specific security measures were implemented in the school?
2. What are student perceptions of the security measures implemented?
3. What are student perceptions about the relationship of safety to security measures in their schools?



4. What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures may have on violence in their school?
5. What impact, if any, did security measures have on student social interactions?
6. What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures have on school culture?
7. What are student perceptions of the impact that security measures have on student learning?
8. What impact, if any, did security measures have on student-teacher relationships?

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms and definitions were used:

#### **Entry Control System**

A system designed to control access to the campus or school buildings by individuals or unauthorized intruders. This system is set up to discourage or prevent the casual intruder from entering the school (National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999).

#### **Lockdown Procedures**

A system of procedures designed to secure the school building and campus in the event of an intruder or other threat to the safety of students and staff (National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999).

### Metal Detectors

Metal detectors are devices used to discover objects made of metal that may not be visible. Metal detectors are an increasingly popular strategy for improving school security by screening student backpacks and bodies for firearms, knives, and other tools of aggression (National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999).

### School Climate

“The elements that make up school climate are complex, ranging from the quality of interactions in the teachers’ lounge to the noise levels in hallways and cafeterias, from the physical structure of the building to the physical comfort levels (involving such factors as heating, cooling, and lighting) of the individuals and how safe they feel” (Frieberg, 1998, p. 1).

### School Culture

“Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges” (Peterson and Deal, 1998, p. 1).

### School Evacuation Plans

These plans allow the safe and orderly exiting of students and staff from the school buildings or campus when faced with an emergency or involved in a crisis (National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999).

### School Resource Officer (SRO)

The School Resource Officer program places a policeman in the school with responsibility to provide educational programs in such areas as tobacco, drugs, gang activity, violence diffusion and other safety issues (Hylton, 1998).

#### School Violence.

Is behavior characterized by bullying, extortion, physical fighting, assault against other students and staff, sexual harassment, gang activity, or weapon carrying (Curcio & First, 1993; Steinberg, 1991).

#### Surveillance Cameras

Video cameras are used as part of a closed circuit television system to monitor the school buildings and campus (National Institute of Justice Research Report, 1999).

#### **Delimitations of the Study**

The participants for a phenomenological study must be carefully chosen to ensure that they are individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Subsequently, the selection of the participants was a delimitation of this study. The sample for this study was purposefully selected from freshmen students who have experienced school security measures while attending their previous high school and answered an advertisement placed in the freshmen dorms at The University of Montana. The participants selected had the necessary skills to communicate and relate their experiences regarding security measures and they had experienced security measures in high school within the last year. The scope of this study was delimited to the population of students selected for the study and to those high schools represented on The University

of Montana Campus. The participants selected for this study were chosen from those students who have experienced the phenomenon.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research study had limitations due to the schools represented, size of the schools, geographical location of the schools, and memory recall of the students interviewed. Specific school factors that may influence student perceptions were culture changes that may have taken place in the schools, past violent incidents, school issues other than security measures, and student overall perceptions of their high school as well as the extent of the personal experiences of the students. Another limitation of this study was that disengaged high school students most likely were not freshmen on The University of Montana campus and therefore did not have an opportunity to be included in the study.

Generalizability of this study is a limitation, because Creswell (1994) warns that qualitative studies are not intended to generalize finding when he says, “The intent of qualitative research is not to generalize findings, but to form a unique interpretation of events” (p. 158). However, this does not mean that findings from this study cannot be generalized. Eisner (1991) indicates that researchers who select their samples by means other than randomly must assume the responsibility of determining whether the results are appropriate to their situation. Eisner further maintains that generalizations from a qualitative study should be regarded as tools with which to work from as they are molded

into context. Thus, the generalizability and transferability of this study's findings may be appropriate as determined by the user of these findings.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research presented important information for school officials to consider and incorporate into their planning as they implement safety measures for students in an attempt to provide the best learning environment in their school. The results and implications of this study will assist school officials in understanding the impact that security measures have on student social interactions, student-teacher relationships, and student learning. This information will be extremely valuable, insightful, and significant for schools as they plan and assess security measures.

This study increased the rather limited body of research that currently exists on the impact of security measures on students. The results of this research were a student-oriented approach to the impact that security measures have on student learning and social situations. This research, from a student's viewpoint, is extremely critical for educational leaders as they implement security measures in schools with the best of intentions, yet uncertainty as to its impact. However, the very measures that schools have implemented may be having an adverse impact on students. According to Noguera (1995) the strategy that many school districts have adopted is one of converting schools into prison-like facilities. He suggests that these schools believe that the best way to reduce violence is to identify potential students who may commit acts of violence and to exclude them from the other students. Noguera believes that schools must find ways to create

more humane learning environments that will lessen the feelings of alienation, fear, and repression for students, staff, and administrators.

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control has conducted extensive research on the thirteen leading violence prevention efforts. The center's research caused Halford (1998) to state, "The center's research lends authority to what many educators already know: that focusing on the hardware of control will not resolve dilemmas involving the software of our students' hearts" (p. 1). Therefore, it was imperative that this study be conducted to examine the impact security measures have regarding a student's perception of their high school experience. The results of this study contribute valuable knowledge to the current literature on the impact security measures are having in our schools. The review of literature, which follows in Chapter Two, demonstrates that additional information from this study is surely needed on the impact of security measures on a student's high school experience.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Literature**

A review of the existing literature revealed that very little work has been done on the impact security measures have on a student's high school experience. However, a limited amount of work has been done on school culture and its relationship to school safety. The literature concerning school culture and safety was helpful in developing a relationship between security measures and the impact on students. School culture and safety have several interrelated components that form a solid base for their integration and inclusion in this study. The interrelated components of school culture and safety that formed the framework for this study's review of the literature are: (a) school violence, (b) student-to-student relationships, (c) student-to-teacher relationships, (d) security measures, and (e) the culture and climate of the school. School violence encompasses the afore mentioned areas and therefore will begin this review of the literature.

#### **School Violence**

Schools have been concerned about violence, crime, and victimization in and around buildings and on campuses since the 1950s (Asmussen, 1992). The problem of violence at school increased to the point that in 1974 Congress mandated a national survey of the prevalence of school crime. This mandate resulted in the Safe Schools Study as documented by the National Institute of Education (NIE, 1986). The Safe Schools Study (SSS) report showed some trends that disturbed many educators.

Statistics from the SSS report revealed that while teenagers spend up to one-fourth of their waking hours at school, 40 percent of the robberies and 36 percent of personal attacks against them occurred at school (Rapp, Carrington, & Nicholson, 1986). These authors went on to indicate that junior high students were affected at higher rates than high school students, and a third of junior high students in large cities said they avoided certain places at school because they feared being victimized by a peer. The number of students who reported staying home from school because they feared for their safety increased during the mid-nineteen eighties (Rapp, Carrington, & Nicholson, 1986). Hanke (1996) reported results, which indicated that teachers who said they were threatened with physical harm numbered over 100,000, and teachers who reported being physically attacked each month numbered over 5,000. These attacks were much more likely to result in injury for teachers compared to assaults between students. These assaults and resulting injuries can prove very costly to schools.

The SSS report documented the economic costs of school crime and violence to be an estimated \$200 million annually. This report revealed that burglaries were occurring five times more often in schools than in businesses. The average cost of each theft was about \$150. Vandalism incidents were also higher than expected, occurring an average of one time per month in one fourth of the schools surveyed. From 1950 to 1975, aggressive behavior in the schools had shifted from acts of violence against property to violence against persons. Fights had shifted from words to weapons causing the result to be death in some cases (Rubel, 1977). The SSS survey gave some unexpected results and



conclusions. The results of the study caused additional interest in the nature and extent of school crime and violence and its impact on students and school staff.

The SSS report lead directly to a School Crime Survey, which was given to over 10,000 students age 12-19 who attended school in the first six months of the 1988-89 school year. This survey showed that nine percent of students had been victims of crime in or around school: seven percent reported at least one property crime and two percent a violent crime (Bastian & Taylor, 1991). These authors further indicated that students over the age of 17 were less likely to be victims than younger students, with ninth graders the most likely to be victimized and twelfth graders least likely to be victimized. The survey went on to show that 18 percent of the students "sometimes" feared being the victim of an attack. As many as 16 percent of the students surveyed reported that a teacher had been threatened or attacked at their school, and 15 percent reported gangs in their school. Six percent of the students reported they avoided some place in their school because they feared attack and two percent said they had taken a weapon to school to protect themselves (Bastian & Taylor, 1991). The findings of this survey were in agreement with another study done just two years earlier by the National Adolescent Student Health organization.

The National Adolescent Student Health (NASH), as documented by the American School Health Association (ASHA, 1989), surveyed over 11,000 eighth and tenth grade students. The ASHA survey revealed that nearly 40 percent of the students had been in a physical fight at school, or on the bus to or from school in the past year.

The survey went on to indicate that 34 percent of the students reported that someone had threatened to hurt them at school and 13 percent reported being attacked at school. Student's fear of victimization was significant with 22 percent of the students carrying a knife or some other weapon such as a gun to school in the past year for safety. Surveys seem to show consistently that the primary reason students carry a weapon to school is for protection rather than with the intent to harm someone else (Sheley & Wright, 1993). Both the ASHA and Sheley and Wright surveys demonstrate that a significant number of students fear for their safety at school and some carry weapons to protect themselves. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey done just two years later would seem to demonstrate the continuance of this trend.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRB) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta (CDC, 1995) seems to support the NASH survey. The YRB found that approximately one out of every 20 high school students (4.4 percent) said they skipped at least one day from school because they did not feel safe at or on the way to school. Younger students were more likely to miss a day of school rather than older students because of fear for their safety. The YRB survey found that 18 percent of the boys and five percent of the girls missing school reported carrying a weapon to school at least once during the month preceding the survey. The survey indicated that 16 percent of the students said they had been in a physical fight in the past year and almost one-third said they had property deliberately damaged or stolen at school in the past year (CDC, 1995).

Results from a National School Board Association survey (NSBA, 1993) revealed that more than 80 percent of school districts reported in 1993 that school violence had gotten worse compared to the previous five years. The most often reported form of school violence was assault, which occurred in 78 percent of the responding districts. The number of students bringing weapons to school increased to 61 percent; student assaults on teachers increased to 28 percent. The increases in violence were not limited to urban school districts, but occurred with more frequency over the past five years in suburban and rural schools (Rossman & Morley, 1996).

Violent victimization rates for students reached a high of 59 victimizations per 1000 students in 1993 and then declined to a low of 26 victimizations per 1000 students in 2000. The percentage of students that were victims of both violent and property crimes decreased from ten percent in 1995 to six percent in 2001. However, the percentage of students that were threatened or injured in the previous 12 months with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property remained between seven and nine percent from 1993 to 2001 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).

These surveys support the contention that school violence increased over a 50-year span reaching a high in 1993, and then declining over the past few years. However, violent crime with a weapon against students has remained nearly constant in recent years. This violent crime has caused students to carry weapons to school for protection and/or skipping school out of fear for their safety. Until recent years, schools did not appear to be addressing violence on their campuses with school wide safety measures.

This lack of action by schools to address violence resulted in some educators and non-educators believing that a crisis existed in some schools. The results of these studies on school violence would seem to indicate that schools must become more proactive to continue reducing the violence that seems to be incorporated into the culture and climate of schools.

### School Culture and Climate

In examining the concept of school culture, it's important to start with an explanation of what culture is. School culture appears to have different definitions depending on the source of information. School climate and culture are used interchangeably by some authors and at other times have two very different meanings. One scholar, Frieberg (1998) says:

The elements that make up school climate are complex, ranging from the quality of interactions in the teachers' lounge to the noise levels in hallways and cafeterias, from the physical structure of the building to the physical comfort levels (involving such factors as heating, cooling, and lighting) of the individuals and how safe they feel. (p. 1)

Other authors such as Petersen and Deal (1998) used climate to describe school culture, "For decades, the terms climate and ethos have been used to capture this pervasive, yet elusive, element we call 'culture'" (p. 1). Peterson and Deal further said, "Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges" (1998, p. 2).

Based on the descriptions in the literature, it seems that climate and culture are closely related and require special attention when used in research.

Individuals in a school can actually observe and notice the environment according to Kaplan and Kaplan (1982). These authors noted, “There has also been a growing appreciation of the fact that the human capacities for perception and thought are not neutral, general-purpose processes; rather, they are processes attuned to a particular environment” (p. 14). Kaplan and Kaplan along with some other theorists contended that individuals do, in fact, perceive environment. Breaking Ranks (1996), a report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation noted that, “School climate acts as a sort of catalyst, not visible in educational outcomes, but very much affecting the process of teaching and learning that leads to those outcomes” (p. 33). The Breaking Ranks report maintained that climate is an important concept in schools and is in agreement with a study done in 1994 by Irvin, Valentine, and Clark when they reported, “School climate is an essential element of a true middle school” (p. 55). The importance of climate is stated by Hanna (1998) who writes that, “Schools must provide a warm, caring environment for students to learn and prosper” (p. 83). Climate and environment seem to be interrelated and a crucial component of schools for all students.

School climate does not appear to have a different role with males or females. Plucker (1998) noted, “Combined with the results of previous studies, the lack of gender differences provides evidence that although male and female students may differ in

aspirations, no practical gender differences exist in the perception of school climate conditions” (p. 245). Regardless of gender, student perceptions of school climate seem to be similar. This statement is important, since climate and culture are very influential in schools.

Peterson and Deal (1998) concluded that the influence of culture is interrelated with everything that happens in school when they state, “Culture influences everything that goes on in schools: how staff dress, what they talk about, their willingness to change, the practice of instruction, and the emphasis given [to] student and faculty learning” (p. 1). They further said, “This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools. This highly enduring web of influence binds the school together and makes it special” (p. 1).

If school culture is strong enough to bind a school together and make it special, we must consider how school culture is both established and changed. It appears that school culture is established in some schools when they are built and evolves over time to its current state. Evidence of culture being established by design can be found by looking at Northbrook School. According to Adami & Norton (1996), the administrators and teachers in Northbrook School paid careful attention to developing a dress code and school policy, because, as educators they said, “This was especially important since Northbrook was a new school and the school culture was being established. School culture and safety issues that would affect the day-to-day learning environment were at stake” (p. 20). Other schools have managed to change the culture of their schools using a

variety of methods. One school underwent an extensive school-wide approach to student discipline and as Sack (1999) reported, “The faculty panel also wrote that the school climate has changed significantly” (p. 34). When attempting to change climate, schools need to be aware of the existing culture in the school.

Schools must have a knowledge base to work from when trying to make adjustments to their climate and culture. In order to establish a base of information, schools should use an instrument to measure their school climate. Freiberg (1998) noted that, “There are many ways to measure school climate...schools used three measuring instruments--student concern surveys, entrance and exit interviews, and ambient noise checklists” (p. 1). Another school, reported by Elias (1998), who started a respect and trust campaign in their school used a survey designed to measure these two components using a longitudinal analysis. Elias (1998) noted that, “School climate surveys re-administered one year following the campaign showed significant improvement in student, staff, and parent assessments of the levels of respect and trust in the school” (p. 5). This literature demonstrated that school climate can be measured using several different instruments depending on which aspects of the climate are being considered.

All students and staff who attend a particular school form school culture. Schools are charged with educating all students who walk through their doors and the result may be a very diverse student body. This diverse student body brings many challenges to school everyday. Students bring to school their family environments, their experiences in the neighborhood, and their attitudes about how to handle frustration, their response to

discipline, their entire socialization, and their view of the world. Some children may be inadequately prepared to meet even the most fundamental demands of the school day, which causes them to struggle. The social and economic conditions of neighborhoods and communities are taken directly into schools (Gardner, 1999). As a result of these social and economic factors, the structure and function of schools changed to deal adequately with the associated problems.

Noguera (1995) found that different aspects of the structure and function of schools would increase the likelihood of acts of violence occurring there. According to Noguera, these aspects of structure and purpose in schools served three main functions over time. First, schools have been mainly operated as agents of social control; schools have long been charged with maintaining a custodial role similar to that of the asylums, which was to regiment, control, and discipline those who attended. The second function of schools was to acclimate and Americanize a large number of children of European descent. Third, schools were designed to primarily prepare students to become future workers for United States industry. These three goals have had a direct influence on school policy and the way schools have developed in America (Noguera, 1995).

Order, efficiency, and control dominated the early development of schools in the United States. Then, by the 1960s, there became a time where control and compliance were increasingly difficult to manage and many urban schools lowered their expectations about behavior. These lower standards of behavior caused the schools to start to lose control and compliance by students. It was about this time that schools started to focus on



average daily attendance because it was the basis of funding formulas and an area that they seemed to have more influence on (Noguera, 1995).

According to Noguera (1995) the historical preoccupation that schools have with control has limited the ability of administrators to respond to the crisis created by the increase of violence and disorder. Noguera went on to indicate that the strategy many school districts are adopting is one of converting schools into prison-like facilities. He suggested that these schools believe the best way to reduce violence is to identify potential students who may commit acts of violence and to exclude them from the other students. Noguera believes that schools must find ways to create more humane learning environments that will lessen the feelings of alienation, fear, and repression for students, staff, and administrators.

Morrison, Furlong, and Morrison (1994) offer a guide for safe versus unsafe schools. These authors believe that safe schools are effective and unsafe schools cannot and will not be effective. They believe that unsafe schools are characterized by chaos, stress, and disorganization. These schools seem to lack clear and consistent school disciplinary expectations and have poorly designed physical space. This poor physical design may not allow staff members to properly monitor and supervise student behavior. Safe schools seem to be characterized by a more positive school climate and atmosphere. According to Garcia (1994) these schools have high levels of student, staff, and parent participation. He goes on to say that students in safe schools seem to feel more attached

to their school and have clear and high expectations for student performance and behavior.

Schools are a place where children from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds come together and spend a large part of their day. Regulus (1995) indicated that this diversity could contribute to incidents of violence due to racial tension, cultural differences in attitudes and behavior of children from different neighborhoods. Regulus proposed a program that would cause the integration of a staff culture that emphasizes nonviolent means of conflict resolution with the student culture. The influence of a peer group is often reflected in student culture, along with the need for independence and autonomy. Regulus (1995) indicated that students often struggle to establish a personal identity and to maintain personal racial or ethnic identity.

Schools facing racial or cultural issues demonstrate that schools do not operate in a social or cultural vacuum. Researchers and educators have found that the culture of a school is related to the level of school crime and violence at a particular school (Felson, Liska, South, & McNulty, 1994; Hellman & Beaton, 1986). This relationship has significant implications for intervention programs in that school. Hellman & Beaton (1986) indicate that schools placing great emphasis and effort on altering the general culture within the school building will find it difficult to maintain and sustain a change over time without support from the neighborhood or a change in the surrounding community. This concept is expanded further and supported by the high recidivism rates among juvenile offenders. Many times after incarceration, individuals return to the very

environments, peer groups, neighborhoods, and social factors that helped to contribute to their initial involvement in delinquent and criminal activity (Lipsey, 1992; Mulvey, Arthur, & Repucci, 1993).

School factors that seem to be conducive to disorder, crime, and violence include: (a) overcrowding; (b) high student/teacher ratios; (c) insufficient curricular/course relevance; combined with (d) low student academic achievement and apathy, which give rise to disruptiveness; (e) poor facilities design and portable buildings that both increase isolation and hamper internal communication; and (f) teacher failure to act because administrators improperly identify potentially inflammatory situations, are reluctant to admit a problem, believe nothing will work, or simply do not know what to do (Rossman & Morley, 1996; Sautter, 1995; Watson, 1995). Teachers fail to act when they feel that they don't have the complete information needed to defuse a potentially inflammatory situation and/or have not received the necessary training the situation requires. Schools have trouble attracting and retaining good teachers when their culture and climate has a reputation of fear, violence and crime. In addition, school discipline may suffer as teachers hesitate to confront misbehaving students because they fear for their own safety. Most students are sophisticated enough to recognize a teacher's limitations when it comes to using discipline or force to gain compliance and retain order in the classroom (Rossman & Morley, 1996).

Thayer (1996) maintained that many times teachers are unprepared to deal with the challenges brought by their students and the system within which they must operate.

According to Walker and Gresham (1997), teachers in large schools and crowded classrooms have trouble developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with students. These authors went on to indicate that the development of these relationships is especially true for at-risk students who have more intense needs for attention and involvement. Walker and Gresham maintained that another challenge for overcrowded schools is that they have more discipline and vandalism problems. Hellman & Beaton (1986) believe that a high student-to-teacher ratio makes it nearly impossible for teachers to effectively monitor their students' behavior and the result is an increase in discipline problems and crimes. According to Noguera (1996), teachers in large overcrowded schools seem to be increasingly isolated from each other, from parents, and from the neighborhoods and communities where their students live. Walker and Gresham (1997) believe that many schools have attempted to become virtual fortresses of safety, steps that have been in response to the escalating rates of violence. All of these conditions make it extremely difficult for schools to effectively educate their students.

There seems to be many repercussions from oversized and overcrowded schools that have a high student-to-teacher ratio. Webster (1993) indicated that staff members just don't have the time to monitor and discipline students. The result is less time to educate, motivate, and teach. Webster believes that the specific incidents of conflict and disagreement that are known to precede acts of aggression behavior and violence may go undetected in large classrooms, in the lunchroom, or on the playground due to lack of supervision. He went on to point out that many very good intervention programs exist,

but like conflict mediation, they can only find the time to mediate the most serious forms of disagreements. If these programs were to mediate all of the minor conflicts, teachers would have little time to spend on instructional activities. Webster (1993) indicated that the lack of time creates a situation where only the most serious forms of conflict and disagreement are dealt with, thus causing negative reinforcement, because these are the events, which receive attention and mediation. He went on to indicate that the "minor" disagreements, which happen more often, go undetected and are rarely mediated. These minor undetected events will probably not be revealed by security measures.

### Security Measures

Many people believe that security measures are needed in schools. Educational researcher Paul Garcia (1994) asserted, "It is estimated that every day 270,000 guns go to school with students" (p. 23). Garcia further stated, "More than one out of four high school seniors reported having been threatened with violence during the past school year" (p. 23). This trend from the mid-nineties of students taking weapons to school seems to be holding steady in recent years. More support for the implementation of security measures comes from Friedland (1999) when he reported, "More than 6,000 students were expelled from schools last year for possession of a weapon or for making threatening statements, according to the first annual School Safety Report" (p. 1). These numbers make a strong case for some sort of action to increase safety for our students and staff.

**Hylton (1998) suggested:**

**Security and crime-prevention programs and measures that have proven effective revolve around security efforts, such as professional security or police personnel patrolling the interior and exterior; crime-and loss-prevention programs; closed-circuit television; central monitoring; metal detectors; intrusion detection systems; access-control systems; central management of security personnel and operations; school employee security education and awareness training; procurement and maintenance of security equipment; and a focus on the necessary principles of continuous quality security improvements. (p. 1)**

**Hylton described an impressive list of security measures that are possible for schools to implement.**

#### **School Resource Officer**

**One specific program included in Hylton's list is the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The SRO program seemed to be gaining popularity in schools; Hylton (1998) stated, "The school resource officer (SRO), or school liaison officer (SLO), program is fast becoming the program of choice by education institutions and law-enforcement agencies" (p. 2). The SRO program is apparently having an effect on school climate. Yeagley (2000) noted, "The school resource officer is now an integral part of our school district's safety plan. The good news: It has worked to improve school climate exactly as we envisioned it would" (p. 44). An assessment or evaluation is one method to determine if a program is an integral part of your safety plan.**

### Assessment and Evaluation

Schools planning to implement security measures may consider a wide variety of programs for their particular situation. Using a planned approach to implementing security measures by conducting an assessment may give schools a more balanced and rational array of security measures. Hylton (1998) indicated his belief of this concept when he said, “Effective school planning begins with a commitment to make safety/security a top priority, and integrate security programs and systems into the school infrastructure” (p. 1). Schools that make the decision to plan for security using an assessment tool must then decide what the assessment will include. Trump (1999) said, “Assessment methods should include structured interviews with members of the school staff and community, analysis of policies and procedures, review of crime and discipline trends, examination of physical facilities, and an analysis of other school and community information sources” (p. 22). These assessments should be comprehensive and provide insights that can be used now and in the future. Trump recommended that assessments should be comprehensive when he maintained, “The final assessment report should provide findings and recommendations that can be used in both short and long-term planning” (p. 23). Hylton (1998) believes that these plans should include ways to integrate security measures into schools in a subtle way that minimizes the negativity associated with the implementation.

Schools planning and implementing security measures must determine what other components they will include in the plan. Trump (1999) maintained:

**Assessments should be one of four security risk reduction areas addressed by administrators. The other three are consistent enforcement of all disciplinary policies and procedures, training and staff development on security and crisis preparedness for all staff, and development of crisis preparedness guidelines and teams. (p. 23)**

**Former President Clinton advocated for safer schools at a White House summit on school safety. He “urged educators to support curfews, school uniforms, and crackdown on truancy” (as cited in Halford, 1998).**

**Schools implementing security programs should include an evaluation or assessment component. Questions that should be answered in this review are: How is the program doing? Are the staff and students safer than before? The literature responding to these questions is unclear. Some reports seem to indicate that students and staff are safer, while others indicate that they are not. Evaluation and/or assessment reviews should address facility design.**

### **Facility Design**

**Architects and school planners have recognized that school layout and design can in itself be considered a security measure. New and remodeled schools are considering the following components in their planning: (a) campus borders clearly defined, (b) eliminating informal gathering areas that are out of sight, (c) eliminating building design that produces isolated areas, (d) relocating student parking lots from the outermost areas, (e) eliminating the planting of trees and shrubs that obscured parking areas,**



(f) eliminating locker areas where contraband can be hidden, (g) locating restrooms near supervision, (h) employing natural access control by limiting entrances, (i) eliminating blind spots in corridors, and (j) providing key surveillance points (Atlas, 2002). The basic premise of school planners using these architectural components in school design and remodeling is a reduction in the opportunity and fear of crime. When remodeling or building new schools, metal detectors are a component of security measures that schools are considering.

### Metal Detectors

Friedland (1999) indicated that more metal detectors are in place in schools than ever before and that schools are employing more security personnel than in the past. He went on to state, “In spite of these security-based, curative measures, violent acts continue to occur with some frequency in our public schools.” (p. 14)

Friedland (1999) further reported, “If all schools do is add guards or metal detectors or put students in uniforms or expel them, it won’t work” (p. 14). Halford (1998) noted, “Other recent research on the effectiveness of high-tech school safety measures, including metal detectors and surveillance cameras, finds these approaches to be only marginally helpful in most settings” (p. 1). Another example by Noguera (1996) concerning the use of metal detectors in New York City schools reported, “Despite spending more than \$28 million during the 1980’s for the installation of metal detectors at public schools in New York City, crime and violence continue to be a major concern” (p. 9). Noguera used yet another example where metal detectors have failed to provide

safety for students in schools, when he cited an incident in California, “Recently, at a high school in Richmond, Calif., [sic] two students were shot at a school despite the presence of metal detectors” (p. 10). Noguera maintained that if a student really wants to take a gun into school, he would get it in even when metal detectors have been implemented to stop guns being brought to school. Although, there are schools that are reporting success with programs that include metal detectors. Burke and Herbert (1996) claimed that, “Threats of violence were treated as seriously as assaults, and metal detectors were used to screen spectators at school sporting events. Foss High School was becoming a safe and secure place to learn” (p. 50). This section regarding metal detectors and other hardware can best be summed up by a quote from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. “The center’s research lends authority to what many educators already know: that focusing on the hardware of control will not resolve dilemmas involving the software of our students’ hearts”, observed Halford (1998). The software of students’ hearts would seem to include teacher/student relationships.

#### Teacher/Student Relationships

A study by Schmitt, Sacco, Ramey, Ramey, & Chan (1999) maintained that, “With respect to school climate, our basic hypothesis is that teachers’ perceptions of the school climate will be correlated positively with student progress” (p. 739). These authors went on to say, “Our results indicate that school climate has modest impact on student academic achievement and social development” (p. 750). However, these authors maintained that their research might indicate that, “any effects of school climate may be

relatively immediate and temporary . . . on student achievement” (p. 750). Another view by Manning and Saddlemire (1996) reported, “Trust, respect, mutual obligation, and concern for others’ welfare can have powerful effects on educators’ and learners’ interpersonal relationships as well as learners’ academic achievement and overall school progress” (p. 41). These authors maintained that school climate is an important component in student achievement and relationships with students and teachers.

It appears in our schools that the relationship between students and teachers is becoming strained. Teachers are viewing violence on television or reading of acts of violence by students and the result is a strain on the student-teacher relationships.

Noguera (1996) claimed that:

Lacking another source of information, many teachers begin to fear the children that they teach because to some they seem to embody the less-than-civilized images associated with people who reside in the inner city. Fear invariably influences interaction between teachers/administrators and students. (p. 11)

Noguera also makes a case for the fact that fear influences relationships involving staff and students. Noguera (1996) indicated that teachers and administrators seem to be increasingly isolated from the students and neighborhoods they serve. He believes that this distance seems to be exacerbated by fear. Noguera maintained that teachers who are afraid of their students or are uncomfortable in their workplace will have difficulty maintaining order and discipline. He went on to indicate that when fear is at the center of

the student-teacher relationship, teaching becomes almost impossible, and concerns about safety and control take precedence over concerns about learning and teaching.

Esposito (1999) found in his research that, “The most important factor associated with children’s school adjustment is the Teacher/Student Relationship” (p. 376). This statement signals the importance of the relationship between teachers and students and the role it plays in the overall culture of the school. School Resource Officer (SRO) programs recognize this important concept and place emphasis in the officer’s job description. Yeagley (2000) maintained that SRO’s must, “work within the school system to build positive relationships between students, faculty and the police, while enforcing the laws promoting a safe and drug free environment” (p. 44). The literature supported the concept that relationships in schools are an important component of school culture.

#### The Relationship between Security Measures and School Climate

Trump (1999) offered a link between security measures and school climate. He maintained that security assessments do offer a connection to climate: “They [security measures] offer administrators a guide for both short and long-term security enhancements as a part of their strategic planning process for improving the school climate” (p. 20). The Safe Schools Handbook (1994) seemed to have developed this concept prior to Trump’s 1999 Study when the Safe Schools Handbook considered two sources of threats: (a) security problems and (b) climate problems. Security problems, such as an armed intruder or an armed student, obviously endanger school security. What may be less obvious is that a negative atmosphere also threatens school security. Studies

show that violence is more likely at schools in which students feel little or no attachment to the school and are frequently absent (Buckner & Flanary, 1996). A study by Perone (1998) on the relationship between school climate and school safety reported interesting results. According to Perone, "Generally, the data demonstrated a strong relationship between school climate factors and student and teacher perceptions of safety" (p. 1). She went on to relate the perceptions of students and staff: "Social integration and avoidance of punishment were the strongest predictors of safety for the entire student sample. For teachers, personal security and smooth administration were the strongest predictors of perception of safety for the entire sample" (Perone, 1998, p. 2). Another author, Frankfurt (1999) maintained that, "A school climate must be created where psychological and physical safety is paramount" (p. 26).

Schools have been attempting to determine if they can become safer places without depending on security measures. Friedland (1999) maintained that schools could become safer without security measures. He said, "The objective is to change the culture of each school from one that focuses on individual goal achievement exclusively to one of achievement through cooperative teamwork" (p. 14). Friedland believes that we must teach students to work together and be more accepting of each other to change our school culture. Student perceptions play an important role in creating the culture of schools.

#### Importance of Student Perceptions

This phenomenological research study was based on the perception students have regarding the impact security measures had on their high school experience. Another

phenomenological study by Tochterman (2002) researched how the tragedy at Columbine High School impacted student perspectives about violence in their school. Tochterman interviewed students from a high school approximately two hours away from Littleton, Colorado. Many of the students interviewed knew students who attended Columbine High School. The students were interviewed one week following the shootings at Columbine and again at the one-year anniversary of the tragedy. Tochterman asked each subject of her study: “How have the recent events in Littleton influenced and affected your current practices and routines as a student in the public school system” (p. 2)? The main themes that emerged were: (a) fear that it could happen to me, (b) a need to foster relationships, (c) distrust and suspicion, and (d) sadness. The themes that emerged from Tochterman’s study would seem to indicate that students were impacted by the violence at Columbine High School.

One year later Tochterman interviewed a second group of high school students and asked them: “It has been one year since the tragedy at Columbine High School. How has the event influenced your life as a high school student?” (p. 5). The following themes emerged: (a) respect for others, (b) annoyance with security measures and trust, (c) invincibility, nothing has changed, (d) anger with suspicion, and (e) fear. The theme of annoyance directed to security measures could be related to the impact that security measures have on a student’s high school experience.

One student's perceptions were:

We now have to carry around our schedules, our ID cards. Increased security exists in our building. More security guards, with more walkie-talkies, walk the halls. They do this to us because of kids in another town. It's not fair to be policed! We even have to carry large yellow hall passes now when we leave to go to the bathroom. So I think people need to realize that keeping us on a leash won't prevent bombs. (Tochterman, 2002, p. 5)

Another student responded:

I am still scared. I keep to myself mostly, if I could be home schooled, I would take that choice. I would feel safer in my own home rather than coming here. At least I could lock the doors and windows there. (Tochterman, 2002, p. 6)

These and other student perceptions about the tragedy at Columbine were the basis of the Tochterman (2002) study. The student perceptions were taken one week and again one year after the event. The students appeared to have no problems with perceptions of the event after more than a year. Student perceptions of the violence that consumed Columbine High School would seem to support earlier reports in this literature review that many students fear for their safety at school.

#### Summary

This literature review documented the increase in school violence up until approximately 1993 by looking at several surveys and reports. Schools had tended to ignore school violence until public pressure forced a reaction. Violence in schools has

declined since 1993, but students being threatened with a weapon at school have remained constant during this same time period. This constant level of crime with weapons has forced schools to continue seeking ways to address violence on their campus. Next, this analysis of literature explored school climate and culture by looking at what it is, how it is established or changed, and how scholars have measured climate and culture. School security measures were researched and reviewed to determine their role in schools, which were to provide a safe secure environment for students and staff. This examination looked at effective security measures, a planned approach to security, and an assessment or evaluation of how effective security measures are at reducing school violence. Literature on teacher/student relationships as it related to school climate was appraised. This review then looked at the relationship of school security measures to school climate and culture. Connections were made between security measures and school climate and culture despite the lack of an abundance of research in this area. Lastly, this review looked at student perceptions of the violence at Columbine High School from a phenomenological study. Student responses to security measures and safety were examined. The student perceptions in the Tochtermann (2002) study of the violence at Columbine High School verified the importance of studying student reactions to a phenomenon.

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides evidence that security measures have an impact on schools and students. The impact that security measures have on a student's high school experience is a phenomenon that this study investigated. The



**investigation was done using the methods for collection and analysis of data outlined in Chapter Three to reach the conclusions of this research.**

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe the impact that security measures have on a student's high school experience. It was anticipated that the types of security measures that were used in schools that subjects of this study were exposed to were (a) school resource officers, (b) school employee security education and awareness training, (c) metal detectors, (d) lockdown procedures, (e) visitor identification procedures, (f) increased staff supervision, (g) surveillance cameras, (h) restriction of student movement, (i) school evacuation plans, (j) and a system for controlling entry of intruders during school hours.

The qualitative research tradition was chosen to give a voice to the individuals experiencing the phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The students who experienced the impact of security measures at their high school were given a voice in the qualitative research method. The qualitative format allows the detailed descriptions of an individuals experience to be more informative than numerical statistics (Eisner, 1991). This study used a qualitative format to allow the students to give detailed descriptions of the impact security measures had on their high school experience. Therefore, a phenomenological research study was utilized to explore the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon (Denzin, 1989). The thick rich descriptions provided by the subjects will offer valuable insight into the phenomenon (Creswell, 1994). The qualitative

phenomenological design of this study placed the student perspective paramount in the findings of this research and presented information on the impact that security measures are having on a high school student's experience. The resulting data offered valuable insight for educators and school policy makers into student perceptions of security measures in their schools.

### **Data**

#### **Sample**

Van Kaam (cited in Polkinghorne, 1989) proposed that subjects selected for a phenomenological study should have the skills and ability to provide full and accurate descriptions of the phenomenon. According to Van Kaam, the skills needed by the subjects (a) should include the ability to express inner feelings and identify the experiences that resulted from those feelings, (b) they should have experienced the phenomenon somewhat recently so that they can still remember the experience (c) they should have an interest in the phenomenon which would motivate them to provide information, and (d) they should represent a variety of backgrounds to broaden the study. Using the guidelines proposed by Van Kaam, the subjects for this study were purposefully selected from the population of freshmen students enrolled at The University of Montana with the necessary skills to communicate and relate their experiences regarding security measures. These freshmen students had experienced security measures in high school within the last year, as well as proclaiming an interest in the phenomenon.

A phenomenological study by Fischer and Wertz (1979) included subjects who had been criminally assaulted up to three years prior to the study. Another phenomenological study done by Tochteman (2002) utilized student perceptions of the event slightly more than one year after the experience. The Fischer and Wertz and Tochteman studies both supported using student perceptions of events for up to one year after the experience. Student perceptions for up to one year after graduation were the basis for this study. Thus, freshmen students at The University of Montana meet the criteria for participation in this research study, as they were less than one year removed from their high school experience. The subjects selected for this study were eighteen years old or older and from a variety of high schools located in Washington, Oregon, Montana, Wyoming, and Pennsylvania.

Creswell (1998) suggested that the sample for a phenomenological study consist of subjects up to ten. Following Creswell's suggestion for sample size, seven students were selected from the students responding to an advertisement placed in the freshmen dorms on The University of Montana campus that meet the selection criteria previously articulated. The students responding to this study's advertisement were screened using the protocol attached in Appendix A. All seven potential subjects met the selection criteria for this study. This protocol, following Polkinghorne's (1989) criteria for subjects participating in a phenomenological study, simply determined if a student had (a) experienced the security measures in their high school, (b) the ability to communicate their feelings, and (c) an interest in this topic. All the subjects selected for the study were

females. Selecting a sample consisting entirely of females did not create a limitation for this study. Plucker (1998) found that no practical gender differences exist in the perception of school climate by male and female students. Therefore, selecting a sample of all female students does not detract from the findings of this study. The selected students were given an introductory letter outlining (a) the purpose and significance of the study, (b) details on the interview process, and (c) consent forms with an explanation of confidentiality.

### Data Collection

Data was collected from the subjects of this study by having them complete a short survey and an in-depth personal interview with the researcher. The purpose of the study was explained in general terms, anonymity was guaranteed, and the importance of candid responses was emphasized. The subject's records were kept private and not released without their consent except as required by law. Only the researcher and his faculty supervisor had access to the files. The subject's identity was kept confidential and known only by a code. If the results of this study are written in a scientific journal or presented at a scientific meeting, the subjects name will not be used. The data was stored in a locked file cabinet. The subject's signed consent form with verification that they were over 18 was stored in a cabinet separate from the data. The audiotape used to record the interview was transcribed without any information that could identify the subject. The tape was erased after transcription.

### Data Collection Procedures

This study employed a descriptive survey to gather demographic information and a qualitative data collection procedure. In-depth interviews and a survey were used to gather the data to determine the impact that security measures have on a student's high school experience. The subject's decision to take part in this research study was entirely voluntary. The subject could have refused to take part in or could have withdrawn from the study at any time. Each subject selected was given a consent form to read and sign prior to participating in the interview and survey. The consent form required the participant to confirm that they were 18 years old or older.

The interviews were recorded and done face to face with the researcher, his assistant, and the subject following a format suggested by Polkinghorne (1989). Stevick (1971) notes that recorded interviews corrected problems associated with written interviews, which tended to yield responses of a distant and reflective nature and tend to restructure the phenomenon for the subjects. The interview protocol contained questions developed to generate qualitative data that helped answer the central and sub questions.

### Central and Sub Questions

The interview questions were open ended and directly related to the following central and sub questions:

Central Question: What is the impact of security measures on a student's high school experience?

**Sub Questions:**

1. **What specific security measures were implemented in the school?**
2. **What are student perceptions of the security measures implemented?**
3. **What are student perceptions about the relationship of safety to security measures in their schools?**
4. **What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures have on violence in their school?**
5. **What impact, if any did security measures have on student social interactions?**
6. **What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures have on school culture?**
7. **What are student perceptions of the impact that security measures have on student learning?**
8. **What impact, if any did security measures have on student-teacher relationships?**

**Development of the Interview**

Polkinghorne (1989) indicated that, “Characteristically phenomenological interviews are open-ended and unstructured, requiring enough time to explore the topic in depth” (p. 48). Polkinghorne (1989) further stated, “The theory behind phenomenological interviewing differs from the theory behind survey questionnaire interviewing. Survey interviewing is considered a stimulus-response interaction; the interviewer’s question is the stimulus, and the subject’s answer is the response” (p. 49). Mishler (1986) elaborated

further on the distinctions of phenomenological interviewing when he states, “The phenomenological interview, in contrast is conceived of as a discourse or conversation” (as cited in Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 49). Polkinghorne (1989) offered additional information on a phenomenological interview when he said, “It involves an interpersonal engagement in which subjects are encouraged to share with a researcher the details of their experience” (p. 49). Therefore, the focus of this study’s interview was on the experience of the person and was designed to facilitate theme-oriented results.

Using a phenomenological design allowed this study to examine student experiences through the detailed descriptions of the people being studied as provided by in-depth interviewing (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 1998) The questions framed in the interview helped the subjects report their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989). Following Polkinghorne’s recommendation for phenomenological interviews, questions were constructed to determine, “What did you experience? or, What was it like for you?, instead of, What happened?” (p. 50). The interview questions for this study outlined in Appendix B were developed using Polkinghorne’s guidelines as well as the central questions and sub questions for this study. The central and sub questions for this research are described with the supporting literature used in their development. The interview questions are stated and listed following the sub questions they relate to and support. The interview questions are supported with the literature that was used in their development.

**Central Question: What is the impact of security measures on a student’s high school experience?** Finding the impact on a student’s high school experience by



security measures is supported by eight sub questions and eleven interview questions.

The central question of this study was developed, because not only are schools unsure of the impact security measures are having on students, but also they are uncertain as to the effectiveness of the security measures regarding safety (Trump, 1999; Halford, 1998; Noguera, 1996).

**Sub-Question #1: What specific security measures were implemented in the school?** This question was looking for data about the types of security measures implemented in this subject's particular school to ensure the participant actually experienced the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). The survey section of the interview was intended to provide this information and is located in Appendix B.

**Sub-Question #2: What are student perceptions of the security measures implemented?** Finding out how students feel about the security measures is an important component in future planning in schools and student attachment to the school (Buckner & Flanary, 1996; Halford, 1998). The following interview questions were intended to gather data related to sub question #2:

Interview Question #3: Think about a time when you became aware of security measures in your high school. How did you feel? This question gathered data on how students feel about security measures. Halford (1998) indicated that security measures would not solve problems associated with student's feelings.

Interview Question #10: When you think of the School Resource Officer (SRO) at your school, how do you feel? Yeagley (2000) indicated that the School Resource

Officer Program is fast becoming the program of choice by administrators and teachers. This question intended to find out if students have similar feelings regarding the school resource officer.

Interview Question #11: Think about your high school experience. What other feelings do you have about security measures? Hylton (1998) described an impressive list of security measures that schools can consider for implementation. This question was intended to determine if students have feelings about any of those security measures.

**Sub-Question #3: What are student perceptions about the relationship of safety to security measures in their schools?** The feelings of students about safety and security measures determine to a large degree the effectiveness of the program (Friedland, 1999; Trump, 1999). The following interview questions were intended to gather data related to sub question #3:

Interview Question #2: Think about your high school experience. Did you ever feel like you needed more security measures than were in place? Please explain. This question was intended to gather data on student feelings of safety at their high school. Surveys show that students fear for their safety at schools (Bastian & Taylor, 1991; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995).

Interview Question #4: Think about a specific situation that involved a security measure at your school. How did you feel? How students feel about safety and

security measures is a major component in the assessment of the effectiveness of the safety program (Friedland, 1999; Trump, 1999).

**Sub-Question #4: What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures may have on violence in their school?** This question was intended to find out how students view violence in their school and the effectiveness of security measures to reduce or eliminate violence (Halford, 1998). The following interview questions were intended to gather data related to sub question #4:

Interview Question #1: Think about a violent incident at your school. How did you feel? Student perceptions of violence at their school determine how they feel about safety at their school (Bastian & Taylor, 1991; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995).

Interview Question #9: Think about the security measures at your school. What feelings would you have about attending a school without security measures?

Educators believe that students feel a higher level of safety with security measures (Hylton, 1998; Trump, 1999; Yeagley, 2000).

**Sub-Question #5: What impact, if any did security measures have on student social interactions?** Positive relationships between students are an important component of school culture (Yeagley, 2000). The following interview questions were intended to gather data related to sub question #5:

Interview Question #6: Think about a time when you became aware of security measures in a student social situation. How did you feel? School culture influences

everything that happens in schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998). This question determined if student social situations, which are a part of the school culture, changed with security measures.

**Sub-Question #6: What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures have on school culture?** The influence of security measures on school culture is critical, because school culture is interrelated with everything that happens in school (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The following interview question was intended to gather data related to sub question #6:

Interview Question #5: Tell me how you felt about the influence that security measures had on your school culture. Peterson & Deal (1998) indicates that the culture of a school shapes how people think, feel, and act. This question was to determine if the culture of the school was influenced by security measures.

**Sub-Question #7: What are student perceptions of the impact that security measures have on student learning?** Security measures are interrelated with school climate and have an impact on student academic achievement (Schmitt, Sacco, Ramey, Ramey, & Chan, 1999). The following interview question was intended to gather data related to sub question #7:

Interview Question #7: Think about a specific academic activity and how security measures may have influenced it. How did you feel? Manning and Saddlemire (1996) note that; “Trust, respect, mutual obligation and concern for others’ welfare can have powerful effects on educators’ and learners interpersonal relationships as well as

learners' academic achievement and overall school progress" (p. 41). This question determined the impact security measures had on academic activities.

**Sub-Question #8: What impact, if any did security measures have on student-teacher relationships?** This question is based on the information that student-teacher relationships are the most important factor associated with children's school adjustment (Esposito, 1999). "Trust, respect, mutual obligation, and concern for others' welfare can have powerful effects on educators' and learners' interpersonal relationships as well as learners' academic achievement and overall school progress" (Manning & Saddlemire, 1996, p. 41).

Interview Question #8: Think about your relationships with different teachers. Did security measures impact any of those relationships? How did you feel? Noguera (1996) indicates; "that fear invariably influences interaction between teachers/administrators and students" (p. 11). This question was attempting to determine if relationships changed with security measures.

#### Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to identify and contact freshmen students on The University of Montana campus who were willing to participate in this study. The researcher conducted the interviews by following an interview protocol and short survey with the participants. The researcher analyzed the data collected from the interviews using the procedures outlined in the data analysis procedures section of this document.

Creswell (1994) defined qualitative research, such as phenomenological studies, as interpretative research. He stated, “The biases, values, and judgment of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report” (p. 147). While the openness associated with phenomenological research is considered positive, the researcher must bracket his or her personal experiences (Creswell, 1998). Bracketing personal experiences is when the researcher sets aside all prejudgments and relies on intuition, imagination, and worldly structures to develop an image of the experience (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to provide information on his experience with the phenomenon of security measures and their impact on a student’s high school experience. Thus the researcher must “bracket” his personal experiences prior to conducting the research. Bracketing by the researcher includes listing his background information and personal experiences.

The researcher of this study had twenty-five years of experience in high school teaching and administration and was the principal of one of Montana’s largest high schools for seven years. The researcher led the design and implementation of security measures for this high school from 1994 until 2001. The security measures implemented in this high school by the researcher were: (a) resource officer, (b) school employee security education and awareness training, (c) lockdown procedures, (d) visitor identification procedures, (e) increased staff supervision, (f) restriction of student movement, (g) school evacuation plans, and (h) a system for controlling entry of intruders during school hours. This experience provided the researcher with a solid

background in the components of this study. Biases can be shaped and formed from certain experiences.

The biases of this researcher were related to the restrictions of a social and academic nature forced on the students by security measures. The use of security measures in schools tends to restrict time and the movement of teachers and students. Therefore, schools and teachers tend to provide experiences for students that fit into the schedule and can be fulfilled by the least complicated means possible. Student social interactions tend to be restricted by security measures as well. These security measures restrict movement and social freedom of the students. The researcher's bias is that security measures may limit academic progress and student social interactions.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

This research used a qualitative analysis of student perceptions to determine the impact of security measures in schools. The recorded interview data was transcribed into written documents accompanied with field memos. Field memos consisted of descriptive notes to indicate data that might not be recorded, such as a description of the physical setting, activities, and other non-verbal actions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Field note memos were created after each interview and used as a supplement to the transcribed interview data. The form for field memos is found in Appendix D. The qualitative data collected in the interviews was analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) procedures.

Colaizzi first suggested reading all the subject's answers or descriptions gathered from the interview to get a feeling for the data. His next step was to extract the phrases or

sentences that directly relate to the experience. Following Colaizzi's procedures, the researcher took the phrases or statements and extracted the meaning of each. The researcher reworded the meanings of the statements into his words. The resulting list of "meaning" or "significant" statements reflected the essential point of the original statement.

The next step suggested by Colaizzi was to further reduce the data by clustering the individual themes found in all the participants' responses to form common general themes. The researcher then employed the zigzag method of moving back and forth between the meaning statements and the general themes forming a revised list with each successive turn that accurately described the meanings in the themes.

The final result of this analysis process produced the findings of the research and they are reported in the essential structural definition. Colaizzi then suggested doing member checks for verification of the findings. Member checks consisted of sending the data analysis and results of the research back to the subjects and asking them to review the information for errors and omissions. Six of the seven subjects responded during the verification process. Member checks in this study failed to produce any relevant new data.

#### Methods of Verification

The researcher's interpretation is a crucial component in the verification of the findings in a phenomenological study. Creswell (1998) supported this concept when he stated that, "Phenomenologists view verification and standards as largely related to the



researcher's interpretation" (p. 207). However, Creswell (1994) maintained that other common methods of verification for phenomenological studies exist such as member checks and outside reviewers. According to Creswell (1994), member checks are a process of returning the categories and themes developed in data analysis back to the participants and asking if the conclusions are accurate. Colaizzi (1978) suggested returning to the participants and asking them two questions. He advocated asking the participants to (a) determine if the descriptive results compare to the experience and if (b) any aspects have been omitted. This study followed the suggestions of Creswell and Colaizzi as they relate to member checks by returning to the participants with the categories and themes and asking the participants to determine if the results compare to the experience and if any concepts have been omitted. This research also utilized outside reviewers to assist in the verification of this study's findings.

Creswell (1998) indicated that outside reviewers look at the logic of the experience and how it matches his or her own experience. Polkinghorne (1989) suggested another method commonly used by outside reviewers when he stated, "Does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected?" (p. 57). Polkinghorne's findings can assist the outside reviewers to determine if the findings are well grounded and well supported. This study employed outside reviewers to aid in the verification of the results of this research. This researcher's doctoral dissertation committee served as the outside reviewers for this study.

### Narrative

The findings for this study were reported in a narrative format utilizing the essential structural definition suggested by Colaizzi (1978) and Polkinghorne (1989). These authors indicated that the essential structural definition consists of the elements or constituents that are necessary for an experience to present it for what it is and is a description of the essential structure of the experience being investigated. Polkinghorne (1989) stated:

Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with the feeling that 'I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that.' (p. 46)

This phenomenological study followed Polkinghorne and Colaizzi's suggestions by reporting the findings in an essential structural definition, which provided an accurate, clear, and articulate description of the experience.

### Generalizability

The generalizability of this qualitative phenomenological research study was an important concept to consider. Bogdan & Biklen (1992) indicated that, "When researchers use the term generalizability they are usually referring to whether the findings of a study hold up beyond the specific research subjects and setting involved" (p. 44). According to Eisner (1991) two forms of generalizability exist, retrospective and anticipatory. He maintained that retrospective generalizability is associated with qualitative research and defines it when he stated:

It [retrospective generalizability] is developed not by randomly sampling and using findings to anticipate the future, but by encountering or formulating an idea that allows us to see our past experience in a new light. Retrospective generalizations find their subject matter by examining history rather than by anticipating the future. (p. 205)

Eisner's retrospective generalizability applied to this phenomenological qualitative research study. Eisner suggested that in qualitative studies the researcher does not make any attempt to generalize, but the readers will determine if the research findings fit the circumstances where they work. Thus, the generalizability of this study's findings is appropriate as determined by the user of these findings.

#### Summary of Methodology

The methodology for this study was a phenomenological qualitative design. This design provided thick rich data for analysis. The data was collected through interviews with a sample of subjects from the freshman class at The University of Montana. Each interview was conducted using a standard format that included tape-recording the participant's descriptions. Member checks and outside reviewers were employed to verify the collected data and findings. The findings of this research were presented in a narrative format as the essential structural definition. The methodology outlined in this chapter was used to develop the findings of this research, which are reported in Chapter Four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Findings from this Phenomenological Study**

This phenomenological study was conducted to determine the impact that security measures have on a student's high school experience. The study utilized a short demographic survey and a personal interview to collect data on student perceptions of security measures in their high schools. Seven subjects were purposefully selected for inclusion in this study and were interviewed on the same day. All seven of the subjects were females who responded to an advertisement placed in the freshman dorms. The researcher interviewed the subjects individually with an assistant present in the room. The interviews were conducted using a room located in the Department of Educational Leadership on The University of Montana campus. The interviews were conducted using the interview protocol attached in Appendix B. All of the subjects were 2001 graduates of their particular high school and freshmen on The University of Montana campus.

#### **Demographic Information**

General demographic information pertinent to the subjects is included in table 4-1. Table 4-1 details demographic information for each subject; the city and state where their high school is located, and the size of their graduating class. The name of each subject's high school is omitted for confidentiality purposes. However, the subjects city is noted because the data is reported in a manner that does not allow a link to the individual. The subjects interviewed attended high schools located in five states. The subjects graduated from high schools with the number of graduating seniors ranging from 132

students to 535 students. The total number of students in each high school represented by the subjects included in the study varied from approximately 500 students to over 2000 students. All of the subjects in the study were at least 18 years of age and met the requirements outlined and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Montana.

**Table 4-1: Demographic information of the subjects included in the study.**

Subject	City	State	Graduating Class Size
A	Portland	Oregon	250
B	Jackson	Wyoming	132
C	Quakertown	Pennsylvania	500
D	Spokane	Washington	350
E	Kalispell	Montana	535
F	Whitefish	Montana	165
G	Eugene	Oregon	350

#### Security Measure Survey Information

Subjects were asked in the survey portion of the interview to identify security measures that their high school implemented or had in place while they were a student at that school. Table 4-2 presents each individual security measure and notes if the subject identified it as present in their high school. All subjects identified the school resource officer program as being present in their school. None of the subjects indicated that metal

detectors were a part of their school's security program. Six of the seven subjects noted that lock down procedures were in place in their school. All seven subjects indicated that a visitor identification system was being used in their school. Five subjects noted that access was controlled to their school buildings during school hours. Six of the subjects indicated that increased staff supervision was a component of their schools security program. All seven subjects noted that school evacuation plans for threats of violence were in place at their school. Two subjects indicated that surveillance cameras were used at their schools. One subject indicated that her school utilized restricted student movement. Another subject noted that in addition to the named security measures, her school utilized drug dogs. One school as indicated by a subject removed all the student lockers as a security measure. The subject's perception of the security measure implemented or in place in their schools is included in table 4-2.

**Table 4-2: Security measures identified as present in the subject's high schools**

Security Measure	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E	Subject F	Subject G
School Resource Officer Program	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Metal Detectors							
Lock Down Procedures	√	√		√	√	√	√
Visitor Identification System	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Controlled Access to the School	√	√	√		√	√	
Increased Staff Supervision	√	√	√		√	√	√
School Evacuation Plans for Threats of Violence	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Surveillance Cameras				√	√		
Restricted Student Movement					√		
Other						Drug Dogs	Remove Lockers

### Data Analysis

This qualitative study utilized Colaizzi's (1978) outline for data analysis of a phenomenological study. Colaizzi first suggested the researcher read all the interviews to get a feeling for the data. The researcher continues to follow Colaizzi's outline by extracting the phrases or sentences that directly relate to the experience from the interviews. After extracting the phrases or statements the researcher states the meaning of each in his words. The data is further examined and reduced by clustering the individual themes found in the subject responses to form general themes. The general themes and meaning statements are analyzed to form a list that accurately describes the meanings in the themes. This result is the essential structural definition of the research. The essential structural definition is the finding of this study.

Tables 4-3 to 4-14 present the statements from the subjects (left column) that directly related to the experience based on each question they were asked in the interview. Direct quotations are taken from the subject interviews and included in the analysis. The quotes are presented without a connection to the subject for confidentiality purposes. The confidentiality of this information did not impact the interviews or analysis of the data. The researcher's interpretation or meaning of each statement is listed in the right column of each table. The question asked of the subject is listed at the top of each table.

The first question asked of each subject in the interview was to describe themselves in high school. All of the subjects responded that they were involved in



activities and were somewhat popular with other students. The responses obtained from the subjects related to question one did not add or detract from the central question and therefore are not reported in this data analysis.

**Table 4-3: Think about a violent incident at your school. How did you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"After Columbine we had a copycat which some guy had a pipe bomb in his locker and they found it before it went off and stuff, but that was like the Friday after Columbine happened so everyone was like really shook up. It was kind of disturbing just to think that something like that could happen at school."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed and frightened by the incident. The student was disturbed because the incident happened in her school and she did not really believe that violence could happen at her school.</p>
<p>"I think we had a bomb threat and it was kind of scary because we were all going over what we were supposed to do like flip the tables and the desks and stuff, but that was pretty scary, but nothing ever came of it."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed and frightened by the incident. The actual performance of the security procedures contributed to the student's anxiety.</p>
<p>"Um -- like we had a bomb threat. I -- um -- thought they were idiots -- I mean it was stupid."</p>	<p>The student did not take the incident seriously.</p>
<p>"There was a huge fight out at the gym. This kid got a broken nose; his head sliced open; his eye scraped; it was kind of disturbing."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed and frightened by the incident. Witnessing the incident contributed to the student's anxiety.</p>
<p>"I was dating this guy and there was a fight out at this place called armory. It was like these fields and so it was after school and I just wanted to go home, but he said we have to go over here to this fight. So I saw that fight and it was pretty disturbing. Like I had never seen anything like that, and it was a little scary. I was a little frightened."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed and frightened by witnessing the incident. The student attended the fight because of pressure from her friend.</p>
<p>"I just remember at lunch we were sitting at a table and at the other table this kid pulled out a knife. He threatened this other kid and then a lunch lady came over and tried to stop it and he threatened her too and then his friends calmed him down. I guess it was a little scary because I was right there and saw it, but he seemed out of control but then he kind of calmed down and it was a little scary."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed and frightened by the incident. The incident had a greater impact on the subject, because she was present and witnessed the incident.</p>

**Table 4-4: Think about your high school experience? Did you ever feel like you needed more security measures than were in place?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
"I felt like my high school was a very safe environment and I didn't feel like I was threatened in the school. I think the measures that were taking place and were put in action were enough for my security."	The student was comfortable with the security measures that were in place.
"No, um -- I thought our school was pretty safe and after we had -- actually we had a new high school built so we had a brand new school and it had all new stuff."	The student was comfortable with the security measures that were in place.
"No. I thought we were pretty secure."	The student was comfortable with the security measures that were in place.
"There -- but there are so many different halls and stuff -- well -- sometimes there were doors that should have been locked, because pretty much anyone could get in at anytime, because we didn't have fences around our school or anything."	The student did not feel secure and wanted additional security measures controlling the access to the school.
"I think I generally felt pretty safe."	The student was comfortable with the security measures that were in place.
"I don't think so for the most part."	The student was comfortable with the security measures that were in place.
"Um -- I don't think so. I didn't -- we had enough I think, I never felt threatened."	The student was comfortable with the security measures that were in place.

**Table 4-5: Think about a time when you became aware of security measures in your high school. How did you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
"When I did see those cops around I didn't feel like they did a whole lot."	The subject did not feel the resource officers were effective.
"Um – safer, but not really because -- I don't know it seemed like it just brought more attention because more kids wanted to try something or be rebellious about it."	The subject felt that security measures were a challenge to some students. Students would attempt to break security measures to see if they could.
"It was kind of annoying. I didn't really think that we needed all of the security measures in place."	Student did not feel threatened at school and did not see the need for security measures.
"Well they fired our – we had this guy – I don't know what? He was like the crack down guy, but then they brought in an officer – an officer into the school."	The resource officer replacing the disciplinarian did not impress the student.
"I mean it really didn't bother me, because I wasn't involved in drugs."	The student did not feel impacted by security measures, because she wasn't involved in drugs.
"My senior year they started to put video cameras every where and they got a resource officer that walked around."	The student was aware of the security measures the school was implementing.

**Table 4-6: Think about a specific situation that involved a security measure at your school. How did you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"A few of my friends thought it would be funny to drive through the campus at our school. So I did know that the security people did take affect and they were on top of it."</p>	<p>The student felt that the security measures were effective.</p>
<p>"Well - we had to have this book where we had to carry it around all the time. So they would know it was us and not some random person walking down the hall. So -- I thought that was kind of over the hill and like they didn't really need it. I thought it was an extreme thing to do."</p>	<p>The student felt that the identification procedures in place were extreme for her school.</p>
<p>"Someone called in (a bomb threat) and they moved us into the gym and they checked for twenty minutes or so and it was just like – Oh we checked everything. I didn't think they did a good job and lots of people were freaking out about it."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed by the incident. The student did not feel that the school took the incident seriously and conducted a complete search of the building.</p>
<p>"There was supposedly a few Goths in our school who brought a gun and were showing it off in the library. We were locked down in school for about two hours while they searched the library and school – um -- It was pretty disturbing."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed by the incident and made note of the individuals responsible for the incident as belonging to a specific group of students.</p>
<p>"The drug dog thing is about all I can think of."</p>	<p>The student did not feel that their school had many security measures.</p>
<p>"One time when someone called in and said they had left a bomb somewhere in the school and it was right as I was going to school and everyone was outside and they said that they made everyone leave their backpacks and everything in the school and we all had to walk down to the grade school about three blocks away. Um -- then we went back like three hours later and resumed classes and I guess I was a little scared after that because they said they searched most of the school and that they quit looking because they realized it was just a prank call, but I think a lot of people were bothered by that that they made us go back in there and they were scared because it was right after the Columbine incident that that happened."</p>	<p>The student was disturbed by the incident. The student did not feel that the school took the incident seriously and conducted a complete search of the building. The incident occurred soon after Columbine and which contributed to the student's anxiety.</p>

**Table 4-7: Tell me how you felt about the influence that security measures had on your school culture?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
"I think that having security there to support us and knowing that we are protected and that they are trying to prevent anything from happening made us feel safe."	The student indicated that security measures had a positive effect on school culture.
"It definitely cut down on having things. Like we had less assemblies or special things because they were worried about something happening or something was going to happen. Like having the officer in the school made you more nervous like more like something would happen because like some days there would be like one and some days there would be like more than one and so it would change."	The student felt that many of the traditional customs were discontinued after security measures were implemented and the school culture changed. The student felt more anxiety when confronted with security measures every day.
"I think like at events -- lots of people used to come to events drunk, but they stopped that -- you know they would check everybody."	The student felt drinking at school events was reduced by security measures.
"There was a lot of hazing in our school and it got cracked down on a lot."	The student felt that security measures reduced harassment of underclass students.
"People didn't necessarily treat each other differently. I mean people would just discuss what went on during the day and who got caught and then they would try and forget about it. If they never came it was like well they were here and now they are gone let's not worry about it."	The student felt that people were the same after security measures were in place.

**Table 4-7 continued**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>“Like there were a lot of restrictions on what you could and couldn't do and I think when I remember being a sophomore you could just go out in the hall anytime you wanted and you could go to the bathroom and now every time you left the classroom someone would stop you and ask you were you were going and made sure you had a pass or a note from a teacher to be in the hallway. I think they restricted a lot of like homecoming activities too like parades and stuff because they were worried about the bonfire. They wouldn't let us have a bonfire, they usually let us have a bonfire they were worried about stuff like that.”</p>	<p>The student felt that many of the traditional customs were discontinued after security measures were implemented and the school culture changed.</p>

**Table 4-8: Think about a time when you became aware of security measures in a student social situation. How did you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"It was like the year after it happened (Columbine) we didn't do social activities in the school. Like we didn't even have assemblies. We had our dances still, but like not compared to the year before. In like the football rally and the pep assemblies we didn't have those anymore and I don't know if that was because of that or because of student council or something."</p>	<p>The subject felt opportunities for student social interaction were eliminated.</p>
<p>"A lot more teachers than there usually would be, but that's about it and chaperones a lot more chaperones."</p>	<p>The subject noted increased staff supervision at student social situations such as dances.</p>
<p>"We had rent-a-cops for our dances, but they never -- they just stood out there making sure people weren't being stupid and acting up and stuff. It never really hampered the dance."</p>	<p>The subject felt increased supervision at dances had no effect on the student social opportunity.</p>
<p>"Um -- at dances you had to show your ID and if you brought a guest they had to have an ID to get in -- um -- most of the students who went to dances were good students and didn't cause problems."</p>	<p>The subject felt the student screening process for dances resulted in few problems at the dance.</p>
<p>"We had chaperones at our dances, but they never like bothered us."</p>	<p>The subject felt supervision at dances had no effect on the student social opportunity.</p>
<p>"They wanted you out of the halls a lot so you couldn't sit around and talk in the halls."</p>	<p>The subject felt security measures eliminated student social opportunities at school.</p>



**Table 4-9: Think about a specific academic activity and how security measures may have influenced it. How did you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"Um -- not really the only thing that affected like classes that the doors were being locked. After everybody was in class they locked the doors."</p>	<p>The subject felt no known influence of security measures on academic activities.</p>
<p>"I remember a teacher saying something about how she used to do something this way but she couldn't, because it violated this code. I can't remember what it was -- oh it was for a skit and we couldn't bring like a popgun into school. So its not too serious but like it affected some people."</p>	<p>The subject felt that security measures changed or influenced some academic activities minimally.</p>
<p>"The teachers -- their teaching styles changed a little bit after Columbine. Like stuff they would say -- they wouldn't be so -- joking -- most of our teachers -- they stopped teasing so much. They were more all work -- they were afraid that they would tick somebody off. I thought it made class fun when they joked around and stuff, but a lot of them changed to just -- like we are only going to study -- I mean -- I could go and joke around with them after class in their classrooms, but overall it made class dull, not like it was before. I think -- I don't know -- it was kind of depressing. Everyone is old enough to take some teasing. Our teachers -- they just pretty much taught and we had 80-minute periods -- so -- it was hard."</p>	<p>The subject felt that the teachers changed their relationship with students. The teachers concentrated more on subject matter and less on social interaction with students out of fear for themselves and/or retaliation from a disgruntled student The subject noted that these changes were depressing to her as a student.</p>
<p>"You couldn't drive yourself anywhere like on a field trip you had to go with a faculty member or in some classes you had to have permission."</p>	<p>The subject felt that security measures changed or influenced some academic activities.</p>
<p>"I was in band and a few years before I came to the high school well one of the years they went on a band tour and a bunch of the kids got in trouble for drinking and that kind of ruined it for the younger people. We were kind of limited to the number of trips we could take after that."</p>	<p>The subject felt that security measures changed or influenced some academic activities.</p>

**Table 4-10: Think about your relationships with different teachers. Did security measures impact any of those relationships? How did you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
"I feel very comfortable with our teachers and they are really friendly to everyone and they pride themselves on getting to know the kids."	The subject felt there was no impact on her relationship with teachers.
"I think we had better relationships after it happened. They would be more interested in you. I don't know they definitely got better."	The subject felt relationships with teachers improved after security measures were in place. She felt teachers were attempting to become more familiar with students.
"I think if anything we got closer because we realized how important it is for them to know their students better. So it didn't really change too much."	The subject felt relationships with teachers improved after security measures were in place. She felt teachers were attempting to become more familiar with students.
"Yea – it did in class -- out of class it didn't really, but in class I'd be joking around and they would say now you need to be serious now we are not doing that."	The subject noted a change in class to one where teachers concentrated more on subject matter rather than student/teacher relationships.
"They were pretty much the same. I'm sure they were a little bit more cautious than before with students that they thought might cause trouble, but there weren't to many of those."	The subject felt there was no impact on her relationship with teachers.
"Yes, I remember there was one time I wasn't in the class but I just heard about it. There was a -- um -- a teacher I don't remember what class it was. I guess some kid threatened the teacher in that class and they and just kind of left the class, but they treated that pretty seriously and -- um -- talked to the kid. I don't remember what ended up happening to him, but I remember he did threaten the teacher and went after her pretty angry, but there was a whole class in there too, but they did treat it really serious. Everyone talked about it through out the school and they kind of made a big deal about it."	The subject felt that discipline incidents were taken more seriously after security measures were in place.

**Table 4-10 continued**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
"They – um -- well we -- not really because, I didn't really talk to them a bunch of them individually. but when we do our drills like any type of fire drill or intruder drill it seemed like they would be a lot more serious about that situation than they were before Columbine."	The subject felt teachers seemed more serious about procedures and drills that were implemented.

**Table 4-11: Think about the security measures at your school. What feelings would you have about attending a school without security measures?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"I would feel -- probably I wouldn't be as confident walking around our campus. I think having those cops with the jackets on is better than not having any."</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures.</p>
<p>"I think that with the type of school ours was, because in High School (fictitious name) it's so small that nothing ever happens and that's like----to think about, but if I had definitely went to school in a city or something, I would want security measures from what you hear and stuff, but like before all that happened our school was fine."</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures.</p>
<p>"I think I would feel a lot more uncomfortable about it, because there wouldn't be a lot of protection and someone could get hurt. I just think I would be uncomfortable it makes me feel better about going to school in the morning and not having to worry about getting shot or something like that."</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures.</p>
<p>"I would not want to go to a school that had nothing -- cause it -- it -- seriously I don't belong to the group that -- oh my gosh I'm so scared of everything. I mean -- I think my school had way more security than they did at Columbine."</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures.</p>
<p>"I think you might -- like need some if you had dangerous people so -- I don't know if I would feel much differently about it. I'd -- It probably -- its like -- kind of a sense of security to know that they are there, but I think we are kind of ignorant to the fact that people do bad things -- so I don't think about it that often."</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures and she didn't want to think about the danger.</p>

**Table 4-11 (continued)**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>“Well if it were a bigger school, I would definitely feel it would be a little scary, but for my high school it was where I grew up. So I felt very safe and I didn't think we needed a lot of security measures.”</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures. She attended a small school and felt that she knew everyone</p>
<p>“I guess I never really noticed them that much and then when I thought about it, I realized how much we actually did have security measures and I guess it probably made me feel safer to have the cameras in some ways to protect your stuff in your lockers and also if something happened like if someone was out in the building or we needed help. I guess I would feel better going to a school with something like that then a school without it.”</p>	<p>The subject felt attending a school with security measures was more comfortable than attending a school without security measures.</p>

**Table 4-12: When you think of the School Resource Officer (SRO) at your school, how do you feel?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"I didn't think they really did a whole lot besides stand there, but I guess they don't have to say a whole lot. If someone was going to come in and do a violent act I guess they would scare them off."</p>	<p>The subject felt that the school resource officer program visibility was important, but lacked rapport with students.</p>
<p>"To some extent I think they were friendly, but they weren't really friendly. They would just sit there and do their job."</p>	<p>The subject felt that the school resource officer program visibility was important, but lacked rapport with students.</p>
<p>"Um -- well ours was the guy we all went through D.A.R.E. with. So we all knew him, so it was comfortable having him there. It was just weird when other ones would show up, because it would be like why is that policeman here?"</p>	<p>The subject felt having rapport with the school resource officer made her more comfortable with the program.</p>
<p>"I think good, but in some ways it is also again annoying. Because when I mean -- you could be a bad kid, but like when you are walking around and he questions you it just makes you feel like I'm doing something wrong. I'm just walking around, but it just makes you feel like your bad. I think if anybody - he tried to get a relationship with the bad [sic] kids more."</p>	<p>The subject felt the school resource officer program was effective with some students, but was annoying to her.</p>
<p>"I thought it was a joke. He didn't really do anything except ride around and give people tickets. He just kind of stood out -- we had lots of other people who were out in the parking lot checking people and in the halls checking passes. Our guy was just a guy in uniform."</p>	<p>The subject felt the school resource officer program wasn't effective because of a lack of rapport and relationships with the students.</p>
<p>"There was just one really and like he was the dad of a couple of kids that went through the school -- so -- he knew a lot of people. He was fun to be around -- like to joke around with, but I guess it was reassuring to have him around."</p>	<p>The subject felt having rapport with the school resource officer made her more comfortable with the program.</p>

**Table 4-12 (continued)**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"I guess he walked around a lot. I never really met him, but he tried to meet people around the school and try to get to know people I think, but he just kind of walked around and would answer any questions or if people wanted to talk to him. So it was a good idea I think just to have someone walking around."</p>	<p>The subject felt having rapport with the school resource officer made her more comfortable with the program.</p>
<p>"An officer coming into your school with guns on the side of his outfit, but it was never something that I was involved in. I don't know -- it wasn't too bad, but you always knew something was going on when an officer came in. They wouldn't just ever come in and check out the school or make sure things are running okay, but if an officer was in our school something had gone on whether it be a kid got in a fight or reference to some sort of theft or drugs."</p>	<p>The subject seemed concerned about an officer coming into school with guns. The subject felt that the school resource officer only came into school when there was a problem or incident. She seemed to feel that building rapport and relationships with students would have made her more comfortable.</p>

**Table 4-13: Think about your high school experience. What other feelings do you have about security measures?**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"I feel like my high school was really secure. As I said a lot of the high schools surrounding us would try to vandalize our school. I have always kind of thought that maybe we should have cameras at our school, because we don't know who did this stuff. I feel like that could have been necessary."</p>	<p>The subject felt additional security measures might have been useful at her school.</p>
<p>"Um -- well just like if I went to a school with metal detectors. I wouldn't feel safe at all like even for people who have to check for stuff like that I wouldn't. I don't know if I had to walk through that everyday knowing that some people would bring stuff in or whatever it would change my feelings about it, but I mean our school is pretty comfortable with everything when people get caught with knives or weapons. I think people would try and like beat the system or whatever but then there are other people that wouldn't. Like I don't know there is definitely a personality groups where people would do it intentionally -- like the kid who brought in the pipe bomb he was looked down upon and he wasn't popular and he did it like -- I don't know some people do it for attention."</p>	<p>The subject felt some security measures may motivate students to challenge or attempt to breach security measures in order to receive attention. The subject felt emphasis on some security measures would make her uncomfortable at school.</p>
<p>"I think at some point I kind of wanted there to be more security measures. At times I felt like there wasn't enough, but then most of the time when I was playing softball and we got back really late and all the doors were locked and we had to find a janitor to unlock them it just got really annoying. I guess that was good because -- um -- some random person couldn't go in there and walk around. Um - - it was annoying but it was good."</p>	<p>The subject felt security measures are necessary, but annoying at times.</p>
<p>"Well nothing to terrible happened at my school, but at my school it was just like hall -- hall -- hall -- and outside -- and people could come in whenever they want to and it was kind of scary. Some guy from the neighborhood could get ticked off and just come in and do something. They are building a new school with several levels and fewer doors. It should be better."</p>	<p>The subject felt that facility floor plan was important for a school and due to the existing floor plan, controlled access was difficult at her school</p>



**Table 4-13 (continued)**

Subject's Statement	Researcher's Interpretation of Statement
<p>"I guess I didn't think about it when I was there, but – but I mean like a lot of times I think maybe they take them to far -- like they use like metal detectors and things like that, but I think that shows a lack of trust kind of, but maybe that's a good thing, but also you can take it to far."</p>	<p>The subject felt that security measures indicated a lack of trust in students. The subject felt that a school could place too much emphasis on security measures.</p>
<p>"I know they were talking about maybe having metal detectors or saying you couldn't use backpacks and stuff like that. I think it would kind of bother me I guess, because I know I wouldn't bring in anything in -- I guess what I think about security measures is that when I was there I didn't really think they were necessary but looking back on it I would say it was probably a good idea to have them. Especially with just a couple of instances where rumors I heard or stories like of the kid threatening his teacher or kids with knives or something I just kind of heard little stories here and there so that they caught before it got too out of control I think."</p>	<p>The subject felt that when she was a student in high school, she was annoyed with security measures and didn't realize the need for them. However, after leaving the school she came to realize security measures were necessary.</p>
<p>"I think it is definitely a great thing to have if your high school is not safe. Um -- which could be anywhere, I guess I mean you never know what is going to happen, but for the most part my experience was fine. I grew up not knowing really a lot about security from like when I would hear about other people having security like having to have an ID card to get into our school. We didn't have that until my senior year we did get a photo identification card."</p>	<p>The subject felt security measures are necessary in schools.</p>

**Common and General Themes**

The data for this study was further analyzed and reduced by clustering the individual themes found in the subject responses to form common themes. The five common themes developed were (a) violence or threats of violence at school disturbed and frightened students, (b) students are more comfortable in schools that employ security measures and a particular security measure, the school resource officer program, was viewed as more effective when the officers build rapport and had relationships with students, (c) security measures have influenced and altered school culture, (d) security measures and violence have changed teacher/student relationships, and (e) students believe that appropriate and comprehensive security measures are necessary in schools. The five common themes formed in this research are listed in table 4-14.

**Table 4-14: Common Themes**

Violence or threats of violence at school disturbed and frightened students.
Students are more comfortable in schools that employ security measures. A particular security measure, the school resource officer program, was viewed as more effective when the officers build rapport and had relationships with students.
Security measures have influenced and altered school culture.
Security measures and violence have changed teacher/student relationships.
Students believe that appropriate and comprehensive security measures are necessary in schools.

The common themes were analyzed again and reduced to form general themes. The process used to reduce and break down the data by taking apart statements is referred to as de-contextualizing (Tesch, 1990). The next step, which is rewording the meanings of the de-contextualized statements according to Tesch is re-contextualizing. Grouping the result of the de-contextualized and re-contextualized statements allow the general themes to emerge from the data. The general themes form the basis for the essential structure of the experience. The three general themes of this study were (a) school culture has been influenced and affected by violence and security measures, (b) students want the opportunity to build open and positive relationships with teachers and other adults in the school, and (c) students perceive that security measures are necessary in schools. The general themes are listed in table 4-15 along with the common themes that shaped and influenced each one. In this table the general themes are noted in the left column in bold and the common supporting themes are listed in the right column.

**Table 4-15: General Themes**

General Themes	Common Themes
<p><b>School culture has been influenced and affected by violence and security measures.</b></p>	<p>Violence or threats of violence at school disturbed and frightened students.</p> <p>Security measures have influenced and altered school culture.</p> <p>Students are more comfortable in schools that employ security measures.</p>
<p><b>Students want the opportunity to build open and positive relationships with teachers and other adults in the school.</b></p>	<p>Security measures and violence have changed teacher/student relationships.</p> <p>A particular security measure, the school resource officer program, was viewed as more effective when the officers build rapport and had relationships with students.</p>
<p><b>Students perceive that security measures are necessary in schools.</b></p>	<p>Students believe that appropriate and comprehensive security measures are necessary in schools.</p>

According to Colaizzi (1978) the researcher then moves back and forth between the general themes and the meaning statements to form a list that accurately describes the meanings in the themes. This list makes up the essential structural definition.

### Essential Structural Definition

The essential structural definition is a description of the experience being investigated. The essential structure is formed from the elements that are necessary for an experience to present itself for what it is (Polkinghorne, 1989). The essential structural definition representing student perceptions of the impact security measures have on their high school experience is the finding from the analysis of the data.

The essential structural definition starts with the perception that students have concerning their experience with security measures in high school, which clarify the impact these programs are having in schools. School culture has been influenced and affected by violence and security measures. Students feel more comfortable attending a school with security measures because violence is disturbing and frightening to them. Changes in school culture are both positive and negative as seen by the students. Traditional customs, activities, and social opportunities for students are being eliminated and reduced in some schools producing a negative perception by students of the impact security measures are having on their high school experience. However, these same security measures are reducing and eliminating problems in the schools. The problems that students perceived as being addressed by security measures consist of: hazing and harassment of students; drinking and drug usage by students; and feelings of fear of violence.

Security measures are necessary in schools. Students perceived that security measures are a necessity in our schools today. They also recognize that in some schools more security measures are needed due to facility design.

Students see relationships as important components of their high school experience. They believe that open and positive relationships between themselves and adults increase the effectiveness of programs and their academic progress. Students perceived a change in teacher/student relationships due to security measures and violence. Teachers are either making a greater effort to become familiar with students or they are concentrating more on subject matter and distancing themselves from students. Student perceptions of the school resource officer program reveal that officers that build relationships with the students are viewed as more effective than those who do not. Student's value relationships built in schools.

Students recognize the need for security measures, but they desire a balance in their activities, social opportunities, and relationships in school. This balance is the heart of culture in schools for students. The addition of security measures in schools is affecting this balance. The general themes of this research indicate that students have felt the impact of security measures on their high school experience and are recognizing the discrete elements creating those impacts. The articulation of those impacts by students leads this research study to one overarching conclusion: that students want a balance in their school experience and security measures may have put critical areas of the student's high school experience out of balance. Students want to experience a balance in their

**schools through opportunities for open, positive relationships with adults and experiencing security measures that provide a safe environment without being too intrusive.**

### **Summary**

**This qualitative study utilized Colaizzi's (1978) outline for data analysis of a phenomenological study. These procedures included becoming familiar with the data before extracting the phrases or sentences that directly related to the experience of security measures from the subject's perspective. The researcher analyzed the phrases or sentences and extracted the meaning from each while rewording the meanings. Clustering the individual themes found in the participants' responses to form common themes further reduced the data. The researcher then de-contextualized and re-contextualized the data to form three general themes. Next, by moving back and forth between the meaning statements and the general themes the researcher formed a conclusion that accurately describes the meanings. From this process emerged a description of the essential structure of the experience being investigated. The essential structural definition representing student perceptions of the impact security measures have on their high school experience is the result of the analysis of the data.**

**In the next chapter, Chapter Five, the findings of this phenomenological study are summarized. This summary includes the findings from Colaizzi's (1978) outline for data analysis of a phenomenological study. The findings have been examined to answer the grand tour question: What is the impact of security measures on a student's high school**

experience? The chapter concludes with implications for practitioners and further research.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusions and Implications**

#### **Introduction**

The central question in this research study explored the impact of security measures on a student's high school experience? Data was generated through the survey and interview process in a quest to answer the central question and sub-questions. The analysis of the data formed the conclusions of this study. The findings of this phenomenological study add information and credence to the limited research on security measures in schools.

This study concluded that: students want a balance in their school experience and security measures may have put critical areas of the student's high school experience out of balance. Students want to experience a balance in their schools through opportunities for open, positive relationships with adults and experiencing security measures that provide a safe environment without being too intrusive. This conclusion is supported by three general themes and five common themes. The three general themes are (a) school culture has been influenced and affected by violence and security measures, (b) students want relationships with teachers and other adults in the school, and (c) security measures are necessary in schools. The five common themes which formed the basis for the general themes, are (a) violence at school disturbed and frightened students, (b) students are more comfortable in schools that employ security measures and the school resource officer program was viewed as more effective when the officers build rapport and have

relationships with students, (c) security measures have influenced and altered school culture, (d) security measures and violence have changed teacher/student relationships, (e) students believe that appropriate and comprehensive security measures are necessary in schools. These results have implications for future planning and the use of security measures in schools.

### Synopsis of Central and Sub Questions

The central question of this study was: What is the impact of security measures on a student's high school experience? The central question was supported and answered by data generated from the eight sub questions. The data answering the central question was analyzed to form the conclusions of this study. The following section is a summary of the data as it relates to each of the eight sub questions.

#### Sub question 1: What specific security measures were implemented in the school?

Subjects indicated on a survey the various types of security measures that had been implemented in their school. The school resource officer program, a visitor identification system, and evacuation plan for threats of violence were present in all the subjects' schools. Subjects indicated that lock down procedures and increased staff supervision was present in six of the seven schools. Controlled access to the school, surveillance cameras, and restricted student movement were indicated as present in some of the schools. One school had utilized drug dogs and another had removed all the student lockers as security measures.

**Sub question 2: What are student perceptions of the security measures implemented?** Subject perceptions indicated that students are more comfortable attending a school with security measures because violence is disturbing and frightening to them. Students perceived that security measures are a necessity in our schools today and in some schools more security measures are needed due to facility design. Subjects in this study indicated that some older schools and/or those designed with multiple doors need additional security measures to control access to the building. One particular security measure, the school resource officer program, emerged in this study and was perceived by students to be effective when officers build relationships with the students. Students perceive that security measures are a necessary component of schools in our society today.

Sub questions 3 and 4 are included in the same summary, because the data was nearly identical.

**Sub question 3: What are student perceptions about the relationship of safety to security measures in their schools?**

**Sub question 4: What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures may have on violence in their school?** Students indicated that they felt safer attending a school with security measures rather than a school without security measures because violence is disturbing and frightening to them. Students related incidents of violence in their school that impacted their feelings of safety. These violent events seemed to have a greater impact on the students when they were present and witnessed the incident. The

implementation of security measures reduced student feelings of fear of violence in their schools. In addition, subjects reported that security measures reduced incidents of hazing and harassment of students during the school day. Students perceived that security measures had a direct impact on their safety and reduced violence at school.

Sub questions 5 and 6 are included in the same summary, because the data was nearly identical.

Sub question 5: What impact, if any, did security measures have on student social interactions?

Sub question 6: What are student perceptions of the influence that security measures have on school culture? The security measures that schools have implemented are influencing and altering the school culture. These changes in school culture are both positive and negative as seen by the students. The elimination of traditional customs, activities, and social opportunities for students are perceived as negative. The traditional customs, activities, and social opportunities that are being reduced or eliminated include assemblies, dances, and student social time in school halls or other restricted areas. The reduction and elimination of these school events have produced a negative perception by students of the impact security measures are having on their high school experience. However, these same security measures are reducing and eliminating problems in the schools. The problems that students perceived as being addressed by security measures consist of: hazing and harassment of students; drinking and drug usage by students; and feelings of fear of violence. The reduction and/or elimination of these problems in

schools have created a positive perception of security measures by students. Students have recognized the impact that security measures have on student social interactions and school culture.

Sub question 7: What are student perceptions of the impact that security measures have on student learning? Students perceived an impact of security measures on academic activities. Perceptions of subjects in this study seemed to indicate that only supporting items for academic activities were screened out by security measures. Prop guns for plays, field trip transportation, doors locked to the classroom, and restrictions on musical trips were mentioned as examples. However, perceptions of changes in the student/teacher relationships emerged from the data supporting this sub question and sub question number 8.

Sub question 8: What impact, if any, did security measures have on student-teacher relationships? Students perceived a change in teacher/student relationships due to security measures and violence. Teachers were either making a greater effort to become familiar with students or they were concentrating more on subject matter and distancing themselves from students. The effort that some teachers made to become more familiar with students was perceived by the students to be positive. Subjects felt these teachers realized the importance of a good relationship with their students. The sense was that this familiarity and relationship would provide information and an understanding of their students that would allow them to be proactive in solving problems. The subjects in this study indicated negative changes in student/teacher relationships when teachers

concentrated more on subject matter. The teachers that changed their relationship with students by concentrating more on subject matter were viewed as afraid of their students. These teachers seemed to be afraid of upsetting a student and eliminated joking and teasing as part of their classroom environment. The concentration of subject matter rather than relationship building was depressing as indicated by at least one student. Students seem to recognize the value of a constructive student/teacher relationship and felt the impact that security measures can have from both a positive and negative aspect.

### Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is generated from the analysis of data gathered during the interview process. The conclusion is based on the central question and the sub questions of this study. The analysis of the data from this study produced a single conclusion supported by three general themes and five common themes. The conclusion and themes are outlined in the following sections.

### Balance in their School Experience

Traditionally schools have made the leap to believe that a safe school was an effective school. Thereby the addition of security measures to increase the safety in a school was believed to increase the effectiveness of the school. However, this study points out that the implementation of security measures is affecting an important balance in schools by changing the student experience in regard to activities, social opportunities, and relationships.

**A single overarching premise emerged from the general themes. That premise is: that students want a balance in their school experience and security measures may have put critical areas of the student's high school experience out of balance. Students want to experience a balance in their schools through opportunities for open, positive relationships with adults and experiencing security measures that provide a safe environment without being too intrusive. Which leads this researcher to conclude that students must have a voice in school planning that insures a balance of social opportunities and activities.**

### **General Themes**

#### **School Culture**

**The first general theme that emerged from the data was that: school culture has been influenced and affected by violence and security measures. This general theme is supported by three common themes (a) violence at school disturbed and frightened students, (b) students feel more comfortable in schools that employ security measures, and (c) security measures have influenced and altered school culture. The first common theme that emerged from the data was that violence at school disturbed and frightened students.**

**Students were disturbed and scared by incidents of violence or threats in their school. The violent incidents seemed to have a greater impact on students when they were present and witnessed the incident. Student perceptions of threats of violence such as bomb threats to the school were disturbing to students when they thought the school**

wasn't taking the threat seriously. When school authorities performed a quick search and restarted school after a bomb threat, some students were afraid that the school wasn't safe. The literature on violence in schools supports the perception of students in this study. The perception of students in this study was a fear for their safety when violence occurred in their school (Bastian & Taylor, 1991; CDC, 1995; Rapp, Carrington, & Nicholson, 1986; Sheley & Wright, 1993; Tochtermann, 2002).

Students are more comfortable in schools that employ security measures. A particular security measure, the school resource officer program, was viewed as more effective when the officers build rapport and had relationships with students.

Another theme that emerged from the data was that students feel more comfortable in schools that employ security measures. Students indicated that they felt more comfortable and safe with security measures in their high schools. These students went on to indicate that they would rather attend a school with security measures. Hylton (1998) and Garcia (1994) both support implementing security measures to increase safety for students and staff. The perception of students in this study was in agreement with the literature on security measures. The subjects in this study felt safer and more secure when security measures were in place in their school.

The influence and changes that security measures have had on school culture was a common theme that emerged from the data. Students indicated that security measures had a positive effect on school culture by reducing incidents of harassment, use of alcohol and drugs, and gave students a general feeling of security. The subjects in this

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study felt that security measures reduced incidents of hazing or harassment of students by other students. The subjects went on to express that security measures reduced incidents of alcohol and drug usage by students at school social activities. The perception by subjects in this study that security measures have an impact on school culture is supported by the literature on school culture. Peterson & Deal (1998) maintained that culture is a set of informal expectations and values that shape how people think, feel, and act in schools. The perception of students in this study was that security measures did change how people think, feel, and act in school, thus changing school culture.

The subjects in this study found that security measures also had a negative effect on school culture. Students felt that security measures had a negative impact on school culture by eliminating traditional customs, activities, and student social opportunities. The perception of the subjects would coincide with the definition Peterson & Deal (1998) have of school culture when they said; "Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges" (p. 2). Students felt that their schools changed the traditions and customs that have formed their school culture by eliminating bonfires, dances, assemblies, and other social opportunities.

### Relationships

The second general theme to emerge from the data was that: students want the opportunity to build open and positive relationships with teachers and other adults in the school. This general theme was supported by two common themes (a) security measures

and violence have changed teacher/student relationships, and (b) the school resource officer program is viewed as more effective when the officers have rapport with students. A supporting theme that emerged from the data was that subjects felt security measures and violence have changed teacher/student relationships. Subjects in this study felt security measures and violence caused some teachers to make an effort to become more familiar with their students. The perception that teachers were working harder to establish a relationship would seem to be supported by Esposito (1999) when he found, "The most important factor associated with children's school adjustment is the Teacher/Student Relationship" (p. 376). These teachers may have been promoting and establishing a relationship to improve student adjustment to school as well as early intervention in student problems.

The perception of some subjects was that security measures and violence caused some teachers to become more content oriented and reduce or eliminate socialization in the classroom. These perceptions would seem to be supported by a study completed by Noguera (1996). Noguera found that teachers seemed to be increasingly isolated from students and that the distancing effect seemed to be exacerbated by fear. The perception by the subjects in this study that teachers are concentrating more on subject matter and less on building relationships with their students is supported by literature on student teacher relationships.

The school resource officer program is viewed as more effective when the officers have rapport with students. This theme emerged from the data when the subjects in this

study felt school resource officer programs were more effective when students were familiar with and felt a relationship with the officer. Yeagley (2000) stated that the School Resource Officer Program must, “work within the school system to build positive relationships between students, faculty and the police, while enforcing the laws promoting a safe and drug free environment” (p. 44). The findings of this study were in agreement with Yeagley (2000) and Hylton (1998) in that the school resource officer program is more effective when rapport and relationships are formed with students in schools.

#### Security measures

The third general theme to emerge from the data was that: students perceive that security measures are necessary in schools. Appropriate and comprehensive security measures are necessary in schools was the last general theme to emerge from the data. Subjects in this study felt that security measures were necessary in schools, but are annoying at times, may cause some students to challenge security measures, and may make some students feel uncomfortable depending on the magnitude of the measures. In addition some students don't recognize the need for security measures until after they have graduated from high school. The perception of subjects in this study is supported by Tochtermann (2002) when she found that students were annoyed with security measures. One subject in Tochtermann's study indicated that keeping students on a leash wouldn't prevent bombs. The perception by subjects in this study that some students are going to challenge security measures is consistent with the subject in Tochtermann's study.

Additional security measures might be needed in some schools to provide a comprehensive program of safety. The perception of some students in this study was that older schools with multiple accesses might need additional security measures to make students feel comfortable. Controlling access with security measures is particularly difficult in older schools with multiple doors. Additionally, some subjects thought surveillance cameras might be useful to protect buildings from vandalism and theft. The perception that poor physical design may not allow school staff to properly supervise students and intruders may also contribute to isolation and hamper internal communication in the school (Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994; Rossman & Morley, 1996; Sautter, 1995; Watson, 1995). The perception by subjects in this study that poor physical design of a school contributes to student concern for safety and security is supported within the literature.

### Implications

The findings of this study generate many implications for practitioners and future studies. These implications are separated into two sections (a) “Implications for Practitioners,” and (b) “Implications for Future Studies.” The implications for practitioners are described in the first section and may benefit school personnel in their future planning for security measures.

#### Implications for Practitioners

School practitioners will find the results of this study valuable in future planning for school safety. School personnel should consider the conclusions of this research when

planning, evaluating, and implementing security measures. School personnel must realize that the balance in schools between social opportunities and a safe and secure environment has been tilted with the addition of security measures. Students recognize this imbalance in schools and want to experience a balance through opportunities for open, positive relationships with adults and experiencing security measures that provide a safe environment without being too intrusive. School leaders can achieve a balance in schools by utilizing the conclusions of this study. In order to accomplish this goal schools must understand and implement the following concepts.

Schools must understand that students feel more comfortable in a safe school with appropriate security measures. However, school districts must realize that security measures and violence are changing the school experience for students. Students are experiencing a change in school culture and their relationships with teachers. Schools must discover ways to continue traditions and customs from the past, which students consider being an important component of their high school experience. Schools must analyze their culture and promote student social opportunities such as assemblies, dances, and other student interactions. In addition, school leaders have to consider the effect that violence and security measures are having on student/teacher relationships.

Teachers are attempting to distance themselves from students by concentrating on subject matter rather than building relationships with students. Schools will transition into prison like facilities if school personnel don't protect student opportunities and encourage teaching styles that provide a focus on students. The School Resource Officer program is

**an excellent example of a security measure that students feel is effective, but only when the resource officer builds relationships and develops a rapport with students. Teachers, administrators, school staff, and resource officers must realize that developing rapport and building relationships with students is an effective security measure.**

**The subjects in this study felt that security measures were necessary in schools and made them feel safer. Students felt additional security measures may be needed depending on the school facility design. Some older schools and schools with facility designs that include multiple access options should consider a comprehensive system for controlling intruders during school hours. Students in this study seem to feel more uncomfortable when they believe that intruders can easily enter the school.**

**An important implication derived from this research that school personnel should realize and employ is to consider student perceptions when planning. The conclusions of this research demonstrate that students have an understanding of the balance needed in schools. Students recognize what is needed in schools when they call for an opportunity for open and positive relationships with adults and experiencing security measures that provide a safe environment without being too intrusive. Now is the time for administrators to allow students a voice in school planning that insures a balance between social opportunities and a safe and secure environment. The inclusion of student perceptions in school planning and evaluation will result in not only a safer, but richer learning environment.**

### Implications for Future Studies

This research study has unlocked several possibilities for future studies. Student perceptions of the impact that security measures have on their high school experience would naturally lead to a study on teacher perceptions of the impact that security measures have on a student's high school experience. Another study could be done on the impact that security measures have on a student's middle school or junior high experience. Students at the middle school or junior high seem to deal with increased violence at times and research in this area may reveal further information (Rapp, Carrington, & Nicholson, 1986). Additional studies would seem to follow from the conclusions of this study in the area of student/teacher relationships. Students observe a change in student/teacher relationships due to violence and security measures; do teachers perceive these same changes? Students noted changes in school culture that were both positive and negative. Further research in this area could be done utilizing teacher perceptions of changes in school culture. This research will provide the basis for future studies utilizing student perceptions as a valuable tool in developing a vision and plan for school safety.

### Summary

During the last few years' security measures have been implemented in schools across America. School leaders charged with ensuring safety for students and teachers have forged ahead without considering the impact these security measures have on a student's high school experience or the balance in their school. This research study was

completed to determine the impact security measures have on a student's high school experience. The conclusions of this study redefine the components for safety planning in schools. It is imperative that school personnel realize that the balance in schools between social opportunities and a safe and secure environment has been tilted with the addition of security measures. Students recognize this imbalance and must be given a voice in planning for safe schools.

Administrators, teachers, school board members, and parents must include student perceptions as a basic component in determining appropriate security measures in future planning. Students acknowledge that security measures are necessary in schools and even suggest additional security measures may be helpful in certain situations. In addition, students recognize that security measures have impacted school culture, student/teacher relationships, and provide a sense of safety for all those in school. Students are worried and concerned about more than reading and writing in schools today. School leaders must realize that students are not only concerned about safety, but also understand what schools should do to provide a full, enriched learning and social experience for students during their school years. Student ideas and perceptions are powerful tools to be used in creating a balanced school with a safe learning environment. Now is the time for schools to include student perceptions of security measures in their planning and begin to regard students as partners in reducing violence and ensuring safety in schools.



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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Screening Interview**

### **Screening Interview**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2002      Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (am/pm)      Male: \_\_\_      Female: \_\_\_

#### **Opening Statements:**

Thank you for taking part in this initial interview for a research study. I would like to go over a few things before we start the initial interview.

- This research study will look at student perceptions of the impact of security measures on their high school experience.
- All information from this interview will be confidential. You will not be identified by name or in any report from this study.
- This researcher and Dr. William McCaw, Department of Educational Leadership at The University of Montana, will be the only people who know you participated in this research. Dr. McCaw is my Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chairman and oversees all aspects of this research study.
- The confidentiality of your name is also under the purview of the Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana.

I want to assure you that there are no correct answers to the questions. What is important, are your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The intent of this initial interview is to find out if you are interested in participating in this research and if you have experienced security measures in your high school.

#### **Questions**

1. Tell me about your high school and where it was located.
2. Are you aware of your high school implementing or having in place security measures intended for student safety?
3. What types of security measures were you aware of?
4. Would you be interested in participating in this research project?

**Appendix B: The Interview Protocol**

**Interview Form: Student Perceptions of the Impact Security Measures have on  
Their High School Experience**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2002      Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (am/pm)      Male: \_\_\_\_      Female: \_\_\_\_

Add code #

**Opening Statements:**

Thank you for taking part in this important research study. I would like to give you the consent form for your signature and go over a few things before we start the interview.

- I will be asking you questions and tape-recording your responses.
- All information from this interview will be confidential. You will not be identified by name or in any report from this study.
- A confidential code will be used to identify you for follow-up questions and your confirmation of information in the final report.
- No direct quotes from you will be used in the study without your prior permission. When quoted your identity will remain confidential.
- This researcher and Dr. William McCaw, Department of Educational Leadership, The University of Montana will only know your name. Dr. McCaw is my Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chairman and oversees all aspects of this research study.
- The confidentiality of your name is also under the purview of the Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana.

I want to assure you that there are no correct answers to the questions. What is important, are your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The intent of this interview is to gather your thoughts, feelings, and experiences, not to make judgments on your responses.

**Survey Information**

**Please check the types of security measures your high school implemented or had in-place while you were a student there. (Check all that apply)**

- School Resource Officer Program
- Metal Detectors
- Lock Down Procedures (Locking down the school if there is a threat of violence)
- Visitor Identification System
- Controlled Access to the Building During School Hours
- Increased Staff Supervision
- School Evacuation Plans for Threats of Violence
- Surveillance Cameras
- Restricted Student Movement
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following questions about yourself and your high school.**

Please list the name of your high school, city, and state.

High School \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Year graduated from high school? \_\_\_\_\_ How large was your graduating class? \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Questions**

**Interview Question #1:** Please describe yourself in High School?

**Interview Question #2:** Think about a violent incident at your school. How did you feel?

**Interview Question #3:** Think about your high school experience. Did you ever feel like you needed more security measures than were in place?

**Interview Question #4:** Think about a time when you became aware of security measures in your high school. How did you feel?

**Interview Question #5:** Think about a specific situation that involved a security measure at your school. How did you feel?

**Interview Question #6:** Tell me how you felt about the influence that security measures had on your school culture.

**Interview Question #7:** Think about a time when you became aware of security measures in a student social situation. How did you feel?

**Interview Question #8:** Think about a specific academic activity and how security measures may have influenced it. How did you feel?

**Interview Question #9:** Think about your relationships with different teachers. Did security measures impact any of those relationships? How did you feel?

**Interview Question #10:** Think about the security measures at your school. What feelings would you have about attending a school without security measures?

**Interview Question #11:** When you think of the School Resource Officer (SRO) at your school, how do you feel?

**Interview Question #12:** Think about your high school experience. What other feelings do you have about security measures?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Do you have any questions for me?

**Appendix C: Consent Form**

-



**Participant Consent Form**

**Title of the Study:** Student Perceptions of the Impact Security Measures have on Their High School Experience

**Investigator:** Kenneth C. Stuker

**Special instructions to the potential subject:** This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you.

**Purpose:** You are being asked to take part in a research study to determine the impact that security measures have on a high school student's experience. It is important that schools understand what impact security measures are having on student social interactions, student-teacher relationships, student learning, and student perceptions of the security measures. Understanding the impact of security measures on students will assist schools in future planning for safety purposes and providing the best learning environment possible.

**Procedures:** If you agree to take part in this research study you will be given a consent form and a form for permission to quote. You will be asked to participate in an interview for approximately forty-five minutes. The interview will take place in an office at the Education Building on the campus of The University of Montana.

**Risks/Discomforts:** No anticipated risks or discomforts.

**Benefits:** Your help with this study may help schools better understand the impact of security measures on students and aid in future planning.

**Alternative Therapy:** None

**Confidentiality:** Your records will be kept private and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. Only the researcher and his faculty supervisor will have access to the files. Your identity will be kept confidential. If the results of this study are written in a scientific journal or presented at a scientific meeting, your name will not be used. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Your signed consent form will be stored in a cabinet separate from the data. The audiotape will be transcribed without any information that could identify you. The tape will then be erased.

**Compensation for Injury:** Although we do not foresee any risk in taking part in this study, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms. In the event that you are injured as a result of this research, you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, and Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:** Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about the research now or during the study, contact: Kenneth Stuker at 406-442-8707 or by email at [stukers@centric.net](mailto:stukers@centric.net)

**Subject's Statement of Consent:** I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that a member of the research team will also answer any future questions I may have. I voluntarily agree to take part take part in this study and confirm that I am 18 years old or older. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form prior to the interview.

**Name of Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D: Field Memo**

**Field Memo Form**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Date of field memo)**

**Reference**

**Interview Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Date of the interview)**

**Subject Code:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Reference to specific research subject)**

**Notes:**

**Summer contact Information:**

**Phone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E: Permission to Quote**

**RELEASE FORM**

**Permission to use Quotations**

The purpose of this form is to secure permission to use quotations from the semi-structured interview(s) conducted as part of a research study regarding student perceptions of the impact security measures have on their high school experience conducted by Kenneth C. Stuker.

Subject's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The undersigned (subject of the study and originator of the quotation) hereby grants permission for Kenneth C. Stuker to utilize quotations by the undersigned to be reported in his research study on the impact security measures have on the high school experience and any subsequent publications resulting from said study.

The anonymity of the undersigned will remain confidential at all times.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of the Subject)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)