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The Values Influencing Assistant Principals' Decisions to Utilize School Resource Officers

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Abstract

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MCJ, University of South Carolina, 2000

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Dissertation Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

School administrators use control and maintenance to create a safe learning environment for students in the United States public schools. However, when school resource officers (SROs) within U.S. schools are assigned authority over disciplinary procedures certain students become negatively impacted. Substantial research has been conducted regarding the impact and roles of SROs, but very few studies explored the opinions of assistant principals (APs), the individuals typically responsible for the enforcement of school discipline. In this study, a qualitative interpretative design was used to explore what values and beliefs guide APs in their decisions to involve SROs in school disciplinary procedures. Hodgkinson's hierarchy of values served as the theoretical framework. Interviews were conducted with 11 APs, representing 7 high schools amongst 3 school districts in a southeastern state of the United States. Interview responses were coded and analyzed and identified 3 key categories of values used by APs in deciding whether to involve SROs: ethical, organizational, and personal, with ethical values serving as the most frequent determinant for using SROs. The primary ethical values described were faith and spirituality. Based on the analysis of the roles and values of APs, the findings suggest that SROs are not creating safe environments as intended. Instead, the over dependence on SROs negatively impacts students (particularly black and brown students). Findings further suggest that school systems could better meet the long-term needs of students through alternatives to SROs, such as an increased use of professional school counsellors.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Jesus Christ, my savior for his grace and mercy in making this dream a reality. I would also like to dedicate this to my late mother, Daisy Mae Caldwell, late grandmother, Helen Kemp Caldwell, and my late brother, Rev. Anthony R. LaGroone. You contributed all you had to ensure I reached this level of academic and life achievement. Your direct and indirect life lessons will be forever treasured as a source of inspiration.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A review of the past three decades (1990-2020) evidences dramatic change within the American public and private school systems (Sizer, 2013; Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). For an increasing number of students, violence, bullying, and classroom chaos are routine aspects of the school day (Lunenburg, 2010). Merino (2011) and Musu-Gillete et al. (2018) argued that schools are no longer viewed as safe havens for teaching and learning but have become a location for crime and violence. Causal factors for the frequency in school violence and other disruptions are complex and yet to be determined. Education and law-enforcement researchers, psychologists, and social theorists debate these factors (Teasley, 2013).

In a 2013 interview regarding increased school violence within Baltimore, Maryland, Dr. Robert W. Simmons III, professor at Loyola University, suggested that "school violence is a by-product of the society; where [sic] violence is present in music, movies, games, and homes" (as cited in Hellgren, 2012). Of a national sample of 1,276 high school students, 5.9% reported that within 30 days, they failed to attend school because they felt unsafe at school or en route to and/or from school (Eaton, et al., 2011). This scenario is perhaps more severe for some schools than others; however, school violence is a constant concern for school administrators in their attempt to create a safe, disciplined learning environment and is deserving of public attention (Chavis 2011; Melvin, 2012).

In 7 years (i.e., 2009−2015), episodes of school violence killed and/or injured approximately 979,000 individuals within 98,817 U.S. public schools (Robers, Kemp, Truman, & Synder, 2013; Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012 & Musu-Gillete, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, Kemp, Diliberti, & Oudekerk, 2018). The same reports reveal 226 of these incidents account for school- associated violent deaths with 150 homicides, 13 suicides, and four legal interventions. The remaining violent incidents range between a severe violent offense (rape, sexual assault physical attacks and threats of physical attacks with and without a weapon) to theft and larceny of items valued less than $10 without personal confrontation (Robers, Kemp, Truman, & Synder, 2013; Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012). Most of the incidents were the more minor level of offenses.

Schools of all academic levels, including colleges and universities, have experienced serious violence (Weiler & Cray, 2011) with victims being from different genders and age and ethnic groups (Booth, Van Hasselt, & Vecchi, Martin, & Trimpe, 2011; Robers et al., 2013). The perpetrators of these offenses have similar characteristics as the victims, with the youngest reported as 6 years of age (Robers et al., 2013). No accurate or useful profile exists of a school that is vulnerable to school violence, which has caused countless pursuits by communities for preventive strategies. Commonly implemented tactics to date include the implementation of *zero-tolerance* policies (Kaffka, 2011); both random and scheduled backpack, locker, cell phone, and vehicle searches (Vorenberg, 2012); crisis management (Kingshott & McKenzie, 2013); uniforms (Dunlap, 2013); environmental-structure changes (Cornell & Mayer, 2010); family intervention (Blockler, Seeger, & Heitmeyer, 2011); drug-education programs

(Miller, Aalborg, Byrnes, Bauman, & Spoth, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2013); gang prevention programs (Gottfredson, 2013); the placement of metal detectors and cameras (Bachman, Randolph, & Brown, 2011); life-skills training (Inman, van Bakergem, LaRosa, & Garr, 2011); and security and law-enforcement personnel within schools (Canady, James, & Nease, 2012; Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). Although these strategies have contributed to a decrease in school violence, the extent of their impact has been disappointing and they have served to present additional concerns for researchers, parents, and students regarding student criminalization (Farrell, Henry, & Bettencourt, 2013; Forman, 2011; Na & Gottfredson, 2013; Theriot & Cuellar, 2016; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). This concern is created by an inconsistency in what is too much and not enough intervention toward the provision of a safe learning environment.

School resource officers (SROs) have been identified as a key component in the most recent effort to combat school violence and promote school safety (Cowan & Rossen, 2013; Elliot, 2009). These professionals are sworn law-enforcement officers who are assigned to work within school facilities. Their value is supported by those within the law-enforcement profession, which is evidenced by statistics indicating that this group of officers represents the fastest growing field of law enforcement (Brady, Balmer, & Phenix, 2007). The overall goal of an SRO is to improve relations between law enforcement and school-aged children by serving as a counselor, mentor, teacher, and role model; they play a prominent role in American public schools (James & McCallion, 2013; Wolf, 2013). Policymakers recently approved the allocation of $257 million within the 2014 fiscal-year budget for the Comprehensive Schools Safety Program under the

Community Oriented Policing (COP) Services program. The funds were targeted for the hiring and retention of police officers and sheriff deputies across the United States (Department of Justice, 2013).

Between 1997 and 2007, the number of SROs assigned within American public schools rose by 52% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). By 2012, the national estimate was 17,000 officers (Snyder & Truman, 2013) with 42% of schools utilizing SROs, regardless of location, academic levels served, or size of enrollment (Wieler & Cray, 2011). The National Association of School Resource Officers estimates 14,000 to 17,000 SROs currently service within U.S. schools (2019). This program was designed to increase the number of law-enforcement officers engaged in community policing in and around primary and secondary schools, while concurrently building collaborative partnerships within school communities to combat school violence (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019).

Within the United States, the primary role of the assistant principal (AP) in secondary-education schools is to support the school principal and act as principal in his or her absence (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Wong, 2009). Daresh identified the work of the AP as some of the least desirable administrative duties; while principals receive credit for effectuating those duties generating attention of the public (2001). Depending upon the type of school and academic levels served, as well as the structure of the respective school district, AP duties may differ, but for the most part they are very similar. Common responsibilities of APs are monitoring student behavior, maintaining school discipline, and promoting school safety (Kelly, 2013), the latter of which was the focus of this study.

Maintaining school discipline requires preventative measures, long-range planning, developing and distributing behavior guidelines, working directly with students exhibiting inappropriate behavior, suspending or expelling students, creating alternative education provisions, and consulting with support personnel. With the involvement of law enforcement, the AP serves as the school liaison between law enforcement and students. According to Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickerral (2009), physical, social, and emotional discipline is collectively the first essential dimension of a positive school climate.

A positive school climate affects all individuals within the school setting, and administrators view it as necessary to promote student, teacher, and school success (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Huggins-D'Alessanddro, 2013). Such a climate can exist only when all involved feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure within an environment conducive to interacting with caring trusting people (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Huggins-D'Alessanddro, 2013; Zullig, Huebner, & Patton, 2002). Although controversial, most schools throughout the U.S. have embraced the use of law enforcement to create the security aspect of the positive school climate (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Huggins-D'Alessanddro, 2013). However, I found minimal studies highlighting the opinions, concerns, and assessments APs, who are typically responsible for the enforcement of school discipline and the utilization of SROs in producing positive school climates. The values and beliefs of these education professionals could provide a perspective of SROs and may contribute to the development of public policy regarding safer schools.

The following sections include a full description of the problem statement, research question, and purpose of the study. Each section demonstrates the status of the problem and its significance for two professional disciplines, education and criminal justice. I discussed the theoretical framework and my rational for using phenomenological research design. I also provide definitions of key terms to ensure clarity I also outlined key assumptions, scopes, and delimitations.

Background

The concept of assigning law enforcement within American school environments emerged in Flint, Michigan during the 1950s. Depending upon the source, the year of introduction varies between 1953 and 1958 (Black, 2009; Bond, 2001; McNicholas, 2009). At that time, the plainclothes officers within the Police-School Liaison Program were referred to as *juvenile detectives.* Their purpose was to patrol and investigate criminal complaints within the local junior-high and high schools, enforce the law but not school rules, and to improve relationships between the local police and youth (McNicholas, 2009).

The term *SRO* was not introduced until the mid-1960s (McDaniel, 2001). To date, discrepancies remain as to what this role actually entails. The first federal definition was presented in the request for proposal for the Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative (as cited in McDaniel, 2001) as:

A career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with schools and

community-based organizations to: (a) address crime and disorder

problems, gangs, and drug activities affecting or occurring in or around an

elementary or secondary school; (b) develop or expand crime prevention

efforts for students; (c) educate likely school-age victims in crime

prevention and safety; (d) develop or expand community justice initiatives

for students; (e) train students in conflict resolution, restorative justice,

and crime awareness; (f) assist in the identification of physical changes in

the environment that may reduce crime in or around the school; and (g)

assist in developing school policy that addressed crime and recommend

procedural changes. (pp. 2−3)

The National Association of SROs (NASRO, 2010) defined an SRO:

A law enforcement officer who promotes a better understanding of our

laws, why they were enacted, and their benefits. They provide a visible

and positive image for law enforcement. They serve as a confidential

source of counseling to students concerning problems. They bring

expertise into schools that will help young people make more positive

choices in their lives. They also work to protect the school environment

and to maintain an atmosphere where teachers feel safe to teach and

students feel safe enough to learn. (p.1)

A third definition developed after years of research and based upon encounters

experienced by law enforcement officers assigned to schools throughout the country is

provided by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence (n.d). The Center's definition described the SRO as:

certified law enforcement officer who is permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or a set of schools. The SRO is specifically trained to perform three roles: law enforcement officer; law-related counselor; and law-related education teacher. The SRO is not necessarily a DARE officer (although many have received such training), security guard, or officer who has been placed temporarily in a school in response to a crisis situation but rather acts as a comprehensive resource for his/her school. (p. 1)

Legislative definitions of SROs are provided by the Community Oriented Policing Services (2011) program and within the Safe and Drug Free and Communities Act of 1994. Both are the major funding sources for SROs. According to COP Services program, an SRO is:

A career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, [who is] deployed in community-oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations – (a) to address crime and disorder problems, gangs, and drug activities affecting or occurring in or around an elementary or secondary school; (b) to develop or expand crime prevention efforts for students; (c) to educate likely school-age victims in crime prevention and safety; (d) to develop and expand community justice initiatives for students; (e) to train students in conflict resolution

restorative justice, and crime awareness; (f) to assist in the identification

of physical changes in the environment that may reduce crime in or around

the school; and (g) to assist in developing school policy that addresses

crime and to recommend procedural changes (42 U.S.C. §3796dd-8.).

Under the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Community Act, the SRO definition is:

A career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, [who is] deployed

in community oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police

department to a local educational agency to work in collaboration with

schools and community based organizations to (a) educate students in

crime and illegal drug use prevention and safety; (b) develop or expand

community justice initiatives for students; and (c) train students in conflict

resolution, restorative justice, and crime and illegal drug use awareness

(20 U.S.C. §7161).

All the quoted definitions of an SRO have similarities. All define SROs as law

enforcement officers who participate in COP activities and who are assigned to work

within schools and/or community-based organizations. During late 1980s, SROs placed

in school were full-time certified law-enforcement officers serving as teachers and

counselors within school settings (NASRO, 2010). In 1991, the NASRO adopted the

triad model, allowing SROs to act as teachers, counselors, and law enforcement officers.

The rationale behind this approach was that, if students were educated on drugs, alcohol,

violence, and the consequences of illegal activity, they would be less likely to make

severe related mistakes (South Carolina Association of School Resource Officers

[SCASRO], 2014). The triad model was rapidly adopted in public schools across the country. By 1995, most states had developed and adopted their own form of the SRO program, and a supporting association (Finn, McDevitt, Lassiter, Shivley, & Rich, 2005).

Although initially introduced during the early 1950s, the practice of placing law enforcement officers within schools was not implemented nationally until the mid-1990s, motivated by the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado (James, Logan, & Davis, 2011). This event has been identified as the incident that drew national attention to violence within U.S. schools (Greenya, 2005). Since that time, annual violent incidents have emerged within school settings, resulting in serious injuries and deaths (Torres, 2014). A few that have received national media attention were Ohio's Chardon High School on February 27th, 2012 (Caniglia, 2013); Connecticut's Sandy Hook Elementary on 12/4/2012 (Scinto, 2012); Nevada's Sparks Middle on October 22nd, 2013 (Hutchinson, 2013); Colorado's Arapaho High on December 14th, 2013 (Mitchell, Meyer, & Gurman, 2014); Washington's North Thurston High on April 27th, 2015 (Murdock, 2015); South Carolina's Townville Elementary on September 9th, 2016 (Almasy & Allen, 2016), California's North Park High on April 10th, 2017, and Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High on February 14th, 2018 (10 years. 180 school shooting, 2019).

Although school safety remained a priority, following the Columbine incident, the placement of officers within schools was aggressively challenged by juvenile-justice advocates (Justice Policy Institute, 2011; Theriot, 2009). This challenge was spurred by the perception of law enforcement becoming America's response to varied occurrences on school grounds, whether appropriate for law enforcement control or not, in addition to

other concerns (Marsico, 2013; Theriot, 2009). One result of the increase in law enforcement involvement in school system was an influx of juveniles being referred to the justice system.

Within the State of South Carolina, lawmakers, school administrators, educators, parents, and students all share concern over school violence (Terry, 2010). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) reported that South Carolina is one of 13 states with the highest homicide rates among populations between 10 and 24 years of age. This is the result of community violence overflowing into the schools (Benbenishty, 2011; Hoffman, 2012). The South Carolina legislature has responded to the issues of bullying, intimidation, and harassment within schools by passage of the Safe Schools Climate Act (Terry, 2010). Each of these issues can easily escalate to acts of violence. The statute was designed to limit and punish related behavior among public-school students, and it mandates the development of policies to address these issues within each school district across the state (Safe School Climate Act, 2006). Yet, concern over the intent verses the actual contribution of law enforcement within schools continues. The responsibilities and duties of the SRO within the state of South Carolina vary not only among school districts (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012) but between schools within the same district.

My goal for this study was to examine the values that guide the related efforts of administrators as they relate to the utilization of SROs in the application of disciplinary procedures. Schools are value driven institutions; therefore, acknowledging and understanding the values of those responsible for its daily operation could prove

beneficial in public policy modifications. This is significant with a shift in the roles and responsibility of school administrators and SROs as it relates to disciplinary procedures, as this appears to become more of a public policy issue. The data that I collected in the study were necessary for remedying various challenges faced by administrators, schools and communities pertaining to the possible criminalization of students and usage of SROs.

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study

There is massive controversy regarding the effects of public policy on school safety regarding the use of SROs (Canady, M., James, B., & Nease, J., 2012; Petteruti, 2011). Parallel to the increased number of SROs within America's schools are the number of students finding themselves a part of the criminal justice system (Theriot, 2009). Many of the increased court referrals are the result of minor nonviolent behavioral problems (Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014). Infectious values and beliefs shape systems and the magnitudes to which SROs are used by the school system. These practices are now harmful to the lives of students (Begley & Leithwood, 1990; Na & Gottfredson, 2013). Many of these affects have been attributed to the zero tolerance and exclusionary school disciplinary policies, which disproportionately target students of color and those with a history of abuse, neglect, poverty, or learning disabilities (Children Defense Fund, 2012).

Values play a key role in creating public policy. When strongly held, values cause conflict (Hodgkinson, 1996). Focusing on the values of school administrators is a way to understand the views of those directly affecting the process and of others, to help find

common ground where it exists surrounding the issue, and to allow those working together to find ways to form positive social change. The values of APs towards students, law enforcement, and discipline could provide insight into the decision making of school administrators. The understanding of these values could also impact public policy, so that there is change in the manner SROs are used within American schools. Indirectly, this could increase the number of students graduating from school and decrease the number acquiring criminal records from school and the policies believe to contribute to these areas of concern.

Numerous studies have been conducted to determine the status, associations, effectiveness, and impact of SRO programs regarding school violence across the United States (Weiler & Cray, 2011; Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, & Donner, 2011; McNicholas, 2009; Brady, et al, 2007; Finn, McDevitt, Shivley, & Rich, 2005; and Greenwood, 1996). Studies have also been conducted to determine the values school administrators should possess in carrying out their professional and legal duties (Aslanargun, 2012). However, measuring the effectiveness of these programs and the focus on what values school administrators should possess have revealed a major factor that has been overlooked; the school chief disciplinarian's perspective. Meaningful research addressing solely the involvement and opinions of APs is scarce. Those who work alongside law enforcement, including SROs, within the school settings, report that managing and responding to inappropriate student behavior continues, especially within high-school settings (Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, & Donner, 2011). The roles and responsibilities of SROs may differ from school to school due to the values and beliefs of the respective APs.

The purpose of the research was to explore and describe the values and beliefs of APs, as they relate to the utilization of SROs in disciplinary procedures within their schools. I evaluated which values influenced the response of APs to inappropriate student behavior, as evidenced by the labeling of offenses by the South Carolina Department of Education that occurred among student attending Grades 9 through 12. I used a qualitative phenomenological design to examine the approach of APs within the southeastern schools regionally located within the United States.

Merriam (2002) and Patton (2002) both viewed phenomenological study as laying the groundwork for others to follow. In this study, I identified additional areas of research related to SRO and the practices of education administrators. I explored the values and beliefs of APs that promote positive social change by expanding upon an existing understanding of their role in the daily implementation of the SRO program. I expected APs' beliefs supporting a view of children as problematic and deserving of strong discipline will show a higher SRO involvement in disciplinary procedures and a higher student referral rate to the justice systems for both minor and major offenses, higher dropout rates, and higher suspension and expulsion rates. I also expected these results to be most exemplified under policies such as *zero tolerance* and programs such as Safe School Act (SSA). I expected the exact opposite when values support greater leniency or a less strict approach to inappropriate student behavior. This latter scenario was considered the more appropriate by proponents of development theories. A connection between AP values and SRO involvement in schools found in this study indicates a need for further research to increase the understanding of school-district administrators

surrounding factors that could raise the success rate of APs. This could, in turn,

contribute to understanding which values, beliefs, and behaviors tend to create more

positive outcomes for schools across the country. Most importantly, this could bring

about more positive outcomes for students experiencing life-altering chastisement of

current public policy on school safety.

Research Question and Theoretical Framework

Although assumed that the AP is second in command within the school setting,

this is not necessarily the case with disciplinary issues. Bond (2001) stressed that without

a memorandum of understanding, it is impossible for APs and SROs to understand each

other's role. This could be problematic and affect the effectiveness of both. A substantial

amount of research has been conducted to understand the impact and roles of SROs, but

very few studies relate to APs. The overarching question guiding the research that I used

to guide this study was: What values and beliefs guide APs in their decision to involve

SROs in school disciplinary procedures.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Hodgkinson's (1978, 1991,

1996) hierarchy of values. Hodgkinson's hierarchy of values draw upon the prevalence of

values embedded within education-administration practices. This framework supports the

aim to gain an unprecedented perception of SROs from perspectives and performance of

APs. This theory was initially developed by Christopher Hodgkinson in 1978, but further

expanded in 1991 and 1996. The foundational concept is that "the intrusion of values into

the decision-making process is not merely inevitable; it is the very substance of decision"

(Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 59). Hodgkinson provided the framework for understanding

values and the valuation process in education administration practices. He contests any scientific or traditional systems theory approach, stating that the central questions of administration are "philosophical" in nature (p. 272). Hodgkinson provided a model identifying three value types classified in four ways. As it applies to the study, this theory produces the relevance needed to identify and focus on values. If the values of APs related to SROs and student behavior influence their use of these officers in disciplinary matters potentially impacting school outcomes, then a focus on APs may outweigh the past focus on merely the SRO. An answer to the research question guides future research regarding the training and decision making of education administrators.

Nature of the Study

Similar to past research on the topic of interest in the study (Spillane & Kenny, 2011; Theriot, 2013; Weiler & Cray. 2011), this research will also embrace an interpretivist paradigm. The aim is not to express an absolute unworthiness of SRO programs. The values that guide the efforts of administrators are the focus of this study as they relate to the utilization of SROs in the application of disciplinary procedures. Merriam (2002) acknowledged that this perspective focuses on the outcomes of research. There is a dire need to identify the values of the APs to ultimately better support administrator success. As Congdon and Dunham (1999) stated "The probability of success for a research project is greatly enhanced when the 'beginning' is correctly defined as a precise statement of goals and justification" (1999, p. 1). This statement is equally true for the selection of a research design. In its simplest form, such a design is defined as a strategy toward increased knowledge. Regardless of the phenomenon to be

explained, explored, understood, developed, and/or interpreted, several avenues towards an adequate conclusion are likely to exist. All designs present their own set of strengths and weaknesses. The same quality of data can be produced from qualitative methods that can be derived from quantitative research.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a process of inquiry that leads to understanding based upon a distinct methodological tradition toward exploring a social or human problem through building a complex, holistic picture via an analysis of words, detailed views of information, and a natural setting. In the study, a qualitative phenomenological design was employed to gather and analyze the values of APs that influence their use of SROs within their schools. Phenomenology is rooted in a philosophical tradition credited to a German philosopher, Edmund Husserl. As a philosophy, Husserl's phenomenology focuses on the detailed description of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Laureate Education, 2013). The design was further developed by Martin Heidegger (Groenewald, 2004).

The primary focus of phenomenology research is to understand the structure, meaning, and essence of the lived experiences of a person or group of persons (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is simply the study of phenomena, as experienced by those participating in the phenomena on a firsthand basis. This type of research identifies the essence of the human experience directly from those living the experience. Finlay (2008) defined the purpose of this type of research as exploring the way things appear through experience or in consciousness, where the aim is to provide a rich, textured description of the lived experiences. This form of study provides the richest and most

descriptive data (Moustakas, 1994), which serves as the ideal research method for eliciting cognitive representation; this was the exact motive of the study. Although somewhat time consuming, this method of research can be efficient and inexpensive.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study and are defined for purposes of the research. Each term without a citation is referenced in accordance to the website of a school or servicing law enforcement entity within the area of study:

An Assistant Principal (AP) is the direct assistant to the chief executive officer of a public high school located within the geopolitical boundaries of the state of South Carolina. These education professionals can also be referred to as vice principal or dean of students.

A High School is an education facility serving students attending Grades 9 through 12, but not those serving students of alternative status.

A Memorandum of Understanding is a document created by a district superintendent and the serving law enforcement agency to describe in detail the responsibilities and expectations of both the school and local police.

The *Safe School Act (SSA)* was a bill passed in 1994 to help ensure that every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning, by ensuring that all schools are safe and free of violence.

*A School Disciplinarian is a*ny personnel designated to manage overall disciplinary concerns within or surrounding the school setting.

A School Resource Officer (SRO) is a certified law enforcement officer trained and assigned to patrol a school or group of schools as a primary task.

School Violence refers to any action resulting in the physical harm of any individual on school grounds or while attending a school-sponsored event.

Values are a set beliefs or philosophy that impacts decision making (Hodgkinson, 1996).

A Zero-Tolerance Policy are a set of predetermined rules subsequently applied to determine the appropriate consequences and punishments focuses on combating weapons, drugs, violence, and antisocial behaviors within the public-school system by allowing no leniency with infractions.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope of the Study

An assumption in the propose study is that APs are the primary disciplinarians within their assigned schools. It will also be assumed that, although SROs are not required to obtain permission from any other official to make an arrest (Devine, 1996; Groeneveld, 2008), a hierarchy indeed exists among school administrators with the in handling of school incidents. Another assumption is that law enforcement and school administrators share the goal of maintaining a safe learning environment. It is also assumed that all offenses must be managed by school administration, but not necessarily law enforcement, and that criminal offenses occurring on school property must be reported. Lastly, it was assumed that APs participating in the research would be honest in reporting their perceptions regarding SROs, student behavior, and any external pressures they experience.

The major limitation of the study involved the subjectivity of the researcher. When using phenomenology is it often difficult to detect or prevent researcher induced bias (Cerbone, 2014). The difficulty in ensuring pure bracketing may also lead to interference in the interpretation of found data. Both areas may create difficult in establishing trustworthiness if not approached cautiously. Another limitation of the study is the size of the involved sample. Although generally small in phenomenology research, the sample size creates concern for capturing the typical experience of the population.

Data collection and analysis may also present limitations. Participant responses to interview questions will represent solely the values of the participating APs and not the district; therefore, a heavy reliance was placed on trustworthiness. Additionally, questioning techniques and the analysis of the interview transcripts were vulnerable to research bias. To control this factor, I must remain aware and cautious of all personal perspectives and opinions.

Participants in the study was limited to APs of the high schools regionally located within southeastern states. APs from all public high schools within the area were invited to participate in this study. All alternative schools offering the same or sharing similar grade levels within the same area were excluded from participation. Alternative schools service children and adolescents whose educational, behavioral, and/or medical needs cannot be adequately addressed in a traditional school setting.

Significance of the Study

Within most American public-school settings, the position of AP assumes the responsibility of student discipline (Gillespie, 2012) and is therefore perceived to have

great insight and/or influence over the daily operations of SRO programs or their

involvement with student disciplinary practices. Consequently, a detailed exploration of

the values, beliefs, and perceptions of this population is necessary to better understand

the process of decision making for APs in disciplinary decisions and inform that system

as it links to SROs and the justice system. As the gatekeepers of these programs, the

perspectives and viewpoints of APs are valuable to the study. Increasingly, younger

children are being referred to the justice system, which is a scenario rendering the

approach of APs to discipline and safety important.

The value of findings in this research could be unprecedented for both the

criminal-justice and academic communities. The intent to expand the knowledge base

surrounding the values of APs is paramount to determining the effectiveness of the fastest

growing law-enforcement field (i.e., SROs). Investigating whether a correlation exists

between the values of APs and the involvement of SROs within public schools represents

a major benefit of the study. The findings could extend to all school administrators and

SROs working within a southeastern state high-school setting.

Summary

Since 1990, a vast amount of time and resources have been dedicated to

determining the overall effectiveness and necessity of SRO or related programs across the

county. Although 35% of all U.S. public schools utilize SROs (Weiler &Cray, 2011),

little consensus is evident surrounding their usefulness in controlling or decreasing school

violence, as was the original intend (McDaniel, 2001). Even less agreement exists on any

other benefits to officer presence within school settings, except for the improvement of relations between law enforcement and school-aged youth.

Christopher Berry, Maryland's 2007 Principal of the Year recipient, opined that the vision of any school reaches far beyond the scope of the principal (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2012), and much of this vision is shared with the AP. Due the increased accountability for student achievement, the role of the APs has evolved; however, the primary task of disciplinarian remains the focus. Because of this responsibility, increase knowledge surrounding the values of APs could reveal a groundbreaking perspective and greater understanding of the use, roles, impact, and effectiveness of SROs across the country, while also increasing both administrator and student success.

Chapter 1 included the introduction, background of problem, statement of problem, and research questions. The theoretical framework supporting this study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the study were also provided in this chapter. In Chapter 2, I will provide a review literature pertinent to the current status of SROs, roles of APs, and the application of the expectancy value theory outlined and highlight the relevance of the values APs and the use of SROs within the school disciplinary procedures. In Chapter 3, I will provide a description of the research methodology, sample selection, data collection, and analysis procedures for the study.

Chapter 2

Introduction

Although not widely recognized until the 1990s, the placement of police within

school settings is not new, nor is it restricted to schools within the United States (Bond,

2001). According to Bond (2001), the first formal, documented program was developed

in Liverpool, England. Shortly thereafter, Flint, Michigan developed and implemented

the first SRO program within the United States. Since 1950, law enforcement has been

linked with schools within various countries, for various reasons, and fulfilling various

roles (Kelly, 2013). Justification for this linkage within the United States has been to

reduce and/or prevent incidents of school violence (Merino, 2011), but along with the

increased number of SROs within America's school is an increase number of students

being pushed into the criminal justice system (Theriot, 2009; Zalatoris, 2015); and

Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). During this same span of time, several related empirical and

theoretical studies were conducted to capture the justification for the increased use of law

enforcement in schools. While Hughes and Fenster (2011), Johnson (1999), and James

and McCallion (2013) highly supported the placement of law enforcement within

schools, Na and Gottfredson (2011), Petteruti (2011), as well as, Theriot and Cuellar,

2016), found very little worth in the program, arguing that the practice caused lasting

harm to youth. Murray (2003), Shuler-Ivey (2012), Wages (2002), and Theriot (2016)

explained the perceptions of teachers, students, and principals with regard to SROs, and

Bond (2001), Travis and Coon (2005), Wolf (2013), and Blad (2017) described the duties

and roles of the SRO. Regardless of the support or opposition within related research

studies, SROs continue to be highly utilized within American schools and have developed into one of the most debated social, economic, and political issues (Na & Gottfredson, 2011; Nakamura & Hamburger, 2012; Raymond, 2010).

Unfortunately, these debates and inquiries seldom include meaningful discussion from the perspectives of APs. Assistant principals are the professionals usually charged with maintaining discipline and order within the school setting (Kelly, 2013); therefore, their views and values are highly beneficial to the SRO discussion. Begley and Leithwood (1990) stated that understanding APs utilization of preventive strategies, such as SROs, is an important step to understanding their responses to student behavior and the roles and necessity of SROs as facets of their responding actions. I used extant literature on SROs, SRO programs, the roles of APs, values and school administration, student behavior, and school discipline to address the themes in this study. The purpose of this study was to explore the values and beliefs of APs as they relate to the utilization of SROs within their schools. The findings will contribute to the existing base of knowledge surrounding SROs but from a new perspective. The research provides a starting point for the further study of values and specific disciplinary practices

Literature-Search Strategy

To obtain a balanced perspective of historical and diverse viewpoints pertaining to SROs, the role of APs, and the motivation of human behavior, I searched for multiple sources in my literature search. I used multiple electronic searches to identify and retrieve the sources that I then reviewed. I found information using various the academic databases: Academic Search Premier, Educational Resource Information Center,

Education Research Complete, ProQuest Central, and SAGE. I was able to identify and retrieve more relevant information by using the advanced search engines provided by each of the databases, and by utilizing the bibliographies and references of found journal articles.

My research was guided by researching keywords which included *police in schools, secondary principals and SROs, roles of assistant/vice principals, SROs, school violence, student behavior and discipline, school safety, school culture, values, decision making, school administration,* and *educational leadership and administrators.*

Theoretical Framework

School administrators are constantly challenged to make daily decisions that rarely appease all involved stakeholders. Decisions pertaining to the management of discipline and school order tend to be the most challenging. According to Begley (2004), this decision-making process for all administrative practices must move beyond simple "rhetoric of moral leadership" (p. 15). This is necessary because "the new reality of school leadership is responding to value conflict" (p. 17). Hodgkinson's hierarchy of values theory was selected as the theoretical framework for the study to better understand the values and valuation processes of education-administration practice.

Hodgkinson's Hierarchy of Values

Hodgkinson posited that an unavoidable integration of values exists with the execution of the duties and responsibilities of school administrators (Hodgkinson, 1996)**.** The notion that values do matter in education administration and accommodates the status of values as influential to administrative practice is carried by this linkage (Begley

& Leithwood, 1998). Decisions of all types are made by individuals and groups, and those decisions are guided by the lived experience of phenomena. Hodgkinson postulated, "The intrusion of values into the decision-making process is not merely inevitable, it is the very substance of decision" (p. 59). Although not focused on education administration, motivational theories also support this concept in their prediction of behaviors and achievement motivation. Along with Hodgkinson, Wigfield, (1994) and Wigfield, Tonks, and Eccles (2004) have suggested in various ways that values influence perceptions of actions and objects; and Fishbein (1963) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) show the influence in decisions, choices, and judgments. Values also serve as the motivating force behind the motivation to strive for desired goals (Hodgkinson, 1978).

Values have received a great deal of scholarly attention within the realm of education administration since the 1970s (Benninga, Sparks, &Tracz, 2011; Berkowitz, 2011; Fullan, 2004). Many theorists and researchers describe the nature of values and how they influence administrative action (Begley, 2003, 1996; Willower 1999). Although conflicting in its description, and often used interchangeably with morals and ethics, Hodgkinson (1978) defined value as "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic or group, or the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, mean, and ends of action" (p. 121).

According to Begley (2004), the Hodgkinson value typology is essential for "understanding [the] valuation process" (p. 6). It is this typology that supports the continued efficiency and effectiveness of leadership practice among those in education

administration. The value-hierarchy concept contains a classification for three types of values (transrational, rational, and subrational) for which Hodgkinson (1978) claimed two components, axiological (i.e., good) and deontological (i.e., right; see Table 1). He suggested that which is enjoyable, likeable, or a "matter of preference" is good, and that which is proper, moral, or a "sense of collective responsibility, a conscience" is right (p. 110). The latter of the two (i.e., the deontological) is what creates anxiety for most administrators. Whenever there is a struggle between the desirable and the right, it is necessary for individual desires to subside to universal demands (Hodgkinson, 1996). Hodgkinson's (1978) model of value concepts identifies three value types, ranked in four ways, which classifies grounds for value judgments.

At the base of the Hodgkinson (1996) hierarchy framework are Type 3 (i.e., subrational) values. These values are grounded in individual preferences, self-justifying, and primitive (p. 98). Type 3 values represent the axiological conception of what is good and are theoretically parallel to logical positivism, behaviorism, and hedonism. Because they are based upon personal preference, they are not represented in the same manner as the remaining type of values. Begley (1996) advanced that the remaining two types are a more accurate representation of a hierarchy of values. Types 1and 2 values solicit reasoning and are differentiated on a continuum of importance that is considered higher than the one below it (1990), while Type 3 values require no "rational processing" (Begley, p. 419).

Table 1

The Hodgkinson Administrative Values

Grounding	Psychological correspondence	Philosophical correspondence	Value (types)
Principle	Conative	Religionism Existentialism Ideologism	1 (transrational)
Consequences			
	Cognitive	Humanism Pragmatism Utilitarianism	2 (rational)
Consensus			
Preference			
	Affective	Logical Positivism Behaviorism Hedonsim	3 (subrational)

As illustrated in Table 1, what Hodgkinson (1991) identified as Type 2 values (i.e., rational) are positioned directly above Type 3 values. They correspond with utilitarianism, pragmatism, and humanism. Unlike Type 3 values, Type 2 values are social and governed by "collectives and collective justifications" (p. 98). More specifically, these values run parallel with the culture of an organization wherein values are established by policies, laws, and traditions (Hodgkinson, 1996, p. 120). The Type 2 values are classified as (a) consensus or the will of the majority (Begley, 1996) or (b) consequence, which involves an examination of the consequences involved by the value

judgment. Of the two, consequence is the "higher level of rationality" (Hodgkinson, 1996, p. 117).

At the top of the Hodgkinson (1996) hierarchy framework, and enlisting the "highest level of rationality," are Type 1 values (i.e., transrational). These values are grounded in principle and correspond with ideologism, existentialism, and religionism. Type 1 values reach beyond reason and cannot be scientifically verified or vindicated by logical argument. Begley and Leithwood (1990) further suggested that Type 1 values are "based on will rather than reason" (p. 340). The adoption of Type 1values implies "some act of faith, belief, or commitment" (Hodgkinson, 1996, p. 99). Type 2 values define the "typical administrative mode" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p.122), but are ultimately formed by referring to Types 1 and/or 3 (p. 127), especially when attempting to eliminate the tension between preferences and principles.

The overall usefulness of the Hodgkinson hierarchy of values is in the resolution of conflict between and within levels of the paradigm. The general rule of this concept is that, when conflict is presented, the "lower level values should be subordinated to the higher-level values" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 146). Because this theory posits that all value levels are influential to decision-making processes of education administrators, it was appropriate for the theoretical framework of my study. Hodgkinson (1978) argued that the resolution of values is the administrative condition; therefore, values are unquestionably involved in the administrative decision-making process. He stressed that effective and efficient administrators must be consciously aware of their own values and

possess a willingness to be true to their own personal morality in order to creatively

tackle conflict, resolve issues, create solutions, and justifiably stand by the outcomes.

Because administrators work under the mandates of law, policy and procedures,

some actions and/or decisions require consideration of all relevant values and

subsequently judgment either by opting for one side (e.g., a Type 1 value) or by

compromise (i.e., a Type 2 value). Consequently, Hodgkinson (1991) suggested that

school administrators involve of a "rich personal value structure" in all administrative

practices (p. 136). The conceptual position that a full understanding of what influences

the values or circumstances considered by APs in their decision-making process, as it

relates to the utilization of SROs in disciplinary practice also makes this the appropriate

theoretical framework for my study. Begley and Leithwood (1989) advocated for study

such as this, stating that it is necessary to adopt a theoretical framework that holds "the

existence of values" in administrative actions because this will lead to a more thorough

explanation of decision making than what "exclusively rational frameworks" (p. 27)

typically produce.

Values in Education Administration

Branson, Baig, and Begum (2015) and Stravakou, Lozgka, and Melissopoulous

(2018) provided a more modernized account of values with education administrators; yet,

Hodgkinson's (1996) theory remains one of the most highly influential works on values

and has gained considerable scholarly support in research pertaining to values and the

application of education administrative practices. Branson, et al (2015) concurred the

importance of administrators' values and infers that disciplinary climate of the school

disciplinary is dependent on the alignment of the personal and organizational values throughout the school and the values and behaviors of its principals. Stravakou, et al (2018) reveal administrators' acknowledgement that values are highly important in how the carry out their daily duties. Much of their research was built on the ideologies of Begley and Johansson.

Begley and Johansson (1998) concurred that the personal values of administrators are significant influences on problem solving. They further endorsed that rational values of consensus, and consequences are predominant in the valuation processes of administrators while personal preferences are evident but infrequently articulated. Begley and Johansson also suggested that transrational principles are employed, but only under particular circumstances. Begley (2003) supported the motivational basis as the influence behind the adoption of certain values by education administrators. He confirmed that "normative motivational bases for administrative decision-making [*sic*] are the rational domains of consequences and consensus" (p. 7). Although infrequently and primarily in special circumstances, Begley stressed that self-interest motivates ethics and principle values; consequently, it has a place in the administrative decision-making process.

Engin Aslanargun (2012) supported the need to investigate the values necessary in education administrators to effectively conduct administrative work, emphasizing that "principals are not only charged with legal and professional duties, but they also respond to social expectation in a manner [conducive to] morality" (p. 1339). The need to consider values within administrative practice is most profoundly expressed by

Greenfield (1995) who proposed that "valuing is central in the doing of school administration" (p. 191). His rationale was the manner in which schools differ from most organizations because they are "uniquely moral enterprises", and it is the responsibility of administrators to be aware of the values influencing their actions and decisions (p. 61).

Leithwood and Steinbach (1991, 1993) stressed that values both directly and indirectly influence the problem-solving process. With respect to direct influence, values function as preferences and dictate the actions of administrators. With respect to indirect influence, values function as filters for determining the significance of the external factors of problem solving. Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) subsequently broadened their research, verifying the prevalence of values in problem-solving and decision-making techniques of school administrators, suggesting that values are influenced by their "education, religion, training, district philosophy, and role models," along with personal and professional experiences (p. 189). Roche (1999) opined that principals "must choose one value or set of values over another" (p. 256) when faced with moral dilemmas. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992) supported this notion and highlighted that all school administrators depend upon a "common core of values in their problem solving" (p. 108). Millerborg and Hyle (1991) further promoted this line of thought, declaring that the ethical belief system of administrators affects their decision making because of the "values they have internalized" (p. 4). Thus, these researchers call for increased awareness of the ethical decisions made by administrators. Toews (1981) added that the issues school administrators frequently encounter "involve the weighing of social and personal values" (p. 6).

A significant amount of research has been devoted to values and school administrators via a wide range of studies published within both peer-reviewed journals (Ashbaugh & Kasten, 1984; Aslanargun, 2012; Begley, 1996; Begley, 2002; Begley & Johansson, 1998; Greenfield, 1995; Richmon, 2004; Willower, 1996) and reputable edited book chapters (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Stefkovich, 2013; Willower, 1999). The many professional roles considered administrator created a minor concern in this study. It appears the only values embraced are those of the school principals, while the AP position has been underrepresented within professional literature (Glanz, 1994; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Ribbins, 1997). The position of this study is that the values possessed by those in administrative positions, including APs are evident in all administrative practices, but especially with decision-making and problem-solving tactics dealing with disciplinary practices. These professionals can impose their views of the world and values on others, including the way SRO programs are directed, with cleverness, skill, and authority. One of the most challenging areas for effective decision making and problem solving for APs is the management of order and discipline (Daresh, 2001, Kelley, 2013). Exploring the values most contributing to this maintenance could provide an end to the SRO verses no SRO debate, while simultaneously producing an unprecedented direction for future study.

Individuals behave in various ways for radically different reasons best explained by examining their personal beliefs and/or prior experiences. The Hodgkinson (1978) theoretical framework supports the goal of gaining a clearer understanding the values of APs that potentially influence the involvement of SROs in school disciplinary practices.

Hodgkinson proposed that values influence decisions, choices, and judgment. He described values as "concepts of the desirable with motivating force" (p. 120), which justified the selection of this framework as the basis of this study. Use of the framework is further justified by its ability to conceptualize the nature of the personal values held by administrators. Therefore, the framework significantly contributes to the advancement of students, APs, and law enforcement. In this research, I asked the questions needed to stimulate a new means of success for students, school administrators of all levels, and all law-enforcement personnel everywhere.

What is known with certainty about SROs is minimal, while what is believed to be known is quite extensive. Information yet to be revealed could result in centuries of additional research. This study contributes to past studies focusing on the overall contribution of SRO programs, as well as research yet to be conducted on the significant values of APs that affect the controversy of public policy on school safety and the utilization of SROs in disciplinary practice. With loyalty to the phenomenological practice, Bates (1980) explored understanding the meanings and intentions of individuals within organizations. It is his belief that "the structure of organizations provides only the framework within which negotiation is conducted, priorities are formulated, and assumptions about ends and means are debated" (p. 7), while "the values and beliefs of the individual [are what] give organizations their meaning" (p. 8). From the Bates perspective, values must be included as an essential component of any education theory of surrounding administration (p. 16). Failure to consider values and beliefs makes it

difficult to fully understand the mission, vision, and processes of any educational

organization.

According to Begley (1999), "theory and research on leadership values are highly

relevant to the field of educational administration" [because] the presence or influence of

values cannot be reliably or explicitly tracked by scientific methods alone" (pp. 252,

343). He called for qualitative research "that include[s]face to face [*sic*]data collections"

(p. 244) to provide insight into the nature and function of values in specific

administrative practices. This study attempted to answer this call. Begley and Leithwood

(1990) were persuaded that:

> A theoretical perspective which accommodates the existence of values as
>
> influences on administrative practice [could heighten] [*sic*] our
>
> understanding of administrative actions beyond that which is possible
>
> employing the exclusively rational frameworks normally associated with
>
> effective schools and school improvement research (p. 27).

These researchers further suggested that this outlook "contributes to a more

comprehensive description of the influences on the administrative actions of principals"

because it adds the "internal mental processes" of the individual to the more conventional

list of "contextual and process factors" normally considered by researchers (p. 27). Thus,

this study enhances existing research on the values of school administrators regarding

their decision making and focus on a specific area of concern yet to be studied.

The School Resource Officer

As noted, placing law-enforcement officers within U.S. school environments first introduced in 1953 or 1958 in Flint, Michigan (Black, 2009; Bond, 2001; McNicholas, 2009). During the mid-1960s, the term *SRO* was adopted (McDaniel, 2001). In the late 1990s, the nature and increased violence of student behavior caused a more visible and rapid increase in the presence of SROs, which have now become a common addition to American schools. They are, in fact, now deemed a school necessity (Theriot, 2009). The tasks of the SRO have extended beyond the initial purpose to primarily improve the relationship between youth and local law enforcement (James & McCallion, 2013, Kelly, 2013; Wolf, 2013). Responsibilities now involved multifaceted functions (NASRO, 2013; Raymond, 2010). The triad model, which many programs adopted, was developed in the early 1970s by the Orlando Police Department (Sherling, 1998; SCASRO, 2015). Currently identified as the Florida model, the construct contains guidelines and procedures for SROs and labels the roles of the position as law-related counselors and educators, as well as, law enforcers (SCASRO, 2015). The triad approach assumes that the more frequently educated students consider the consequences of illegal activity, the less likely they will become habitual participants in such activity. If effectively implemented, the counseling and mentoring components will help students correct and/or avoid minor childhood mistakes or *status offenses* (i.e., being incorrigible or persistent truancy). Anything beyond status offenses would be handled by the law enforcement component possibly resulting in justice system referrals.

South Carolina Program

Information pertaining to the first SRO program within the state of South Carolina was not be located; however, the first implementation of the triad model was recorded within Beaufort County in 1994 (SCASRO, 2015). Due to the financial assistance of the COP program, the SRO program rapidly grew throughout the state and encouraged the creation of the SCASRO in 1996. Since its creation, association membership grew from 23 to over 625 officers. This organization aids SROs, school districts, the South Carolina General Assembly, and the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy in establishing standards, laws, and training for the functions and roles of those serving in capacities contributing to and/or improving student safety. Even with significant support, conflicting opinions and practices result in non-explicit SRO roles and expectations. The budgetary responsibility for maintaining the program is one area of concern due to the significant cost for some districts.

Both, police officers serving as SROs and school administrators, agree that school safety is of paramount importance; however, conflicting interests exist when it comes to the welfare of students (Gittins, 2005). Consequently, Petteruti (2011) stressed the necessity of acknowledging that, although all SROs are police, not all police are SROs. This acknowledgement could affect the approach APs take in utilizing SROs and the values and beliefs they hold that influence that decision. Researchers have suggested that the personal values of education administrators play an important role in their leadership decision making (Begley, 2004). An exploration into the values of APs, as they relate to

student behavior, the SRO program, program utilization, and student disciplinary

practices, would be invaluable to the realm of student safety within American schools.

The Debate Surrounding Police Presence in Schools

Policy related to criminal-justice issues is often swiftly adapted and implemented

with little research to determine its strengths and/or weaknesses. It can subsequently cost

the justice system millions of dollars for a failed policy. This is evident with various

"tough on crime" policies, sentencing reforms, and policy related to capital punishment

(Hill, 2013; Liebman & Clarke, 2012; Shaw, 2011). Prominent scholars continued calls

for broader research examinations into the content of policy prior to adoption (Hester &

Servigny, 2014, Manski & Pepper, 2013). It could be argued that the placement of law

enforcement in school settings followed similar implementation patterns. Consequently,

attitudes surrounding the necessity of SROs range across the spectrum. Due to the recent

events that captured national attention regarding a SRO and a female student in a South

Carolina high school and a SRO and a 11-year old student in a North Carolina middle

school the range has widened. One extreme argues that public schools have always been

and remains a "safety net" for youth (Hyman and Perone, 1998; Stringer, 2018; Theriot,

2013). Such an environment calls for staff, school administrators, and teachers to not only

educate, but also to protect students from participating in, and becoming victims of,

criminal activity. This group speaks against the use of SRO in school settings. Mowen

and Freng (2019) even argued that such drastic school safety measures generally result in

decreased perception of safety amongst various school associated populations.

However, the truth is that public schools have become havens for criminal behavior

(Cowan & Rossen, 2013; Elliot, 2009; Swanson & Fingerhut, 2019;). The other end of the spectrum of attitudes surrounding the necessity of SROs are extremists who view the use of SROs as unquestionably necessary to tackle the amount of violence, drugs, alcohol, gang-related activity, and other social ills constantly threatening student safety on school campuses. A feeling of constant danger is bound to have an impact on academic and personal outcomes. Jennings et al. (2011) reported that employing SROs to mitigate problems of bullying, racial tension, student disrespect, and gangs on high-school campuses across the United States appear promising. Yet, these researchers were silent on how these issues were being handled by SROs, leaving the question open as to whether the long-term cost of the program outweighs its benefits (Theriot, 2016). According to Theriot (2009), as well as, Hyman and Perone (1998), solely the presence of police within schools contributes to a much higher rate of juveniles being reported to the justice system, increased suspension and expulsion rates, and increased student misbehavior. According to a 2009 national report on minority contact with law enforcement within school settings, these rates disproportionately affect minority male students (Armour &Hammond, 2009). Losen and Skiba (2010), as well as, Noltemeyer and Mcloughlin (2010) emphasized that these statistics have been evident over 30 years, especially for African American male students.

Data related to the presence of SROs in public schools and its effectiveness at reducing school violence is dated and somewhat limited. Conflicting conclusions have been drawn in nearly every aspect. The most notable conflict is whether SRO programs deter school shootings (James & McCallion, 2013). Because of the 2012 tragedies of

Sandy Hook Elementary School; Parkland High School, and several other high-profile cases of school and community violence, renewed interest in these programs has manifested among policy makers and research scholars. However, debate continues surrounding the program with, little new knowledge gained. Failure to alter the overall focus of related research is believed to be the cause of such minor progression. Most researchers argue that, along with other security measures, the placement of SROs is an effective way to reduce crime and juvenile delinquency, improve school climate, and enhance the quality of community life within the public-school system (Brady et al., 2007; Maguire & King, 2004; Rector, 2009).

A flaw in research addressing school safety is placing the focus only on violent offenses resulting in death and/or severe bodily injury. The Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that such incidents account for 3.3% of all violent offenses (as cited in Robers, et al., 2012). The placement of SROs has caused the most cherished American institution to resemble prisons and has served to increase the criminalization of student behavior (Na & Gottfredson, 2011; Theriot, 2009; Wald & Thurau, 2010). Consecutive years of data have suggested that juvenile crime has decreased (Morgan et al., 2014; Puzzanchera, 2013); yet, the perception continues of a need for law enforcement presence in schools. Continuous media coverage of a few tragic school shootings have spurred the suggestion of more severe types of incidents taking place on school campuses than have occurred in the past. This have generated an unnecessary atmosphere of fear and motivated an overreactive need to act (Cornell, 2013).

The development of "get tough on crime" and similar violence-prevention programs like SROs initiative began due to the opinions voiced by several researchers (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Greenwood, 1996). In the mid -1990s, during increased visibility of SROs, each of these investigators collectively and/or independently conducted research focusing on the rise in juvenile crime and need for tougher sanctions within all realms of education. Baron and Hartnagel (1996) examined public opinion towards juvenile offenders with special attention to the Young Offenders Act of 1986 and 1992, media contribution, and punitive measures. The research was designed to contribute to knowledge within this area of concern by testing a model predicting public support for a juvenile curfew, transferring juveniles to adult court, and the sentencing severity of youth. All was based upon a theoretical framework and a review of literature addressing adult criminal- justice topics. The results revealed that respondents were quite punitive in their responses, and those with more conservative social values were consistently more punitive. Although not directly dealing with the use of SROs within school settings or the values of APs, the study presented the foundational views conducive to the acceptance of such programs.

Greenwood (1996) presented a positive outlook on the "nothing works" belief of the 1970s with regard to combating juvenile crime. Although, the most effective practices for reducing recidivism remain unknown, the premise of the study contributed to increased understanding features juvenile courts must seek in the selection of dispositional alternatives. Lessons were learned by focusing on various types of programs and assessment methods. Greenwood determined that "methods concentrating on

changing individual behavior patterns which lead to delinquency and improving pro-
social skill are likely to be 10% to 20% more effective than just focusing on the behavior
in reducing delinquency" (p. 80).

Although much has been done to reveal the benefits of SRO programs, minimal
study has compared measures of the overall benefits versus harm of SRO programs.
Theriot (2009) examined the impact of SROs on school-based arrest rates. He concluded
a reason exists for concern with the increasing presence of SRO in schools and
criminalizing student behavior. The concern centered in the notion that "problematic
students would be moved to the juvenile justice system rather than being discipline[d] at
school" (Theriot, 2009, p. 221). Regardless of any lack of support for the Theriot
conclusions, the evidence presented was sufficiently significant to be acknowledged.
Many of the behaviors of the concern would to some extent, be expected from developing
adolescents and teenagers and not appropriate for criminal sanctions. Theriot did not
question the necessity of SROs but did express how "good intents" may be detrimental to
the involved children (p. 126). Having an SRO within a school did not predict additional
arrests but did predict more arrests for disorderly conduct. Theriot and Cuellar later
focused on the criminalization of student conduct and reveals how the placement of
SROs infringes on student's rights. They argued the placement of SROs challenges
students' rights to include unreasonable searches and seizures, inappropriate sharing of
confidential information, and decrease feelings of safety (2016).

Na and Gottfredson (2013) agreed that, as schools increase the use of police,
reports of increased weapon and drug crimes rise and a "higher percentage of non-serious

violent crimes [within school are referred] to law enforcement" (p. 625). The mere possibility that the placement of police officers in schools increases referrals to law enforcement for crimes of a non-serious nature is sufficient to require more rigorous research. Kim (2012) observed that the "school-to-prison pipeline" reveals increased criminalization of student misbehavior, which renders this form of school discipline questionable. Future study emphasizing the values of decision makers initiating reports to law enforcement could provide meaningful reform to nonjudicial entities, which Kim (2012) recommended without the involvement of the justice systems (p. 648). In cases where the justice system is involved in the investigation and punishment of students, Kim (2012) advised that the courts routinely defer to school officials, which further justified the need for this study.

Roles of Assistant Principals

Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) described the assistant principalship as a unique entity. The position frequently lacks a clear job description but requires numerous tasks to ensure the school success (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The indefinable duties are normally the product of the specific needs of the respective school. Inconsistency ensues, even with schools of similar profiles within the same district. Although APs are critical school leaders, Daresh (2001) clarified that "they are clearly not in the same inner circle as the principal" (p. 70).

The role of an AP is to serve as the chief supporter of the principal, fulfilling the duties deemed necessary by the principal. According to Weller and Weller (2002), APs are commonly charged with "performing all duties determined and assigned by a

superior" (p. xiii). For many fulfilling the role, this involves managing the "three Bs" _

"books, [to enforce the rules of the school] behinds, [ensure student safety and mediate

conflicts], and buses [patrol the halls]" (Good, 2008, p. 46). Although humorous, this

catchphrase is an accurate depiction of the common duties of the AP. It is suggested

within existing literature that most education professionals commonly view APs as

disciplinarians. Although many APs would like to oversee more educational-driven

responsibilities, their primary duty is to serve as the daily operations chief for their school

(Porter, 1996, p. 26). Harvey (1994) described the tasks performed by APs as caretaker

duties, while Koru (1993) compared the role of the AP to that of a policeman.

Since 2000, the position of AP has developed into much more than that of a

disciplinarian. An increase in personnel management, curriculum- development research,

and managing standardized-testing requirements and practices is evident (NASSP, 2019).

Yet, the chief responsibilities of the position remain to support the instructional roles; and

handle the majority of student disciplinary problems (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski,

2012). Glanz (1994) opined that research has negatively portrayed the AP as a

disciplinarian. All the mentioned roles are viewed as a necessity for the AP. Kelly (2019)

express reason for the multiple caretaking, policemen, and instructional scheduling roles

of the APs as a steppingstone for a principal position.

The overwhelming number of tasks necessary to manage student behavior has

negative effects on the job satisfaction of APs. Many of the APs sampled in a New York

study found their position somewhat unrewarding and the responsibilities often the cause

of low morale. Without a change in upper administration, minimal duty and responsibility

changes occur throughout the life of the position. Barnett, et al., (2012) confirmed that, regardless of whether an AP is seasoned or a novice, they remain the same (2012). In their quest for principalship, most APs would elect to focus more on leadership and instructional matters, but as Greenfield (1995) explained "this appears not to be the case" (p. 79). Bundy (2006) reported that their time is heavily devoted to the management of student behavior. Hanson (2003) concurred that APs "give most of their attention to pupil control and managing school [only in the absence of the principal]" (p. 95).

Student Behavior

Student behavior is a major concern of school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. At all grade levels, administrators are faced with a rising number of students whose behavior continuously interrupts the normal operation of classrooms and overall school functioning (Sprick, 2013). Although good techniques exist, teachers cannot depend on solid teaching practices, clear rules and expectations, physical closeness with students, praising and encouraging positive behavior, or any other standard strategy for addressing classroom misbehavior (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011; Quinn, Gable, Rutherford, Nelson, & Howell, 2005). Disruptive behavior eventually results in the involvement of office administrators for official sanctions. For many school personnel, the impact of student misbehavior within their schools has become increasingly frustrating.

Public perception has increasingly viewed student behavior as out of control (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Henderson, 2018; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). Henderson goes as far as to place ultimate blame for

failing schools' performances on the out-of-control behaviors of students (2018). It is

apparent that isolated occurrences of violence publicized through national media have

contributed to this perception; however, society remains concerned with the types of

discipline and control implemented within schools (Rose & Gallup, 2005, Van Brunt &

Lewis, 2013). Although major and tragic acts of violence are a pivotal concern, the

increase and severity of physical assaults; bullying of all kinds; substance and alcohol

uses; dress-code violations; and the magnitude of disrespectful acts (e.g., verbal

confrontations, eye rolling, staring, walkouts, etc.) are also disturbing student behavior.

As a result, heavy reliance is placed on exclusionary and punitive approaches with

limited value (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Mowen & Freng, 2019) to increase

discipline and control for various unacceptable and defiant student behaviors. Such

approaches include security measures (cameras and metal detectors) and strict punitive

measures (e.g., zero tolerances policies).

Like many others, the schools within the study region manage student behavior

beyond the school's physical locations. Discipline codes enforce rules and regulations

while on school property, waiting for the school bus at designated stops, traveling to and

from school, while on a school bus or other school-provided vehicle, or when

participating in or attending school-sponsored or school-related activities. This applied

regardless of parent or guardian presence. Although standard and anticipated, this

extended responsibility further increases the frustration of school personnel toward

student behavior (Borntrager et al., 2012).

Whether positive or negative, all student behavior is a manifestation of an underlying need and/or cause. Walsh (2014) explained that this could be the simple need to pursue something pleasurable or to avoid something unpleasant because this is simply just how the mind of a child operates. The problem is not with the need or cause of a behavior, but rather, the behavior itself. The action (i.e., behavior) behind the cause or need is what is judged as appropriate or inappropriate. Quinn et al. (2005) exemplified this with reading a Stephen King book for recreation and throwing the book onto the floor. This may serve a purpose for an 8-year old student (e.g., to gain attention from the teacher); however, such behavior presents a problem for teachers and school administrators. Hall (2012) suggested that the decision making specifically regarding student suspension highlights "the impact of values on administrative discretion" (p. 74). Consequently, decision making regarding student behavior could also highlight the impact of values on administrative utilization of SROs. The values and attitudes underlying the behavior exhibited in the halls of any school are the invisible, but most essential component of a school environment.

School Discipline

School discipline is not a new phenomenon. Many researchers have documented ineffective discipline practices back to the beginning of United States schooling during early colonialism (Empey & Stafford, 1991; Greenberg, 1999; Regoli & Hewitt, 1997). Although not new, discipline remains one of the most essential components within a school and is necessary to ensure a safe learning environment. Not only is discipline necessary for the proper operation of the school, but also for the maximum development

of the student. A shared responsibility is necessary; without it, teachers cannot teach, and students cannot learn. Nightingale (2012) postulated that children need and truly want discipline in their lives. He further suggested that "while to us [school officials] discipline means expectations and consequences; to student discipline means structure, attention, and connection" (para. 1). Gregory et al. (2010) advocated for strict authoritative discipline within schools to ensure school safety. These researchers further explained that such disciplinary practices must be coupled with trusting connections with supportive adults and not polarized into a "get tough" versus "give support" debate.

Although acknowledged as a necessity, both researchers and administrators have expressed tremendous concern over the direction of current school-disciplinary practices (Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014). Steinberg and Lacoe (2017) shield light on the manner and encouraged school discipline reform. Rather than keeping youth in school, current practices appear to be casting them to the courts. The Discipline Disparities Collaborative Group argued that school discipline has become "a management strategy pressured by financial constraints, high concentrations of struggling students, substantial numbers of transient teachers/long-term substitutes and severe accountability mandates" (as cited in Downey, 2014, para. 10). Others sharing this belief have also stressed that school administrators have become so overwhelmed with funding and testing demands that they gravitate toward what they perceive as easy disciplinary solutions (Anyon, et al, 2014; Downey, 2014). Some believe their school environment will improve if they just remove "troublemakers" (Kinsler, 2013). Regardless of what is

considered the most appropriate school-disciplinary practice, it is agreed that the actual

task of administering discipline is difficult.

A national report revealed that the values and attitudes of a school's principal

have a considerable impact on disciplinary procedures and school outcomes (as cited in

Downey, 2014). Downey (2014) found that it was through the code of conduct that

administrators exercise their philosophy. Noguera (2003) supported these findings and

further stressed that principals who believe in harsh student punishment have higher

suspension and expulsion rates. The same would apply for the extensive utilization of

SROs, though neither Downey nor Noguera identified SROs as a disciplinary tactic.

When making decisions regarding student discipline, APs are often required to

problem solve, as well as resolve the ethical dilemma accompanying the situation

(Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2006). Within the diverse school settings of contemporary

education, school administrators "increasingly encounter situations where consensus

cannot be achieved" (Begley, 2010, p. 239). This is because many of the intricate and

multifaceted issues they face fall far outside the direction of established policies, rules,

and sanctions. These administrators are then entrusted to use discretion as a response to

the problems (Begley, 2004) and ethical dilemmas (Cranston et al., 2006). Hall (2012)

addressed the worthiness of values in the decision-making process, suggesting that school

administrators "rely on their core values in their use of discretion" (p. 96). The awareness

and identification of those values could increase understanding surrounding the

utilization of SROs in schools, especially when used as a disciplinary strategy.

Prior to the practice of zero tolerance, suspension (i.e., in-school or out of school) was the default disciplinary consequence for school administrators reacting to student misconduct. Within the contemporary school, it appears the default has been transferred to the SRO, who is viewed as a discipline because of the manner in which they are utilized. Cushing (2013) pointed out that the recent rise in the number of law-enforcement officers assigned within public schools correlates with the explosion of zero-tolerance policies. Combined, these two factors resulted in the criminalization of acts once considered nothing more than violations of school policy and manageable within the control of school administrators (Theriot, 2013; Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). Regardless of the theorized roles played by law enforcement within school settings, their involvement has increased the number of students transferred to jail for behavior unworthy of suspension.

School officials with the "penchant to punish" (Noguera, 2003, p. 346) create a negative school climate that result in students who feel resentful and unwelcome in their own schools (Nolan, 2011). It can appear that administrators willfully hand their students over to law enforcement with no desire to take control of student discipline (Cushing, 2013). SROs are not entirely in control of school discipline, but if given the power, can have a significant amount of authority and influence in routine disciplinary infractions. Theriot (2013) reported that, when SROs become involved in even minor disciplinary incidents, the situations can immediately become a police matter. At that point, a reversal of roles occurred, and school administrators then need to defer to law enforcement regarding their own students (Nolan, 2011). An example of such a situation would

resemble a student receiving a summons to appear in criminal court for incidents that began with breaking a minor school rule (e.g., cutting class, wearing a hat, shouting too loudly), and escalated into insubordination or disrespect after being confronted by law enforcement. In legal terms, this is labeled as *disorderly conduct* and frequently occurs because SROs are often the first to confront students breaking school rules.

There is no dispute that schools must do all possible to ensure a safe learning environment. The positive effects from the presence of SROs within school settings are also undisputable. Controversy arises only because of the outlandish disciplinary outcomes created by SROs coupled with zero-tolerance policies. No national studies have documented how often minors become involved with police for nonviolent crimes within schools. This is perhaps because tracking the incidents depends upon how records are maintained within individual schools. It may also be due the privacy requirements of juvenile records. Yet, several documented incidents involved responses far more severe than the actual infringements.

In 2008, a 5-year-old kindergarten student was handcuffed and admitted to a psychiatric ward for a tantrum at the sole discretion of the SRO (Melango, 2008). During the previous year, a 16- year-old was arrested for dropping a birthday cake and failing to properly clean the area when requested to do so by the SRO (Watson, 2007). Chen (2010) documented an incident within which a 12-year-old was arrested for drawing on a classroom desk. In North Carolina, six teen boys were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for participating in a year-end water-balloon fight (Cushing, 2013). Mandel (2013) reported that a young lady 17 years of age will possibly live the

rest of her life with a felony on her record for a name change in a yearbook prank.

Shukla (2018) stated a juvenile was sent to juvenile hall for testing because he burped in

class. The actual number of occurrences is not reported; however, these examples

accurately represent their irrational nature. Due to overwhelming evidence of the negative

consequences of zero tolerance and the increasing related public criticism, a number of

states are modifying their laws to provide greater discretion to school personnel, as well

as the ability to consider extenuating circumstances. However, the daily presence of

SROs in disciplinary procedures appears to be on a steady rise.

School Safety and Public Policy

Benet's (2013) polarity of democracy presents relevance in understanding the

views and beliefs of APs as necessary in finding common ground where it exists and

working to find ways to form positive social change as it relates to public policy and

school safety. He suggests that obtaining the positive aspects of the polarities of

democracy is essential in overcoming the challenges that threaten our survival (2013).

The foundation of the polarities of democracy model can be used as a unifying tool to

plan, guide, and evaluate democratic social change efforts (Benet, 2013). He identified

various characteristic of democratic societies and their existence as interdependent poles

within this model and organizes them as polarity pairs. Benet explains the positive and

negative aspects of each polarity; and that successfully managing them requires

enhancing the positive aspects while minimalizing the negative (2013). It is this process

of democracy that can strengthen schools and minimize harm placed on children.

Specifically, Benet (2013) posits democracy as a concept that brings about social change to address environmental, social, economic and political challenges, such as zero tolerance and other exclusionary school disciplinary policies. Within the concept, Benet identifies his theoretical model as the polarities of democracy. The model consists of ten essential elements of democracy paired as polarities: freedom-authority, justice-due process, diversity-equality, human rights-communal obligations, and participation-representation (Benet, 2013). Each element is essential but none of them are necessary in achieving true democracy (Benet, 2013). Benet (2006) defines the positive "upsides" and negative "downsides" of each polarity, drawn from Johnson's (1996) polarity management concept. Not all the polarities are opposite of each other (Strobble, 2014).

Benet's (2006, 2013) polarities of democracy originated from the philosophical perspective of the critical theory. This theory emphasizes a concept to overcome oppression by promoting positive social change (Benet, 2013). Hence, the polarities of democracy model expand the concept allowing communities to focus on the acknowledged polarities existing within a democracy to oppose oppression in all cultures (Benet, 2006; 2013).

Strobble (2015) employed Benet's polarities of democracy model to address issues of racism; while Tubor (2014) utilizes the polarities of democracy to support the use of an amnesty program to guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation for social change efforts within the Niger Delta region. Although focuses are placed on completely diverse subject matters, it is with the same respect.

Within schools across the United States, exclusionary policies and the use of SROs are being implemented in effort to increase school safety. The policies and practice adversely and disproportionately place significant oppression on students of color and those with weighted experiences of abuse, neglect, and poverty. These policies and practices mirror societal concerns within our schools, were there is a battle between   a culture of policing verses a culture of educating. According to Benet (2013), effectively managing the polarities requires addressing exclusionary school disciplinary policies and values pertaining to the use of SROs that are incompatible with maximizing the positive aspects of these elements.

Summary

Budgetary debates and funding cuts affecting the education system intensify the necessity to understand the true nature of the commonly practiced SRO program. Beyond the overwhelming support of the program lies the perception of the consequences rarely enhancing safety and more often involving the heightened criminalization of what might otherwise be considered adolescent misbehavior. By focusing on the values of APs, I provide a new outlook on the actual utilization of this program and the policies supporting its existence. The research does not affect or solve the behavioral problems within schools. However, the findings are expected to increase knowledge on the specific values that impact the decision-making process of APs towards SROs, especially within the realm of disciplinary practice. The study is also expected to add additional strategies enabling greater AP success. Several criminology theories have suggested that the earlier children are exposed to the juvenile justice system and/or frequently labeled as *troubled,*

at-risk, or *delinquent*, the more likely they are to eventually fit the respective

classification (Becker, 2008, Tannenbaum, 1963). The same dynamic applies with

students prone to consistent exclusionary, punitive disciplines and/or law-enforcement

immersion.

As noted earlier, SRO placement is suggested to contribute to increased student

referrals to the justice system. Regardless of district policies, APs may view the use of

SRO programs as introducing more harm on society than good and reduce SRO

involvement in disciplinary procedures. Conversely, APs viewing student behavior as

overwhelmingly problematic and disruptive to the daily operations may find SRO

involvement necessary. The Hodgkinson (1978) concept is used to clarify the related

decision-making process, making a judgment either by opting for principle (i.e., a Type 1

value) or for compromise (i.e., a Type 2 value). Benet's (2013) polarities of democracy

model is employed to address policy efforts of school safety.

A dramatic decrease in violent offenses within schools is evident across the

country (Robers et al., 2013). Yet, a constant presence of SROs within schools remains,

as well as their increasing involvement in issues traditionally handled by school

administrators. As a result, the number of juveniles referred to the justice system

continues to rise (Greenwood & Turner, 2011), especially for low-level offenses (James

& McCallion, 2013). This has proven extremely detrimental for students of color, low-

income students and those with disabilities, as well as students participating in a lesbian,

gay, or transgender lifestyle (Downey, 2014). Studies has found that students within these

populations are disproportionately suspended, expelled, arrested, and summoned to

juvenile court for behavior committed within school rather than receiving discipline at the

school facility (Carter, Fine, & Russell, 2011; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Wald &

Thurau, 2010). Such findings have serious implications for students. They are at

heightened risk of being forced from school and needlessly thrust into the criminal-justice

system. This serious scenario further justified the need for the approach of this study.

     In this chapter, I provided the research strategies engaged in identifying published

literature and studies, presented the theoretical and conceptual orientations for the study

and applied its association to the topic, included a brief synopsis of the SRO programs

both nationally and within South Carolina, discussed the controversial positions

surrounding the presence of law enforcement officers in schools, defined the historical

and current roles of APs and the movement of student behavior, and analyzed previous

research findings. The mentioned information was necessary to fully appreciate the

values of APs and their decision to utilization SROs in disciplinary procedures. The

methodology allowed this valuable information to come directly from the APs and

presented an appreciation that has yet to be considered.

Chapter 3

Introduction

To rationalize the alarming number of students being referred to the criminal

justice system for minor nonviolent behaviors and better under the roles and actions of

APs in the daily implementation of SRO programs, I conducted this study to determine:

What values guide APs in their decision to involve SROs in school disciplinary

procedures?

Booth, et al (2011) revealed that attempts to improve school safety via

partnerships among school administrators and law enforcement are forging ahead across

the country with law enforcement officers being treated as school staff. Regardless of the

actual title of the position or the level of school, those serving as APs or equivalents are

primarily responsible for managing discipline within schools (National Association of

Secondary School Principals, 2013). These professionals are the first- level decision

makers beyond the teaching staff. Assistant principals work closely with SROs; however,

the majority of these individuals receive no specific training on the obligations of law

enforcement prior to this partnership (Raymond, 2010).

Control and maintenance strategies implemented by school administrators have

consequently become a concern for many parents and students. The use of SROs is

amongst the most troubling strategies, especially when such personnel are utilized to

enforce disciplinary procedures. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the

values held by high-school APs that may influence the utilization of SROs in student

disciplinary procedures. Another goal is to provide a foundation for later research

regarding values, school chief disciplinarian, and SROs. This study utilized a qualitative interpretative phenomenological design to explore what values guide APs in their decision to involve SROs in school disciplinary procedures.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (2002), and Patton (2002) all believed that phenomenological study lays the groundwork for future research. My study eliminated gaps within existing literature surrounding the use of police in school settings across the country by linking the values and disciplinary decision making of those education professionals traditionally responsible for managing student behavior- the APs. The values of the APs are deemed vital for understanding the actual use and roles of SROs disciplinary procedures, if any. Hence, I identified areas of research that adds significant knowledge about SROs and utilization practices among education administrators.

I used a qualitative interpretative phenomenological design   Positive social change becomes evident through expanding understanding the roles and actions of APs, as they relate to the daily implementation of the SRO program. Although beyond the scope of the study, if the values of APs present children as problematic and deserving of strong discipline, higher SRO involvement in disciplinary procedures would be expected. A higher rate of student referrals to the justice system for both minor infractions and major offenses, higher dropout rates, and higher suspension and expulsion rates would also be expected. A connection between values of APs and high SRO utilization in schools would support the need for more effective strategies of utilizing SROs in school settings. However, the values of this population must first be identified. The study contributes to understanding the values and behaviors of APs and to a more

comprehensive approach of public policy regarding school safety that result in positive outcomes for schools across the country.

This section includes research method, data collection, analysis strategies, and ethical issues involving this sort of study. The first section of this chapter provided the research method and design, a rationalization of the phenomenological approach versus other qualitative approaches, and the reiteration of research questions. I discussed ethical considerations and the role of the researcher in the consequent section. Prior to the conclusion of the chapter, an explanation of the data collection methods to be utilized in this research study is disclosed, along with the coverage of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

According to Lipowski (2008), the development of research questions is the most important step of the research process. These questions must be carefully formulated to address the relevant aspects of the topic under study while being conducive to practically attainable answers. Despite repeated calls throughout existing literature for further investigation, of the impact of values and the roles of APs, minimal research has described the values of these education professionals in relation to disciplinary procedures and none specifically address SRO involvement.

Qualitative research is an effort to understand the nature of a setting and the experiences others have in this context (Merriam, 1998). I present a rich description of the AP's lived experiences to accurately describe the phenomenon. Considerable research has been conducted to reveal the benefits of SRO programs; hence, their rapid

implementation across the country. I selected a phenomenological design for this study to allow the unique nature of the phenomenon under study to be defined, which distinguishes it from other SRO studies to present an unique perspective. My goal was not to determine the necessity of all SRO programs, but rather to share the voices of APs with respect to their utilization of SROs in disciplinary practices. The findings reveal additional factors not previously addressed in SRO research that may affect the program and the recipients of its services. Through this research, I present a more detailed understanding through the narratives of APs about the factors that influence the way they cope with disciplinary procedures, as well as extenuating circumstances that are not necessarily measurable in a statistical fashion. Patton (2002) suggested that qualitative-interpretive inquiry seeks meaningful, credible, valid, and accurate findings. The decision whether to utilize SROs in disciplinary procedures is fundamentally an interpretive act; hence, the justification for the interpretative phenomenological design.

Methodology Rationale

I used phenomenological approach for this study. It is both exploratory and interpretive; as credited to German philosopher Edmund Husserl (Farin & Hart, 2006). The phenomenological approach, according to Moustakas (1994), is implemented to understand the essences of the experiences of a group of people. I selected this approach to explore the APs experiences within high-school settings and their impact on the decision to involve SROs in the disciplinary practices of their respective institutes. Creswell (2013) expressed that this type of inquiry is best explored through a qualitative

research methodology where in the "interpretation [of participants] becomes important [through] detailed stories and quotes" (p. 145).

Phenomenological study combines both descriptive and interpretive research designs to examine the worldviews and personal experiences of participants (Hatch, 2002). Specifically, phenomenology is the study of phenomena via the lived experience of participants. This approach was found valuable because phenomenological principles assert that scientific investigation is valid when the information gained comes through rich description that allows for understanding of the essences of experience (Moustakas, 1994). Finlay (2008) defined the purpose of phenomenological research as exploring the way things appear through experience or in consciousness where the aim is to provide a rich, textured description of the lived experience. This type of study challenges researchers to set aside any personal prejudices and/or experiences to objectively examine the nature of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). My goal was to seek an understanding of the values of high-school APs as they manage student disciplinary practices. More specifically, I wanted to determine if a hierarchy of values existed that influence the use of SROs within schools towards student discipline was investigated.

Grounded theory, case study, and ethnography are other types of qualitative research designs, but were not suitable for this study. A grounded- theory strategy is typically applied to generate theory to explain a phenomenon or to test or elaborate upon previously grounded theories. Patton (2002) described the term *grounded* as theory that was developed from research or having roots in the data from which it was derived. Although not necessarily the study of individuals, this approach is based upon the views

of the participants surrounding the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). The grounded theory approach was not selected because the study is grounded in the Hodgkinson's (1978) value hierarchy theory.

Case studies highlight detailed contextual analysis of several events or conditions, as well as their relationships (Yin, 2009). Although case study research excels in producing an understanding of complex issues and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research, the research focus was on individuals rather than group experiences.

Creswell (2013) stated that the ethnographic approach to qualitative research comes largely from the field of anthropology, because its focus surrounds the studying an entire culture. The original idea of a culture being tied to the notion of ethnicity and geographic location has broadened to include any group or organization but requires the researcher to become immersed in the culture as an active participant and record extensive field notes. Because of the time needed to conduct ethnographic research was not feasible, the ethnographic approach was not selected.

I selected the phenomenology methodology because of its ability capture the weaknesses of the previously mentioned methodologies. The purpose of the study was to describe the values and beliefs of APs regarding SRO utilization in school discipline procedures. Minimal studies were discovered covering SROs or APs from the proposed stance. In 2011, Engin Aslanargun conducted a phenomenological study investigating the values that principals should have in administration (2012). No specific focus was placed on a specific issue.

Similar to other qualitative research, phenomenology is based on the idea that individual perceptions guide actions and responses (Moustakas, 1994). The justification for selecting this methodology is that phenomenology research presents the opportunity to achieve rich information directly from those experiencing the phenomenon in a timely manner.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the investigator is the instrument and reliability is based upon researcher proficiency with data collection and analysis, as well as any personal bias (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, credibility of the research is contingent upon the credibility of the researcher. As the main data-collection instrument, researchers are responsible for the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data, ensuring that all are in compliance with any related considerations. Although I am a current resident of the area which the targeted APs serve, I have no ties with the schools or the sheriff department serving the schools. My interest in the research topic emerged through departmental discussions while serving as a criminal justice instructor within a Columbia, South Carolina college. These discussions related to the number of students from the local areas with criminal and arrest records. Further interest was piqued by the attention placed on the state's dropout rates.

Throughout my professional tenure, I have served as a juvenile sex-offender program coordinator, policy analyst, group home assistant, criminal-justice college instructor, and have advocated on the behalf of many different people. My perception of the increased use of SROs was bracketed to ensure the perceptions of the research

participants was obtained without influence. Researcher bias can present a weakness if mismanaged. Simply acknowledging can overcome any resulting limitation or reduced validity of the findings (Creswell, 2013) and ensure objective execution of the data collection.

Methodology

Study Participants and Sampling Strategy

The voice of the participants is the primary focus of this qualitative research. The manner in which the optimal voices are acquired determines the value of the study. The population sample derived from APs assigned to high schools within a southeastern state. I used purposeful snowball sampling to obtain the study group, which proved beneficial. This is a strategy that allows researchers to select participants who purposefully contribute to the "understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Several different types of purposeful sampling are suggested for qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002), but only one (i.e., homogeneous) was deemed appropriate for this study. My goal was to achieve a study group of participants who share the same or very similar characteristics and/or traits (Moustakas, 1994), and because the research questions specifically address the characteristics of the target population. Snowball sampling is employed to recruit additional subjects of similar backgrounds. I employed this strategy to identify APs within the area most suitable for participation in the study.

The participants selected in the study share the same occupation. Each serve as AP and/or an individual responsible for managing student behavior within a high-school

setting. Geographical location originally dictated the planned sampling; however, the overall demographics of the state also influenced planned selection and created the ability to communicate yet another tier of data for future research, which is that of disparities.

Compared to other qualitative phenomenological studies, the selection and number of participants in the study was based upon quality accounts of human experiences rather than quantity (Creswell, 2013). Although, there are no regulations regarding sample size in qualitative research, phenomenological studies typically place rigorous emphasis on a small number of subjects (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2013) suggested 3 to 10 participants for phenomenological studies. Due to the number of high schools located in the targeted area, I expected 20-30 APs to participate. As the research proceeded, this number decreased due to APs voluntary to participate and not be able to obtain district approvals.

Procedures and Instrumentation

Specific procedures are necessary in a study designed with this research methodology. The needs and expectations of the participants must first be considered. Consequently, it is necessary to ensure that the risks and benefits of using human subjects is assessed and approved by the Walden University IRB. Directives pertaining to informed consent of research participants, data collection, and participant debriefing required development and preparation. All research records are maintained within a secure filing cabinet and on an external hard drive, of which I will have sole access.

Research must be approached in a strategic manner for accurate results. Phenomenological qualitative studies rely heavily upon the use of participant interviews.

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), "In-depth interviewing is the hallmark of qualitative research" (p. 180). In this study, its used to determine how administrators perceive the need for SROs and how they utilize them within their student disciplinary procedures. I collected data through in-depth, semistructured interviews. Anderson and Jones (2000) reviewed 50 doctoral dissertations completed by school administrators; 60% of the methods used included "interviews, along with observations and document analysis" (p. 436). Begley (1999) noted that "qualitative research methods [are] most appropriate [to a study of values and include] face-to-face [data collections] simulated recall activities and case problem analysis" (p. 244). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) even stressed the importance of interviews maintaining that they capture information the participants would not reveal "by any other data collection method" (p. 228).

Although meticulous data collection from multiple sources is the foundation for any meaningful qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013), the primary instrumentation for this phenomenological study was semistructured interviews. Note taking during the interviews was also utilized. These data-collection techniques were selected due to the desire to obtain rich, descriptive data. Hatch (2002), as well as Seidman (2012), supported these methods when exploring the experiences and participant perceptions. Semi-structured interviews provide participants an opportunity to tell their personal stories (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011). The interview protocol was developed using the Rubin and Rubin (2012) qualitative-analysis method prior to conducting the interviews. The semistructured interview questions were open-ended, allowing the participant stories to be captured, and reflects the research question (see

Appendix A). A digital voice recorder was used to record the sessions and, as noted

earlier, manual notes were taken during the interviews to document nonverbal

indications, context, and any additional appropriate information.

Information pertaining to district suspension rates, incident rates, and

juvenile/criminal referrals was obtained in the study by reviewing various records.

Documentary review is the only appropriate means for gathering such information. Data

collected came from files compiled by each district school of a participating AP and the

respective SRO servicing departments. These sources are deemed reputable and have

been cited within other published studies. The documents were used solely to measure

and increase the validity of information obtained from the APs during the study

interviews. Contact with APs and data collection was conducted and complied over an

estimated 35 days.

Data Collection

Both advantages and disadvantages exist with the use of semistructured

interviews for data collection process. Conducting interviews as effectively as possible is

the key to success for qualitative study. Semistructured interviews allow participants to

narrate their experiences in their own words, with some guidance from the interviewer.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted that the strength of semi-structured interviews is the

rapid collection of a sizable amount of contextual and extensive data. Patton (2002)

concurred and added that this mode of data collection minimizes the influence of

interviewer bias and question variation. Fontana and Frey (2000) emphasized that a

sensitivity to interviewer reaction is essential, as is an awareness of when to make

appropriate adjustments in the questioning to stimulate or retard responses. Most importantly, semi-structured interviews make effective use of interview time with duty-conscious professional participants.

Semistructured interviews can present limitations to the research process. The data-collection strategy can be difficult for future researchers to replicate. As with all qualitative data collection methods, this technique primarily depends upon the honesty of the interviewee. Validity of the data collected is dependent upon researcher ability to be resourceful, systematic, honest, and able to control bias (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Lastly, this format may result in responses so diverse that comparability is overly difficult and important or significant topics can be missed (Patton, 2002).

Researchers are encouraged to apply triangulation to their data collection methods. This involves multiple data sources to verify that enough evidence exists to support research findings and to confirm those findings accurately reflect the phenomenon under study. Merriam (2002) advanced that multiple methods of data collection enhance the validity of the findings and assist with drawing meaning from the data. Although Denzin and Lincoln (1994) noted that triangulation is not a tool for validation and only an alternative to validation, the data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews with multiple participants, note taking during the interview sessions, document review, and a literature review to effectuate validity.

Semistructured interviews of no more than 1 hour were conducted over the course of 35 days. The unexpected delay was due to holidays. Interview locations were held in locations most convenient to the participants. The interview questions were based upon a

set of key issues derived from the literature (Hall, 2012; Heilmann, 2006; Moutaska, 1994; Patton, 2002) and guided by the research question pertaining to participant perceptions with respect to student behavior and law-enforcement involvement in schools. I used prompts to guide completely open-ended questions, as recommended by Jacob and Ferguson (2012), as well as Rubin and Rubin (2012).

It is during the interview process that researchers must be keenly conscious of personal biases. Repeating responses back to interviewees to confirm the accuracy of interviewer interpretation is an effective strategy toward collecting precise information that is also valid. As noted earlier, I used a digital recorder to capture as much of the tone, pace, and atmosphere of the interviews as possible (Grinnel, Williams, & Unrau, 2012). Member checking was conducted to ensure accuracy in the transcripts. Carefully preparing and executing the interview process generated the rich data needed to expand existing knowledge surrounding about the use of SROs in the disciplinary procedures of schools. Data was organized in files by the interview transcripts, and the files and audio recordings were stored in secure filing cabinets.

The data collection instrument used during the interview process was a digital audio tape recorder with attached microphones. The digital audio tape recorded all interview questions, participant responses, and all discussions and interruptions that may occurred during the interview sessions. Digitally audio recording allowed a keen review of participant's responses to interview questions. Each recorded interview was stored in a password protected computer file and will be deleted at the conclusion of the study. Data from interviews will be kept for a minimum of at least 5 years, as recommended by the

university requirements. As previously indicated, interview protocols were guided by the

suggestions of Rubin and Rubin (2012).

Even though qualitative researchers are not necessarily obligated to strict rules

and procedures, some interview protocols must be followed. With interviews, it was

necessary to ensure participates were clear of specific instructions, even when it required

me reading the interview instructions to the participants. It was also necessary to review

the interview instructions and questions with my peers to ensure that each question was

clear and understandable. After the scheduling, but prior to the interview, volunteering

participants were provided written consent forms to be obtained at the time of the

interview that included my contact information, the purpose of study, and examples of

questions to be asked. The consent forms acknowledged participation in this study. It

was clear that participation was on a voluntary basis and could be terminated at any phase

of the process. The suggested practices help reduce errors and ensured appropriate and

effective procedures were followed. My contact information was provided to the

participants (regardless of request) just in case they wish to reschedule or obtain/provide

additional information after the conclusion of the interview.

Data Analysis

Throne (2000) opined that data analysis is the most complex of all the phases of

qualitative research. Patton (2002) and Padgett (2008) both suggested that, to maintain

the holistic integrity of research data, decisions surrounding what to include and discard

must be made throughout the entire research process. Therefore, data analysis must begin

early in the process. Drawing meaning from the data collected is the purpose of data

analysis, which involves organizing and summarizing the content from the data. This is necessary because, unlike statistics, the collected data must be interpreted. Along with data analysis, data management must be concurrently conducted, and is critical at this phase of the research process. Proper data management ensures the confidentiality of the data.

I used the NVivo qualitative data-analysis software to support the storing and organizing of data, including the audio recordings and interview transcripts. Although a powerful analytical tool, it was necessary to also implement an analytical strategy to accurately interpret the data. Content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that requires a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies (Patton, 2002, p. 453). I used content analysis to support the identification of themes (i.e., values) emerging from obtained data.

Supported by the data-analysis software, I used research question as the guiding framework to code emerging themes in this study. This process of categorizing data was conducted by developing a deductive coding scheme or an inductive coding system. Deductive coding is derived from the theoretical framework (i.e., hierarchy of values), while inductive coding generates categories from the ideas emerging from interview responses. Conducting this task using the data-analysis software assisted in linking responses to the research question and subsequently clustering the responses to generate the most recurring themes.

Trustworthiness

A meaningful study is thoroughly planned and executed from beginning to end. In this research, several strategies were employed to achieve four key aspects of data trustworthiness to ensure the worthiness of this study within several professional arenas. The four key aspects of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize the necessity and importance of each aspect for determining the overall worth of a research study. Credibility validates the findings as believable from the perspective of the participants. Within qualitative studies, one of the most reliable means of ensuring credibility is triangulation, which as noted earlier, is a form of collecting data from diverse sources (Maxwell, 2008). Triangulation and consistency were established in this study through interviews and document review. Strategies to enhance the credibility of the findings included maintaining a researcher journal; member checking or participant validation; use of a peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); and employing colleagues and/or other experts in the field of study to assess the meaning of the findings.

Transferability

Transferability is an assessment of the extent to which findings can be generalized or transferred to other contexts, settings, or populations outside the bounds of the study. Lincoln and Guba suggest establishing transferability by describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail, known as thick descriptions (1985). This process allows one to evaluate

the extent to which conclusions are drawn and transferable to other times and people. To

establish transferability for my research, raw data was securely maintained and a wealth

of rich, thick descriptions of that data was provided. Inclusions consisted of direct

quotations from participants, descriptions of experiences surrounding the phenomenon,

and vivid descriptions of the natural settings and circumstances of the interview sites.

This will enable other researchers to replicate the findings within other geographical

jurisdictions and enhance the quality of their findings. Appropriate sampling is also

essential to establishing transferability (Creswell, 2013). The study employed purposeful

snowball sampling to elicit suitable APs.

Dependability

Dependability is an evaluation of the research technique and methods used that

affect the approach to the study. Lincoln and Guba recommend the use of external audits

to confirm dependability within a research study (1985). External audits involve having a

non-involved researcher examine both the process and product of the research study to

evaluate the accuracy and evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and

conclusions are supported by the data. This audit was used to ensure confirmability,

along with audit trail and triangulation.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the results and interpretations can be upheld

by the data collected. To address dependability and confirmability, every step of the

research process in this study was well documented, and adhere to the university's

research process. Any personal influences and bias or influential perspective were

acknowledged. Each of the described strategies collectively produced findings that represent a true picture of the values of APs and guaranteed the proper context was captured. The strategies also ensure that the study can be replicated and that the findings reflect research based upon a true social phenomenon of school safety.

Ethical Considerations

A qualitative phenomenological research method requires a level of interaction between the researcher and the study participants. This contact alone creates ethical concerns requiring attention. Although the study was not believed to include a vulnerable or protected population, it remained imperative that the rights of the participants were protected throughout each phase of the research process. This protection extended to data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and the dissemination processes. The most essential elements of ethical research practice include full disclosure of the research intentions and a clear understanding of voluntary participation with the right to withdraw without penalty for any reason (Hatch, 2002; Seidman, 2012). Because participants revealed personal values pertaining to daily professional practices, they were ensured anonymity and had confidence that their confidentiality were protected. As the researcher, it was necessary that I guaranteed the enforcement of these procedures. This was not only to protect the participants, but also to preserve the integrity of the research process and my developing integrity as a scholarly researcher.

As previously described, I conducted semistructured interviews as the primary data-collection format. Beyond the collection of data, maintenance of the information was executed in a confidential manner. All data was encrypted to protect the identity of

all participants and the school they represent (Grinnel, Williams, & Unrau, 2012). The participants were assigned identification numbers that discreetly identify them. This assisted with data analysis, guaranteeing that multiple data sources properly linked. All transcripts, summary notes, and contextual notes are stored in a password- protected computer and used solely for purposes of the study. Consent and confidentiality were discussed with each participant prior to the interviews and revisited within each interview session (Hatch, 2002). To adhere to all ethical considerations and receive approval to conduct the study, all study materials, research design methodology, and participant contact followed Walden University IRB guidelines.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

To determine the influence of values in administrative decision making toward the utilization of SROs in school disciplinary procedures, qualitative research methods were utilized in the study. I selected the phenomenological design to explore AP experiences within high-school settings and their impact on the decision to involve SROs in the disciplinary practices of their respective institutes to capture the stories of APs. In this chapter, I outlined the sampling techniques, strategies for evaluation, and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 4

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and examine the values that affect AP's decision to utilize SROs in disciplinary procedures. I used one-on-one semistructured interviews with participants as a mean to analyze data obtained from the participants and discover themes associated with their daily responsibilities. Overall, the goal of the research was to provide unique insight and clearer understanding of the roles and actions of APs based on their values as they carry out the daily implementation of the SRO programs within their respective schools. My focus surround one central research question: What values and beliefs guide APs in their decision to involve SROs in school disciplinary procedures? In the interviews, participants provided their perceptions and experiences with student disciplinary concerns, their knowledge of the roles and involvements of SROs, and an analysis of their decisions.

In this chapter, I provided a detailed presentation of the study's research findings and the processes used to generate and analyze the collected data. Findings are based on an analysis of semistructured interviews and district and school documentation. Also included is an overview of participant demographic description, the evidence of the study's trustworthiness, and a summary of all emergent themes.

Participant Demographics

The participants within this study comprised of 11 APs, representing seven high schools amongst three school districts within a 20-mile radius located in a southeastern state of the United States. Each high school governs Grades 9−12. The 11 participants'

(six were female and five were male) years of experience serving in the current role as
assistant principal averaged at 7.5 years, collectively. One participant report being 7
months into the position; while the most seasoned participant reported being in the 15th
year of service. Although all reported serving in various other capacities within the
school system, no additional demographic or service characteristics were considered and
was deemed not disadvantageous to the research. Each AP identified themselves as at
least one of the chief disciplinarians within their respective schools serving at least one
grade level or populations with last names beginning with assigned alphabets.

Table 2

Assistant Principals Demographics

Participant ID	Gender	Years serving as AP	Assignment Type
AP1	Female	3	N-Z
AP2	Male	4	9-10
AP3	Female	7 mos.	9
AP4	Female	5	A-F
AP5	Male	8	12
AP6	Female	11	11-12/G-M
AP7	Male	15	R-Z
AP8	Female	5	10
AP9	Female	6	G-N
AP10	Male	6	10-11
AP11	Male	5	9

Note: Assignment types: May or may not be shared with other assistant principals

I used a letter and number system to address confidentiality concerns. Each
participant was identified with the letters AP (assistant principal) along with a
corresponding number (i.e. AP1, AP2, etc.) based on the order in which the interviews
were scheduled. The use of letter-number combination is merely my personal preference

and was assigned based on the date and time of availability of both the myself and interviewee once the AP was identified.

Data Collection Process

Selecting participants for this study was purposeful, in that they all currently serve as an AP and their main job duty involves student discipline. I used all high school websites of the counties within the targeted geographical area to identify assistant principals. I then utilized the business and employment-oriented social networking service, LinkedIn, to make as many initial contacts as possible with APs from schools within each of the high schools in the targeted area. I did not make any contact provided through the school (email and/or phone numbers) for initial contacts, although possibly easier. I made this decision for two reasons: (1) the request to research was not attempted or obtained from the surrounding districts and (2) I wanted individuals agreeing to participate to feel free to express themselves without any ties to the school or districts and/or not feel pressured to participate if approval was gained through the district. The invitation to participate letter and follow up email can be found in Appendix B and C. Eight responses representing five different schools surfaced from this initial contact. Of those eight responses, only six agreed to participate in the study. At that time in the study, snowball sampling was first merged into the data collection process to recruit additional participants. I asked each responding contact, whether they agreed to participate or electing not to participate, for a recommendation of any additional APs within the targeted area suitable for participation in the study. This inquiry resulted in three additional contacts. None of those contacts participated in the study. I received six

"I consent" responses from this inquiry and interviews were scheduled. At the end of each interview, I again inquired about recommending additional APs for the study. Overall, this resulted in nine additional contact names, and five agreed to participate. Once the participants were identified, I sought and reviewed all disciplinary policies regarding the districts and schools represented in the study.

Interviews

I interviewed 11 participants for this study over a 8-week timespan beginning December 19, 2017−February 8, 2018. The expected timeframe was lengthened because of the holiday season. Each interview was face-to-face interaction only between the AP and me. The interviews were conducted in locations convenient for the participant (i.e.: home office and a private conference room of the local library) which were agreed upon by me and AP. A school-provided office was not considered an option. Each location allowed for minimum to no distractions or interruptions. All interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to 1-hour in time.

With the approval of each participant, I used a digital audio recorder for all interviews to ensure accuracy. I maintained handwritten notes during the interview to capture major points or to note any changes to the order of questioning. The purpose of the study was reiterated with each participant. I assured all participants the protection of confidentiality; that no identification characteristics of themselves or the school they service would be disclosed in the study. I recorded an assigned code was recorded on the audiotape to ensure identities were not disclose and that each interview matched with written notes taken during the interview. It was also shared with all participants their

right to withdraw participation in the study at any time during the interview or after its

conclusion. My contact information was provided, again if any questions arose after the

interview was completed. Each participant agreed to voluntarily participate in the study.

I used a semistructured interview approach, asking participants 28 open-ended

questions. This approach allowed participants to respond openly. When necessary,

follow-up questions were used to clarify a response or to obtain further information. The

order of questioning varied based on participant's responses. This also affected the time

frame of the interviews. Transcription of the interviews began within 24 hours from when

the interview was held beginning December 20, 2017 and ending February 8, 2018. To

ensure accuracy, I reviewed each transcript while listening to the audio recording.

Document Review

Interviews were the primary data collection method for this study, but document

were also reviewed to corroborate participants' accounts where possible. This was also

done to provide thick descriptions of the obtained data. The following documents were

reviews:

(a) Suspension/Expulsion Reports - these reports were obtained from the

Department of Education. They report the number of students suspended or

expelled and the reasons for removal by district, each year. This only includes

the districts involved in the study without identification.

(b) School/District disciplinary code of conducts and report - rules and

consequences for the school. This only includes the districts involved in the

study without identification.

Data Organization

I used a portable Sony ICD digital and pc link audio recorder to record the semi-structured interviews. Each recording was stored in a laptop computer and saved into a password protected file titled "Study Interviews". I transcribe the interviews verbatim and saved them as a Microsoft Word password-protected document, mimicking the assigned codes for each participant. I listened to audio recording multiple times to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions. Transcripts were read over multiple times along with the audio recording also to ensure accuracy. In a final attempt to ensure accuracy, participants were asked to review the transcripts. Each participant provided either a verbal approval, approval through email, or a hard copy initials signature approval on the transcript. All written notes signed hard copies, and the audio recording device are locked and secured in a file cabinet only accessible to me. I will maintain these documents for 5 years. This process contributed to over 12 hours of verbal data and 61 pages of transcribed hard copies regarding participant's opinions and experiences pertaining to student discipline and SRO involvement. I imported all data was imported into NVivo 10 software for analysis.

Data Analysis Process

Immediately after the first interview was completed, data was organized and interpreted using inductive content analysis. This was the initial attempt to identify patterns. Each transcribed interview was reviewed line-by-line. This allowed me to become familiar with the data and develop an understanding of the participants' shared stories. To ensure accuracy with content intentions, transcribed interview transcripts were

forwarded to each participant for review. This was done within 4 weekdays of the

interview. Each participant provided an approval. After member checks were concluded,

data were imported in the NVivo 10 software program. Using this program, each

interview response for all 29 questions was reviewed again. This helped determined the

significance of the response and assign each into appropriate nodes for coding and

categorizing. The NVivo 10 is designed to capture the nodes, themes and meanings from

collected data. From this, I created categories and labeled with terms based on

participants exact language. This procedure showed how frequently the relationships

among the related nodes and themes occurred with the collection of queries. For

reliability and similarity, themes were examined and reexamined. Themes and subthemes

were organized using data relevant to interview responses. Each step was vital to the

study's data organization and allowed the data to be analyzed strategically. Three

recurring themes were identified from the participants' interviews, using the assistance of

the NVivo 10 program.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

For a qualitative research to be meaningful, the researcher must thoroughly plan

and execute the collection of credible data. This is necessary to develop relevant

relationships, themes, patterns, and interpretations. I employed several strategies to

address areas of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Credibility or internal validity verifies the findings as believable from the

perspective of the participants. Credibility was increased using the triangulation of

multiple sources. I utilized both interviews and document reviews as means to gather

data. I also performed member checks during and after the interview. During the

interview, any areas of uncertainty were followed with another question to obtain clarity..

After the interviews, I provided a copy of the interview transcripts to participants. They

were asked to review the document for content accuracy. Data were collected from 11

APs representing seven different high schools to obtain diverse views.

Transferability

External validity refers to the extent to which findings can be generalized or

transferred to other contexts, settings, or populations outside the bounds of the study.

Transferability was ensured through rich, thick descriptions of responses and procedures.

This included detailed description of the research context, targeted population, and

geographical location.

Dependability

Dependability or reliability is an evaluation of the research technique and

methods used that affect the approach to the study. This concept determines if the study

would achieve similar outcomes if carried out with the same methods applied. To ensure

dependability, an audit trail, detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis

processes and reasons other decisions made throughout the study are exposed.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which results, and interpretations can be upheld by

the data collected. To maintain conformability of the evidence, every possible step was

taken to ensure that collected data resulted from participants and not the researcher

biases. All actions taken were well documented and adhered to the University's research process. Any personal influences and bias or influential perspective regarding SRO were acknowledged, but not revealed to participants. Direct quotes from participants were transcribed and no revisions were made; not even grammatical corrections. As previously stated, transcriptions were reviewed by participants to ensure accuracy.

Results

My goal for the data analysis was to identify common themes found from the data and to interpret their meanings. To gain a general understanding of the data and ideas being conveyed by the participants, results presented within this chapter derived from a collection of 29 questions. Value patterns emerged when all questions were answered regarding student behavior, discipline, and SRO involvement. One question was removed and will be discussed independently.

The research question in this study was what values and beliefs guide APs in the decision to involve SROs in school disciplinary procedures. Therefore, it is important to have some level of understanding of what is trying to be achieved when managing discipline; which may contribute to the decision-making approaches used by APs. When asked what's the overall goal of discipline at their school, all except one participant mentioned that the overall goal of discipline within their school goes far beyond the act of issuing sanctions. AP1 summarized:

> Giving the punishment is easy. That only involves assessing the act and issuing the recommended sanction at the appropriate level, at minimum. Our actions must go beyond that to make a real difference in the lives of some of our students and

that's the difficult part. Some of these kids have real-world issues. Some, you and

I could not imagine dealing with as adults. So sometimes those issues must be

addressed, before the act.

AP6 confirmed this thought stating:

We have the responsibility of helping our students be prepared for the real world.

At least that is the responsibility I have placed on myself and I'm sure the same

for my colleagues at [this] school. The goal of our discipline practices is for kids

to learn from their mistakes, to make better choices in the future, and to take

ownership for what they did.

AP11 confirmed the parallel views with the above participants and stated that:

The goal of our discipline practices is, on the surface, to control the behaviors of

the students who enter these hallways. The overall mission of the school is to

produce quality beings ready for all extents of life. So, how we control behavior

is key. The overall goal for me is to help them evaluate options. Every student

who enters my office for a violation, must communicate with me what could have

been done differently to avoid being in the current situation before leaving. How

can you do better if the situation arises in the future? I don't care if the issue is as

simple as being tardy or as drastic as fighting. To me, that can only be done

through relationships. Controlling their behavior can be done in several ways.

Although most often necessary, only issuing reprimands is not always the best

way.

The belief in discipline being a tool is revealing to the comradery within this profession. The interviews conducted in this study revealed that although most participants self-identified themselves as a chief disciplinarian, they looked beyond the duty of disciplinarian and viewed discipline and desired to use it as a tool to meet the underlining needs of the student, where possible. One participant independently viewed the goals of discipline differently. AP5 appeared to see discipline solely to manage the behaviors of students and responded:

> The goal of discipline is to ensure that students and teachers are safe, rules are followed, and violators are punished. I am responsible for 12th graders. Ready or not, they are one foot closer to adulthood, to real-world action. The message must be gained now. They have two options that is very similar to real world option: get it or get out.

Four recurring themes surfaced regarding the decision to utilize SROs in disciplinary procedures according to the participants in this study: (a) ethical values, (b) professional/organizational values, (c) personal values and (d) when and how SROs are used in disciplinary procedures. The findings are presented according to the most recurring themes: (a) ethical values; (b) organizational values (c) personal values and frequency of SRO involvement. Table 3 shows the recurring and emerging value themes.

Table 3

Recurring and Emerging Themes

Recurring Themes	Emerging Themes
Theme 1: Ethical Values	Theme 1.1: Faith
	Theme 1.2: Morals
Theme 2: Organizational Values	Theme 2.1: District Guidance
	Theme 2.2: School Rules
	Theme 2.3: Management/Leadership
	Theme 2.4: State/Local Laws
Theme 3: Personal Values	Theme 3.1: Professional/Academic Background
	Theme 3.2: Parental Dynamics
	Theme 3.3: Fairness/Justice
Theme 4: Frequency of Use	Theme 4.1 Frequent Usage
	Theme 4.2 Occasional Usage
	Theme 4.3 Never Use

Theme 1: Ethical Values

Ethical views were the most prominent themes identified based on the responses from the participants. This relates to the ethical principles of the participants commonly founded in religious traditions. In other words, this is what the APs expected of themselves based on the beliefs common to the religions they practice.

Theme 1.1: Faith

Nine of the participants used the word *faith,* and ten revealed a religious affiliation. When asked about the guiding considerations for decision making, all participants mentioned faith, spirituality, fairness, or moral obligations. AP3 explained:

I'm a Christian, and I try to follow Christ's ways. He was very compassionate with his ministry on earth. And so, I try to look at them through Christ's eyes.

You know, that they are his children. So, I think my faith also guides my

decisions and discipline because I try to do it with care. I don't want any kids to

ever feel like I'm judging them or sometimes they do think I'm mean, but for the

most part it is very compassionate and very respectful. So, I think Christianity

guides what I do.

AP2 shared in this and further clarified depending on spiritual standards to guide

decision making stating that:

My faith #1 is going to guide me. I have a higher obligation beyond my job. I

have come to like the [person] I have to face every day in my mirror, and I would

not want to jeopardize that for anything. My faith and commitment to doing what

I see as right based on my faith helps me feel good about the decisions I make on

this campus daily. Not saying that I am also right.

In expressing similar views about the faith guiding decision making, AP9 affirmed:

Although some may not think so, but I am a Christian. I not only used this to

guide decisions on my job, but in every aspect of my life. In my profession, you

must realize, especially in a small community like this, everybody knows you or

something about you. More importantly, they expect something from you. That's

to be right and to do right. This must be based on something. Mine is my faith. I

would never want to disappoint the kids I serve every day, so my decisions

making tactics whether regarding me or them have to be correct and fair.

Theme 1.2: Morals

AP8 did not identify a religious affiliation or directly spoke to the issue of faith, but expressed:

> I am not a very religious person, but my moral obligation is to treat people the way I expected to be treated. These kids desire to be treated with respect in good and bad situations. If they cannot expect it from us, then who should they look to for this.

Theme 2: Organizational Values

Organizational values relate to how participants perceive control from the school and/or school district in carrying out disciplinary responsibilities. The primary theme is divided into four emerging subthemes: (a) district guidance or guidelines, (b) school rules, (c) school management/leadership, and (d) the law. All participants responded mentioning at least one of the themes as a contributor to their decisions. All participants honor school rules as factors in decision making practices.   AP3 stressed:

> At this school, as an AP at this school we have complete autonomy and are supported with any conclusion drawn regarding student disciplinary infractions, but rules are in place for a reason. I find that when I stick to the rules provided there is little room for my intentions to be questioned. I used these guidelines to hold all my students accountable, and it is what I expected them to use to hold me accountable as well. Now there are those times, when certain offenses are not clearly mentioned, but overall rules and sanctions for violations for those rules are clearly stated. We go as far to make students and parents sign off on our

disciplinary procedures at the beginning of every school year and I find this

beneficial.

AP11 agreed that school rules are important, but stated that because situations can be so

vastly different, leadership has been the guiding factor for him. He stated:

This is the third principal I have served under in this position. For some reason,

they seem to view the same rules somewhat differently. Therefore, I find that the

current leadership or vision of the leadership is the best tactic when making

disciplinary decisions. It is definitely the case when involving the SRO, who does

not get involve with most of our disciplinary concerns.

When asked for an example to clarify his stance, AP11 stated:

I had a student just recently who stole two or three tools out of the shop class.

Now it took some investigating, using social media of course, to determine he was

the culprit. The student handbook calls for a five-day out-of-school suspension for

theft or destruction of school property and referral to law enforcement. The

district follows state law with criminal charges and up to expulsion. My current

administrator is prone to determine the intent of the student and the amount of

remorse behind the infraction. He constantly questions, are you able to determine

the intent? As a result, I called the student in, he didn't lie, he returned the items,

and apologized to myself and the shop instructor. He was issued four Saturday

morning schools and hopefully learned from his mistakes. Now, two years ago

this would have been a different outcome without question, because the principal

was no nonsense, especially for an upper classman who should know better. He

was also big advocate for teachers and believed heavily on the use of the SRO.

AP4 agreed with leadership being a guiding factor for decision making regarding

disciplinary practices, but for a completely different reason. She explained:

Following the vision of leadership, in my opinion, helps avoid parent complaints,

conflicts and the creation of hostile environments. I have learned that regardless

of what is printed, exceptions are required. I, personally, do not see the need of a

full-time SRO at this school. Parents who make enough noise seem to get their

way around here. If they can get to the principal to listen and convince her why

their child should not be harshly punished, then it will not happen. Now only a

select few are given this privilege. This does not create the best working

environment, when your decisions are constantly overwritten. I'm just telling the

truth.

Seven other participants agree that leadership is a heavy influence in decision

making. AP5 identified district guidance as influence of his decision making. He stated:

We have three high schools in this district. We often see kids move from one

school to the next because of the fast development in this community. Because of

this, the guidance from the district seem to keep things consistent. Regardless of

which school a student is enrolled, in this district they are all treated the same.

The district is very involved in the daily operations of our schools. We see a

district rep at least once or twice a month, and due to our appeal process they are

the final decision-makers.

Only three APs identified state law as an influence in their decision making for disciplinary procedures. Each stated that in the case of a criminal offense, the situation is automatically handed over the SRO for criminal proceedings. AP10 best explains the stance when he stated:

Criminal violations are not to be minimized. If one is allowed, then the wrong message is sent to these students. Tardiness, skipping class, disrespect, bulling, vaping, even some fights are all my territory, but serious criminal offenses should not be tolerated. It a manner of safety and principle.

When asked what constitutes serious criminal offenses, he listed the following:

Weapons, physical assault, threats, and illegal drug possession or use. School is not the place for such behavior. Every student deserves the opportunity to learn in a safe environment, and I deserve a safe place to work. Those who chose to violate the law does not deserve to be here.

Theme 3: Personal Values

Personal values relate to various facets that are important to the participants that are not connected to the school and faith themes that contributes to APs carrying out their daily responsibilities. The primary theme is divided into three emerging subthemes: (a) professional or academic background/trainings, (b) parental status, and (c) fairness and justice.

The first subtheme focuses on the professional and/or academic backgrounds of the participants. The professional or academic backgrounds of participants are those they may have been employed in prior to their current position and/or any academic area

beyond a bachelor's degree. Of the 11 participants, three had a professional background in Social Work/Counseling, four in Education, two in Criminal Justice, one in Public Health, and one in Public Relations. While not all the APs referred to their backgrounds beyond identifying it, nine out of the eleven participants did refer to these backgrounds as impactful in the strategies employed to handle their student disciplinary decision-making.

Subtheme 3.1: Professional/Academic Background

All participants with a social work/counseling background shared similar views regarding the treatment of students and openly identified their reliance on their professional background in the practice of their current duties. AP1 clearly and concisely articulated her reliance on her professional background when the following was stated:

> My role, since my background is counseling, I'm always trying to get the student to see the bigger picture. So, when students come to me it's not like hey here's your punishment now get out of my office. We have a conversation. In the conversation, I find myself counseling them on how to make better decisions, not just for now or today but in the future too, and to also just hold them accountable.

AP3 also revealed this reliance by saying:

> My background and training guide what I do and how I deal with these kids. In most cases, I have them tell me what they did, why they did it, and how the situation could be handled differently. That way, they can be held to higher level of expectation when they come up with the idea themselves.

AP1 solidified this:

My students are full of expected and unexpected emotions and hormones. And

they are going to make mistakes, and some are going to just do stupid things.

They are supposed to, regardless how much talking we do. It's a part of the

development process, and logic is not always involved as we would like.

Understanding this keeps me in perspective and makes my job that much easier.

If not, I would feel like a failure all the time.

AP5 exposed the use of his previous professional experiences within his current

position, but not necessarily as an influencer of disciplinary decision-making. AP5 stated:

You have to be clever with these kids, because they definitely are. You have to

put your investigative skills to work on a daily basis. If not, you will never get to

the bottom of anything or the real reason for the behavior, especially when a good

kid is involved. I guess it's good that my background is criminal justice.

This sort of reference is also shared by AP7 when the following was revealed:

Not addressing the behaviors of these kids will affect all of us if not done

immediately and appropriately. We don't like to think about it or much less say it,

but we are dealing with a generation of value-challenged people, if we are not

careful. Well the values you and I may have grown up with anyways.

When asked to identify the values referenced or what values would this include, AP7

identified:

Like working for what you get, everyone is not the winner, or being responsible

for what you do and say. So, if we don't help them embrace these simple

concepts, we are going to have a serious problem as a society. They are going to

be a threat to public health. We don't think about this possibility. My public health professor revealed this to me years ago and I believe it.

AP6 expressed how being an education practitioner and previously serving in the high-school level classroom drastically impacts the actions carried out in her daily decisions. She communicated:

As much as people would like to think kids have changed over time. Honey, I have been doing this for almost twelve years and in the classroom much longer than that, and not once have I been surprised in what these kids do. Same kind of behaviors, different day or year. What is different is the response to the behavior from us as administrators and parents. I can also tell them the situation before they get to my office and I used that intuition when dealing with students having to cross the threshold of my door.

Subtheme 3.2 Parental Status

Of the 11 participants, 9 revealed they were parents and made some indication that this positioning affected the way they handled their employment responsibilities. AP4 expressed this impact stating:

Before all of this, I am a mother. I have two children, who are also high schoolers, so I treated the kids under my watch as such. Therefore, my decisions in the position are to treat students the way I would want my children to be treated at their school. I believe that is what we all should do. Especially those of us who may have children.

AP10 expressed his position as a father has a direct impact on his method of administering disciplinary practices.

> I am a bit old school in the new world way of thinking. I believe in the village. I believe I am a part of the village. I am invested in these kids on the same level I invest in my own kids. I am just as disappointed and even sometimes angry when they mess-up in the same way I am when my own kids mess up, especially when I know they know better than they are behaving. I am committed to holding my students to the same level of responsibility and expectation that I do as Dad. This is how my measure my actions. As long as I walk on this path, I am confident that I am right or at minimum walking with the best intentions.

AP4 confirmed the impact of being a parent has on disciplinary decisions, especially when the involvement of SRO may be necessary, clarifying:

> Although we may not always want to, it is true that tough love or tough discipline is a necessary part of life. We are not trampled with 1045 angels within your student population every day. Because of this, we must respond accordingly for the sake of all the other students. Even if it requires the use of law enforcement. Sometimes I look at my own children and wonder "who are you and where did you come from". On those days, as much as I may not like it, they must be handled accordingly. Some of these corrective actions are costly for them. The same cost is placed or must be done with some of our students on their less than best days. We are not to be their friends; they have enough friends. We are here

to provide guidance for them to be educationally, socially and sometimes legally prepared as productive members in society.

Subtheme 3.3: Fairness/Justice

All APs internalized the concept of fairness/justices differently, but ten of the eleven all identified this as a desired outcome in issuing school discipline. The divergent respondent recognized the need to be fair but stressed that providing justice is not always possible. As the only participant to make a clear and significant difference in her perspective towards fairness and justice AP3 stated:

Of course, I would like to be fair to all my students. It makes the job a bit easier when they all know what to expect from me as their AP. But, let's be honest, what you see as fair and what I see as fair in any given situation can be on two different spectrums. I personally see fairness as making a quality judgement that is based only on facts; free from any sort of discrimination. Not including previous behavioral problems, race, gender, nothing. Justice to me is having the best and right action taken. Well, situations do not always allow this to happen. So, I do the best I can with what I have to be fair in providing justice to these kids. I know it matters, but sometimes life is not fair. That's an important lesson for our students to learn also.

When asked for an example when fairness and/or justice is not rendered, AP3 continued stating:

Okay, so my biggest disciplinary problem is tardiness. The rules states that if a student reaches four tardies they get what we call Tuesday School. We don't have

in-school suspension here, so on Tuesday, you will have to stay after school. Well, sometimes these students are tardy because they are just not responsible enough to get to school or class on time. But there are also times when real circumstances consistently affect their ability to get to school or class on time. Like, parent-contributing problems, car troubles, health issues, etc., real situations. And is it not uncommon for us to see this. Well for each, with reason or without, once they reach four Tuesday School is the expected and written disciplinary action. Well, when the family depends on this student to pick up the other siblings, get home so the caretaker for mom can leave or be home to take mom to work at 4 o'clock because they are only one with a driver's license, and I know it to be true, then Tuesday School may not be the course of action we can take. Is that fair, no, but am I providing justice? I think so.

AP5 somewhat chimed in with the discipline is not always fair, but justice perspective:

When we hear the word discipline, it's always considered a negative. This can be a good thing. Discipline helps kids to learn from their mistakes, and to make better choices in the future. Also, to take ownership for what they did, but sometimes, different courses of action are carried out to ensure this occurs. I am a stickler to the guidelines put in place by the school, but there are those times when my gut seeks to ensure justice for my students.

The remainder of the participants directly speaks to the concept of fairness as the influencer is their delivery of school disciplinary practices and specifically when to involve the SRO in those practices. AP10 stated:

When you are fair, you are fine. You must be fair with discipline. It's too many

kids with too many situations to pick and choose. Then you are left having to

justify every decision you make. When parents get involved, that can create

problems for you. We have a list of behaviors that are referred to law

enforcement. When they surface, the SRO is immediately contacted, if he is not

already involved. This include alcohol, drugs, fighting, fire alarms, thefts, threats,

vandalism, and weapons on school property and buses. Beyond this, I don't

involve law enforcement in my job, but with these behaviors my hands are tied.

AP4 also believed that fairness is instrumental in providing discipline and uses the

involved students to determine the fair approach and stated:

The lessons are learned not only from the punishment, but a totality of the

situation. My goal is to help my students accept their role in the situation and

understand or at least acknowledge them deserving the consequences. I often ask

them, why do you think you did that? Um, why did you think that was the best

course of action? What could you do differently, next time? So, you know, for

me personally, it's educating them. To let them know after you leave here,

society has expectations certain expectation for behaviors. So, whether you are

going on a job, school, or military if you a problem particularly with following the

rules, it could look like their simple, but if you are late to your job or meeting

deadlines three or four time, you are going to be fired. No, student leaves my

office without clearly understanding why a specific course of action is being taken

and that they are treated fairly. They don't always like it or agree with it, but they

know I am being fair. My students can always say they know my expectations

and they know my response when the fail to meet those expectations.

AP7 stressed operating in fairness by accentuating:

Whether they like me or not, they know that when they leave my office they have

been treated fairly and their parents do too. If it requires a serious infraction,

where the SRO has to take part, the parents are called in so that information is

shared one time, without confusion. This holds me, my colleagues, and the

student accountable. I have learned over the years, students and colleagues will lie

or say things that are not in support of me once out of my presence. With these

students, you have a conversation with them, then they go home and concoct a

completely different version to benefit them. So now, I notify the student of the

mandatory conference, parents are called in as quickly as possible, and if needed

SRO.

AP9 stated fairness is required and understanding the following:

In our discretion to provide discipline, we have to be careful that we are being

fair. Sometimes this involves knowing that everything, particularly during this

time of the year does not warrant disciplining students for everything. Right now

we know that are trying to get out of here. The only thing on their minds is the

break. In this, issuing a break to one is means giving a break to others.

AP8 took a completely different approach towards fairness and the use of the

SRO showing a disapproval of the SRO involvement stating:

I don't believe it is fair to the students to use the SRO in my disciplinary decisions. There is a level of expectancy when dealing with these kids. You expect them to mess up occasionally. I am not condoning illegal behavior, but I also do not condone involving the SRO for taking an aspirin, defending yourself from harm, or pulling the fire alarm. To me those are school matters. Should they happen, of course not but let's be fair to the kids. It's not just about being fair to the individual. It's also about being fair to the general population.

A clarification was requested to ensure the statement was taken in the correct context and AP8 simplified:

You may not like my response. I know others don't. Our expectations of illogical people are just too great. I'm with high schoolers 9 to 10 hours a day, 5 and sometimes 6 days a week. Very little that is done makes sense to me. You may get a reasonable, responsible and thought-provoking one every now and then, but they are the exceptions. So last year, I had a freshman female dating a graduating senior male. The SRO approached me about this wanting to talk to the young man about statutory rape accusations. I could see the benefit, so I did. The students continued dating. The only thing I could say was happening was they hugged in the halls, like most couples and receive our normal hands-to-yourself spiel. Weeks later, I learned the SRO has contacted the young lady's parents and the young man was charged. I completely disagreed with this based on what I or the SRO could account to. He completely overstepped his boundaries in my opinion. That's the danger in having them involved in school disciplinary practices. He has

been allotted too much leeway. They or maybe just him, I don't know, but they

enforce laws as if they are patrolling the streets and not hallways. So, I'm saying

just be fair to these kids. Be fair to them at the stage in life they are in or the

situation we have placed them. So now let me add maybe my personal

relationship with the SRO will affect my decision in the future, too.

AP2 summed up the idea of fairness as essential in the involvement of SROs in school

disciplinary practices stating:

The decisions we make regarding these kids matter, good, bad or indifferent. If

we do too little, they internalize they can get away with things. If we become too

strict, they fail to develop compassion for others or find themselves in hopeless

situations. But if we are fair and just, I trust that all good will prevail, and the

needed lessons will be captured. Regardless of our backgrounds, most of us

understand what is right and wrong; therefore, when treated fairly there is an

acceptance of the consequence meeting the behavior.

Theme 4: Frequency of SRO Involvement

Theme 4 relates to how participants perceive their use or involvement of the SRO

in disciplinary procedures. All APs see the necessity of SRO involvement differently and

various factors contribute to extending an invitation (i.e. types or level of offense, history

of student's behavior, and school culture). This theme is divided into three emerging

subthemes: (a) frequent usage, (b) occasional usage, and (c) no usage. All participants

responded to the frequency of SRO involvement theme.

Subtheme 4.1 Frequent Usage

Three of the APs reported a frequent use of the SRO in disciplinary decision-making. AP4 stated:

The presence of law enforcement tends to make the situation more serious. His

presence also keeps situations from becoming combative. So, when I call a

student in, not for discussions but when a sanction is being issued, I ensure he is

involved. When the situation involves a violation of the law, I guess I am called

in, because I assist him. We have a very good relationship with our SRO. We

probably check in with each other several times daily. He supports us, like if we

have to do searches, you know he will accompany us. If we have a student that's

too disruptive, then he will assist us in the classroom or whatever the situation.

Also, if we have investigations on anything, he will sit in on the meetings. You

know sometimes the person with the gun and badge you know; it is good to have

him there to reinforce the school policies and to confirm if it resembles criminal

behavior. He supports us in our role as administrators, and we support him. Also,

we try to keep him in the loop on things that are going on as far as students that

are misbehaving, because he needs to keep his eyes and ears open as well.

AP9 revealed a high usage of the SRO affirming:

I must admit that I use our SRO a lot. I use him the same way I use the expertise

of any other staff. His opinion is valued, and he is part of our staff. He has an

office here and everything. You know one thing about a resource officer, they, I

guess they have a different perspective than a street officer. He is in this school

with these students every day. He knows their characteristics, and I think that he

would be more compassionate than some officers that are coming off the street

that don't have a relationship with these kids. He understands it from an

educational standpoint as well, and not just a law enforcement standpoint. Plus, I

have a lot of issues that would be law enforcement issues if outside of school, so I

leave it to the law enforcement expert.

AP5 also reported a frequent usage of the SRO and stresses its necessity stating:

School is an institution for educating children. I know we must deal with the

whole student, but let's deal with the whole student. Sometimes that involves

some unusual actions. I understand how many people feel about SRO. They think

they turn schools into prisons and take children to jail for everything. I've read the

studies too. That is not what I've experienced in my almost 13 years. This guy has

saved a lot more kids from going to jail. Lest say, if he was not here, we would

probably have more kids going to jail for some reason or another. We just have to

admit that along with the guns, knives, and drugs, disorderly conduct, willful

defiance, and simply disrupting the educational process must be handled

accordingly also. A lot of these kids just do not care. Not all of them, but the ones

that don't really impact the attitudes of the rest. That's why I use the SRO so

frequently. Get him involved with a kid who does not get in trouble often and you

will never see them again. Keeping him involved with our frequent visitors

justifies the inevitable. Lessons must be learned, and messages have to be sent.

Subtheme 4.2: Occasional Usage

Seven of the eleven participants reported occasional use of the SRO in the disciplinary practices. Most of this group seem to appreciate the presence of the SRO, but one found little use for them and used them only in drastic circumstances.

AP10 provided a comprehensive approach to this use of the SRO revealing:

> The great thing about being an administrator is that there is flexibility with discipline. It's not a hard fact. Now somethings are, like if you are smoking, drinking, weapons, that's zero tolerance, that's going to be by the book, but when it comes to things such as tardiness, defiance, or whatever in the classroom, we can kind of work with those issues when it comes to students. The SRO only plays a support role here. We are the final decision-makers. Even when smoking, drinking, weapons are involved, we still make the decision on the SRO's involvement.

AP1 reported occasional use of the SRO:

> I use him sometimes, but not very often. He supports me, like if I have to do a search, he will accompany me and any of the other APs. If we have a student that's too disruptive, then he will assist us in the classroom or whatever the situation. If, well drugs if we found drugs on someone, weapons on someone. Drugs, weapons, um and usually bullying. I would involve him in it. All bullying situations, I involve him. Whether it cyber or face-to-face. It's normally cyber, because kids don't normally bully face-to-face anymore.

AP2 stated:

> I only request the assistance of the SRO when suspension is the next level of
> discipline for the kid. I try to be proactive because suspending kids is probably the
> least effective punishment we have. I understand the reasoning for it, but it is
> mostly useless. Because for most kids, when they get to the point of suspension,
> they don't care, they wanted a couple of days home to relax. So, when we are
> approaching suspension, I call in the SRO for reinforcement. It's mostly a
> warning of, this is what we could do, but we all want the best for you.

AP3 supported the occasional use of the SRO in disciplinary practices by:

> You know we used him for the top two, drugs and weapons, but if a student
> curses at a teacher, I am giving them suspension and involve the SRO just to
> strengthen the message. He may not arrest for disorderly conduct, but if it's bad
> enough and he does, I support it. I don't tolerant any disrespect to an adult in this
> building. So, if you curse at a teacher, or if you talk very rudely or very
> disrespectfully, teacher tells you to do something and you are disrespectful,
> you're going to be put out. If the SRO is needed for this to be carried out, then so
> be it.

AP6 revealed occasional usage of the SRO when conflicted about a student's behavior or
a situation. AP6 stated:

> If I am in conflict over something, I will go to my head principal and say, hey I
> have this situation what do you think, and he will give his advice. But he also
> says you make the best decision for your student. He leaves it up to me, so no we

have complete autonomy when it comes to that. The same is true with the SRO.

If there is a situation involving criminal activity or possible criminal activity and I

am not certain about its magnitude, I seek the SRO's opinion.

AP7 only sees the use of SRO necessary in the severest of cases: AP stressed:

I only call the SRO in when harm has been caused to another student. The rules

on the street are not the rules of the school, and sometimes they get it confused.

Now this does not always go in my favor, but I am confident in my approach.

AP10 concurred with this approach emphasizing:

Yes, I would use the SRO but only when it involves something that is breaking

the law. Mostly, something like having a weapon or severe bodily harm, which we have

never had here. In those situations, he would have total discretion. You know he would

have to make a report, etc. He could get really bored waiting on me to call on him, so I do

try to involve him when in those situations that are questionable. It is understood though

that the final decisions are up to the administrators.

AP11 reveals the use of the SRO saying: I use our SRO every now and then, but overall

discipline is my responsibility.

Subtheme 4.3: No usage

AP8 is the only participant who voiced no use of the SRO is needed in

disciplinary procedures. This AP does not seem to have any use of the SRO in the school

setting period. When asked how often you would say you use SRO in administering

disciplinary practices the response was strong: Never. In addition to what has already

been stated, I just don't find it necessary to use him. I have the relationship with my students; therefore, I elect to handle and make my disciplinary decisions.

Figure 1. Frequency of SRO Involvement
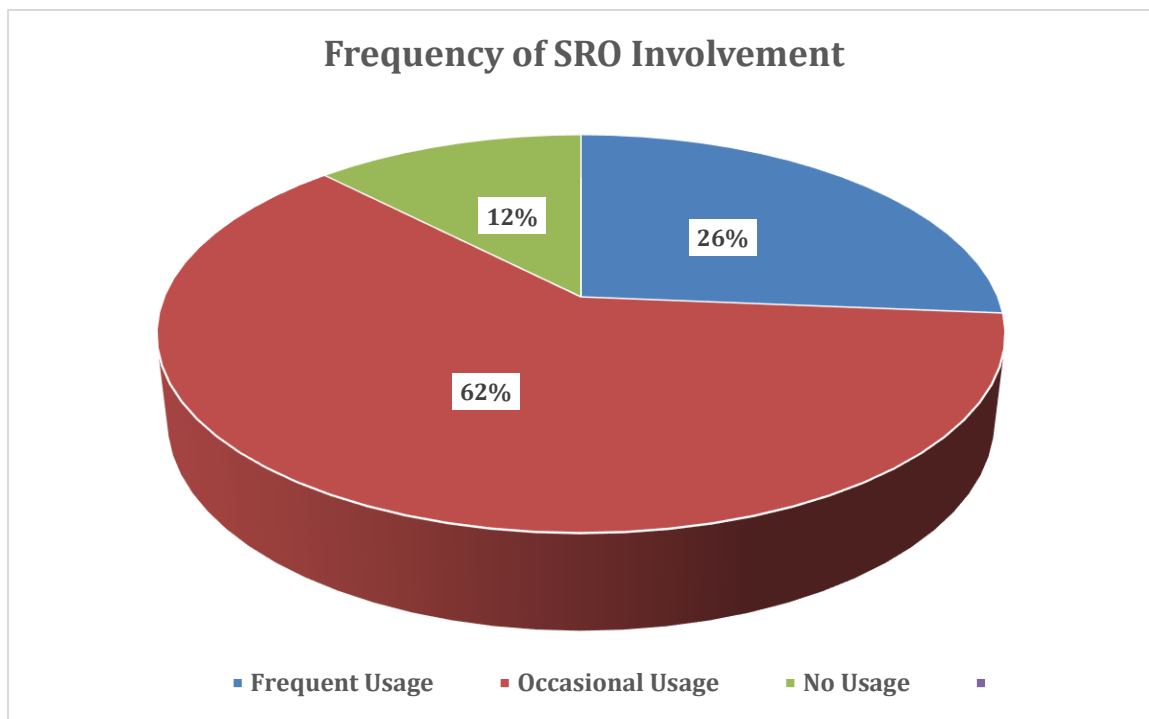
This figure illustrates the frequent use of SRO involvement amongst the APs with school disciplinary procedures.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a brief overview of the purpose of this phenomenological study and the research question the study sought to address were presented. Along with this, I included a description of the demographics of the research participants. A description of the settings and data collection and data analysis processes

was also included. The Nvivo 10 software system was used to assist me in the organizing and analyzing of collected data. This assisted with the placement of related data into categories and the capture of themes based on the frequency of specific responses.

APs serving in high schools located in a southeastern state were asked 29 interview questions to generate insight on the relevance of values of APs. The results revealed that participating APs share similar values that influences student disciplinary decisions involving SROs that were captured into four themes. This research disclosed ethical values as the most prevalent value, while organizational and personal values also highly contributed to the frequency of use of SROs. Procedures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study were also addressed.

Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of the research findings, a discussion of the study's limitations, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research regarding the contributions of AP values to SRO involvement in school disciplinary practices.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the values of 11 APs

serving high schools located in the southeastern region of the United States in their

decision to utilized SROs in disciplinary procedures. Although considerable research had

been conducted on SROs prior to this study, there were limited to no research data f on

the values of the school's chief disciplinarians in the decisions to involve SROs in school

disciplinary procedures. Therefore, in this study unique insight was added to documented

literature that currently exists on SROs and the values of school administrators. To

address this gap in literature, qualitative research method rooted in the phenomenological

practices was utilized.

From the interviews, four main themes emerged during the research process. The

roles and actions of APs were analyzed based on their values as they carry out the daily

implementation of the SRO programs within their respective schools. As far back as the

1970's, various scholars have argued that values matter in our daily functions.

Hodgkinson (1978) along with Begley (2004) captures the notion that values greatly

contribute to decisions and actions of individuals in their daily operations. The values of

persons working in any professional realm are inclined to assimilate participants in that

setting. For those working in education, their values impact students, teachers, staff,

administrations and community stakeholders. School administrators shared experiences

in managing the educational and safety obligations of their schools. A diversity of

themes creates a connection through the implementation of various categories of values,

shared and unshared. Three similar categories of values regarding their decision to utilize SROs in disciplinary practices were revealed in this study. These included ethical, organizational, and personal values. A behavior pattern amongst the APs revealed the frequency of use of SROs in disciplinary practices. This behavior pattern directly relates to how the APs perceived their involvement or use of SROs in disciplinary procedures they are responsible for managing. The identified values within this study did not conflict with the values poised by Hodgkinson.

Interpretation/Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed four different themes related to values influencing APs in their decision to utilize SROs in disciplinary practices: ethical values, organizational values, personal values, and frequency of use. The implications of the study were supported and documented in previous studies, but not on the values of APs and SRO involvement in disciplinary procedures. The debate surrounding police presence in schools, the roles of APs, student behavior, school discipline, school safety and public policy, values in education administration, and Hodgkinson's hierarchy of values were all focal areas of the study. These focal areas collectively suggest that our systems may focus more on what we would like to happen regarding SROs inside school settings versus what actually happens. SROs are not creating the safe environment as intended. Instead, they have become a direct source that brings lifelong harm to our youth, especially the black and brown ones. The findings of this study also suggest that the use of SROs is inconsistent with the type of system required to effectively leverage polarities

of democracy. We must be careful not to sacrifice our students for the sake an unsuccessful intention.

The Debate Surrounding Police Presence in Schools

Opinions regarding the necessity of SROs ranged across the spectrum. First, the findings of the study correspond with literature expressing how attitudes mirror an unquestionable need of SROs to tackle the amount of violence, drugs, gang-related activity, and other social ills threatening school safety (Jennings et al, 2011). Second, they correspond to a call for school administrators, teachers, and staff to prevent the students' participation in and becoming victims of criminal activity (Mowen and Freng, 2019) while also avoiding schools resembling prisons (Na & Gottfredson, 2011). Finally, as described below, the study also added new dimensions to the necessary placement of SROs and the manner in which they are invited into disciplinary procedures.

Most of the APs found some necessary placement of SROs and admitted to occasionally using SROs in disciplinary procedures. How they saw the necessary use of the officer varied and was determined the most critical factor in measuring the influencing values. The APs in this study viewed the use of SROs differently based upon the specific officer, training of the officer, professional backgrounds, and circumstances surrounding the offense committed by the student. The results revealed that all APs would utilize SROs when the possession of weapons and illegal drugs were involved on school grounds, but their presence is not a constant requirement.

Roles of the APs

The literature review revealed uncertainty regarding the roles of APs. The number of tasks assigned to this population to ensure school success lacked a clear job description (Marshall & Hooley, 2006) with several duties falling under the responsibility of an AP. The responses of the APs interviewed in this study differ vastly from this conclusion. The APs identified many responsibilities, but their chief responsibility was to manage school discipline and create a safe and healthy learning environment.

Most APs within this study assumed the role of parent within the school setting. An acknowledgement of the impact of personal values of APs was produced in this study, and revealed the parental status is a heavy contributor to the way student behavior is approached and when or if SROs are involved in disciplinary procedures. It was not determined if all APs were parents, but of those who identified their parental status, all revealed the desired treatment of their own children impacted the way they treated the children under their watch within the school. Although not a qualifier for the role of AP, administrators may gain insight from this in predicting the performances of APs.

Student Behavior

Within the school setting, student behavior is a major concern and for many administrators has become increasingly frustrating (Branson, Baig, & Begum, 2015). The findings of the study confirmed the data documented in the literature review regarding disruptive behavior being a major concern of the APs and oftentimes disheartening. This is most evident with behaviors that interrupt the normal operations of classroom and overall school functioning (Sprick, 2013). The respondents within the study confirmed

this by classifying tardiness as the most frequent disciplinary problem within their schools. Although similar in this aspect, the findings are drastically different from the perspectives identifying student behavior as out-of-control (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008) and the cause of failing school performances (Henderson, 2018).

The research study revealed that several factors, such as professional or academic background training, parental status, and justice and fairness had an impact on the AP's decision to utilize SROs. Hall (2012) suggested that the decision making specifically regarding student behavior responses highlights "the impact of values on administrative discretion" (p. 74). Decision making regarding student behavior could also highlight the impact of values on administrative utilization of SROs. The findings correspond with data documented in the literature and revealed that the personal values of APs greatly influenced the way student behavior is viewed and the need to involve law enforcement in disciplinary procedures. Dennery (2011) revealed the intensity involved in the training and roles of school-based mental health clinicians and found job satisfaction is gained helping students and parents succeed in both school and home settings. The results of the study showed that most APs, especially those with some form of social work/mental health/counseling background, have very similar responses to student behavior and a hesitation to involve SROs due to the lasting long-term effects it may place on students. These individuals stated they would more likely to not involve law enforcement in the disciplinary procedures.

School Discipline

Researchers have documented ineffective discipline practice since the beginning of schooling in the United States (Empey & Stanford, 1991; Greenberg, 1999). Although necessary, if not used properly discipline has the potential to created increased bad behavior, injustices, trauma, and lifelong consequences. The national demand for just punishments for all people mirrors the call for effective and just disciplinary practices for all students. This also confirms the data within the literature review for the same call. The guidance provided through the school district, published school rules, and/or school leadership generated a basis for all the involved APs' decisions. According to the results of this study, APs view the utilization of organizational values as a safety net for all decisions. Organizational values seem to result in less combativeness and create an overall sense of fairness amongst all students even when lack of effective communication, lack of trust in management, or discrepancy in the lines of hierarchy between SROs and APs may be present. The results of the study showed autonomy is essential in the responsibilities/performances of individual APs, but organizational values produce organizational transparency that collectively benefits students, parents, administrators, and SROs. The findings correspond to the literature regarding the utilization of published rules and school leadership guidance in disciplinary practices.

School Safety and Public Policy

Benet (2013) suggested that applying the polarities of democracy theory is important in achieving positive social change. Achieving this change is done by maximizing the positive aspects of ten values (freedom and authority, justice and due

process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation) and minimizing the negative aspects. The findings of my study support Benet's research.

The suggestion to enhance the positive aspects and minimize the negative aspects of each polarity pair (Benet, 2013) corresponds to how APs attempt to perform their jobs by strengthening school environments while minimizing the harm done to students. Although some zero tolerance and other exclusionary school disciplinary policies are actively used, the 10 essential elements of democracy paired as polarities are visible in the values used by APs in determining disciplinary outcomes and the use of SROs in those procedures. When used in this way, the quest to produce safe school environments avoids potentially criminalizing student behavior.

Values in Educational Administration

The interviewed APs expressed that values are extremely impactful in the decisions made regarding student disciplines and the utilization of SROs. The findings of this study confirmed documented literature regarding the impact of values in educational administrators.

Hodgkinson's Hierarchy of Values

The findings in this study revealed that APs perceived values as a necessary tool to carry out their professional obligations. Most of the APs in the study viewed ethical values as the number one influencer in decision-making in student disciplinary procedures and the use of SROs. Hodgkinson (1996) also found religion as the "highest level of rationality" as values that reach beyond reason and cannot be scientifically

verified or vindicated. This research themes did not add new dimensions in values significances but confirms the influence ethics has in administrator's functions. Thus, the need for authorities to be more prepared and knowledgeable on ethical values that may be present within its administration is essential. Although the APs consistently confirmed the importance of ethical values, organizational values were also found as a strong influencer of their disciplinary practices and involvement of the SRO. Therefore, the hierarchy of values found in the theoretical framework is not completely present within the findings of this study, but there is an equal importance in the roles of values in the educator's daily responsibilities of school disciplinary practices and SRO involvement.

Limitations of the Study

The study represents high schools located in the southeastern region of the United States, covering only about a 20-mile radius. Assistant principals in other regions of the United States or covering a larger area may produce different value responses or prioritize values differently, so there is a limited generalization of the study's results. Although participants represented three school districts, the schools are located within close proximity; therefore, experiences of APs serving in other locations may distort these research findings.

The number of participants involved in the study may limit the results of the research study as it pertains to generalization. Eleven participants fulfilled the sample for this study. The views of these eleven APs will not reflect the overall opinions of all education administrators serving in similar roles throughout the country.

I purposefully selected the participants of this study from the targeted area. Assistant principals serving in larger areas or higher diverse areas may produce significantly different experiences or values influencing the decisions to use SROs.

Suggestions for Future Research

Schools and police departments are equally ever-changing learning organizations that require constant self-evaluations. This is necessary because both entities have multiple internal and external stakeholders that must be satisfied. When the operations of these entities combine, a competition of the stakeholders' concerns may become problematic. This study results suggested that there is often confusion with the hierarchy of control within the school setting. During the interviews, many of the APs expressed dissatisfaction with constant involvement and sense of entitlement from the involve SRO in disciplinary procedures. Acknowledging the connection between AP values and SRO involvement in school disciplinary practices found in the study indicates a need for further research to increase the understanding of school-district administrators surrounding factors that could increase the success of students and APs and the allowed roles of the SRO in school operations.

Training recommendations are also suggested for APs. As a result of this study, it is recommended that all educational administrators receive training in understanding the roles and legal obligations of the SROs placed in their schools. A clearer understanding of roles and obligations could eliminate any distrust or strengthen lack of communication that may existence between these populaces without hidden agendas or unspoken intimidations. Value identification and acknowledgement training should also be

provided for APs. This should not be designed to change their values, but merely to help them understand the roles they may play in the daily functioning of their duties. According to Dorothy Dalton, a global talent management strategist, understanding our values can impact our behaviors, results, effectiveness by helping to better prioritize, becoming more consistent, and identifying the reasons for any non-alignment in our professional and personal duties (2015).

The review of AP's values towards the use of school counselors compared to the use of SRO's is also a recommendation for further research. It is deemed necessary to ensure schools are attempting to address all necessary aspects of a child before involving the drastic impact of SRO involvement. The only way to capture this information is to expand such research as this to get a true picture of resources used by APs in addressing disciplinary concerns.

This study examined the values influencing the decisions of 11 APs in the use of SROs in school disciplinary procedures. The study is conducted in the southeastern region of the United States. The study results suggest ethical, organizational, and personal values influence the frequency of SRO involvement in school disciplinary practices. To obtain a more generalized perspective regarding the values influencing APs, future research studies should be conducted to cover a larger region of this geographical location; as well as, all regions of the United States targeting a greater number of APs. This approach discovers a more comprehensive view and comparison of which values influences the decisions of APs regarding the utilization of SROs in disciplinary procedures.

I was purposeful in not obtaining the representing districts' approval to conduct the study. This was deemed necessary to gain true opinions of the elicited APs without fear of repercussion. Based on the willingness of APs, it is suggested that future studies should obtain this approval to increase the number of APs and capture a more detailed reflection of values and opinions of entire schools and school districts.

The goal of this study was to examine the values that guide the related efforts of administrators as they relate to the utilization of SROs in the application of disciplinary procedures. Future studies should be expanded to compare values based on regional geographical locations throughout the United States, length of time in the profession, and/or background or past professions of the participants. Other demographic characteristics such as age, race, religion, and gender could also be compared through study expansion. While it has been determined that values are impactful in the work of educational administrators, a more detailed examination of which values and a comparison of those values could contribute to policy implications on the use of SROs in our schools across the United States.

Suggested Implications for Positive Social Change

Many social implications derived from this study, linking students, education, educational and criminal justice professions, society, and public policy. Several changes are suggested to ensure schools remain civic learning institutions. Based on the analysis of the roles and values of APs, my research suggests that school systems would be more in line with the polarities of democracy if schools did not use SROs. These armed local law enforcement officers are not school administrators. Their constant presence seemed

to have confused the role, with some APs identifying them as school administrators. School resource officers are not equipped to help a troubled child from misbehaving, and I do not believe we should pretend this is the role they play in our schools. Based on my findings, I suggest school districts might want to consider an alternative to using SROs.

For school districts continuing to utilize SROs, it is recommended that the development of a more comprehensive Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is needed. This document should clearly and concisely articulate all needed and desired support from the servicing law enforcement agency, spell out the hierarchy of power in decisions to refer juveniles to the justice system, and require a mandatory district or school supported training for officers serving the schools. Recommended trainings should cover youth development, specific populace demographics, administrative roles, mentoring, or any additional training that ensures the officer obtains a different perspective than a street officer and that supports the mission of the school.

This study also suggests positive social change regarding the impact of educational administrators' values and positive social change in the expansion of knowledge regarding the roles of APs in the daily implementation of the SRO program. Beyond this, the study also contributes to the advancement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. Related to my study are goals four and sixteen. Goal four deals with the assurance of inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of life-long learning opportunities for all, while the focus of goal sixteen is the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable

development; providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The implication for social change as it relates to this study and goal four of the UN's sustainable development begins with APs' awareness and identification of the values influencing their decisions to involve SROs in disciplinary procedures. This would enhance the services APs provide to students and increase APs' ability to more effectively perform their job in various facets. This would also impact the developed culture of policing students and reprioritize the culture of educating them.

Helping students reach their full academic and personal potential is the overall goal of most educational institutions. The UN shares in this goal, expressing the desire of obtaining a quality education is the foundation to creating sustainable development (United Nations, n.d.). Although academics are drastically important, quality education extends beyond the classroom. Many of the participants in this study spoke on how learning to make good decisions and learning from past mistakes are critical in the growth of young adults. Obtaining a quality education requires that students remain present and enrolled in school. By acknowledging the values suggested in this study, the contributions to the frequent, temporary, or permanent separation of students from school may produce reasons for other disciplinary alternatives or the need for other alternatives in providing the best possible outcomes for students overall. Instead of SROs, increased use of school counselors could serve as an alternative to help ensure students are in school and not missing valuable instructions needed in their future.

Social change should also address the need to strengthen education organizations as it relates to students and their overall success. This coincides with UN's goal sixteen for sustainable development. Schools are one of the most impactful institutions within our society and should consistently operate at its highest quality. It is imperative that these institutions do not contradict its missions by placing unnecessary harm on students, negatively affecting their futures. The study findings suggest being aware of the values influencing APs' decisions to involve SROs in the disciplinary procedures. As a result, APs are better positioned to ensure all efforts are exhausted in handling students justly and granting every disciplinary opportunity to succeed. As documented in previous studies, the presence of police within schools contributes to a much higher rate of juveniles being reported to the justice system, increased suspension and expulsion rates, and increased student misbehavior (Armour & Hammond, 2009). Contact with law enforcement within school settings are disproportionately higher for minority male students, especially the black and brown male students (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Noltemeyer and Mcloughlin, 2010; Theriot and Cuellar, 2016). This study revealed that the involvement of SROs in disciplinary procedures does not automatically result in a student being referred to the justice system. What it does suggest is these referrals are more likely to happen if the SRO is involved in the discipline, regardless of the severity of offense. The identification of values contributing to the increased use of SROs provides a new perspective towards more positive outcomes for students experiencing life-altering punishments issued by school administrators. This insight provides possible explanations and resolutions to high dropout rates, high expulsions and suspensions, and

weakened or broken bonds experienced by many students throughout their high school matriculation.

Conclusion

The suggested findings of this research increased current knowledge regarding the use of SROs in American schools, improved values awareness amongst education administrators, and provided a glimpse of the lived experiences of 11 APs in the southern region of the United States. Information was captured through face-to-face semistructured interviews. Past research studies have focused on various aspects of SROs, but few are from the perspectives of those solely responsible for the management of discipline within their institutions. The purpose of this study was to start a new conversation by filling a void in existing research and explore what values influence APs in their decision to utilize SROs in disciplinary procedures.

This study confirmed that values are beneficial for APs in carrying out their duties, and identifies ethical, organizational, and personal values as influencers in their decisions to use SROs in disciplinary practices. Of the three, ethical values are suggested as the most impactful. The way SROs are used varied, but most expressed an occasional use of SROs is necessary in managing discipline within their schools. Additional national and regional research relating to values of APs is required to capture a more comprehensive perspective of APs utilization of SROs. Having a full understanding of how SROs are used and what motivates that usage is believed essential in moving forward with the inclusion of law enforcement in school settings. Recommendations were made to assist APs and school and district leaders in areas of training needed to

improve communication, hierarchy conflicts, and organizational transparency. As the

administrators of the most impactful organizations in the country, it is essential that all

efforts are made to ensure students are positioned to reach their greatest potential. This is

achievable inside and outside classrooms with all working together to build healthy

relationships understanding the guiding forces behind all decisions. Most significantly,

my research suggests that the over dependence on SROs negatively impacts students

(particularly black and brown students) and increased use of professional school

counsellors could better meet the long-term needs of students. In a society where racism,

sexism, feminism (among other categories of injustices) are ever present, it is essential

that public schools, which are responsible for developing future minds, are positioned to

maximize the positive impact on students and minimize the negative impacts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Guide for Assistant Principals

1. What is the goal or goals of discipline within schools?

2. Please describe your role from your perspective, as it relates to student discipline within the school.

3. What types of disciplinary situations cause you to feel hesitant or conflicted in applying a law, rule, or school policy during your decision-making? [Probe for specific examples, rationales, and/or selective enforcement of laws or policies.)

4. What considerations or principles guide your decision making when disciplining a student? [Probe for gender rights, personal faith, and/or professional values.]

5. Under what circumstances is it necessary to involve the school resource officer in disciplinary procedures?

6. To what extent do you think student misbehavior creates a problem for you, as well as teachers, parents and other students? If so, how? Would you please give an example?

7. To what extent, if any, do you think that time for teaching curriculum is hindered because of discipline problems? How?

8. What are current discipline practices in your school?

9. What are the most effective discipline practices you have used in the past?

10. What are the least effective discipline practices you have used in the past?

11. To what extent do you, as an administrator, have a say in determining discipline practices?

12. What part do an involved community and parents play in school discipline practices?

13. To what extent, if any, do you think that students and parents need input in school discipline practices? If so, how should this be implemented?

14. What types of communication concerning rules and discipline practices do you think would be beneficial?

15. To what extent, if any, do you think that the climate of the school affects discipline practices? How?

16. How do you think inappropriate behaviors should be handled?

17. To what extent, if any, do you think that class size makes a difference concerning discipline practices? If so, how?

18. What do you believe about bullying in schools and the impact that it has on students?
    a. How can bullying be avoided?
    b. What can teachers, students, and parents do to change bullying behaviors?

19. What do you believe about zero tolerance policies and do you think these policies have reduced discipline problems?

20. How relevant is record-keeping (data support system) for managing discipline problems?

21. Do you feel that there are any additional barriers to effective discipline practices that we have not discussed yet? If so, what are they?

Appendix B: Participant Email Invitation

<div align="right">Date</div>

Name of Participant
Address

Dear [Name],

My name is Tracy Thompson and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting research toward my doctoral degree on the impact of values held by assistant principals regarding the utilization of school resource officers. A vast number of studies found both positive and negative effects of law enforcement within the school settings; however, minimal research attention has been devoted to the values that impact the decisions of assistant principals towards the use of such programs. Consequently, this qualitative study will explore the scope and impact of the values held by assistant principals from the perspective of a hierarchy of values theory. The intent is to enable education professionals, as yourself, to tell your stories based upon your lived experiences with school resource officers.

I realize your time is important to you and appreciate your consideration to participating in this study. To fully understand your experience, two separate contacts would be made with you. The first will be no more than a 15-minute phone conversation, followed up by email correspondence. The second contact will involve a semi structured interview to be held at a location of your choosing and will not exceed 1 hour. The goal of the interview is to obtain information pertaining to the factors that influence your decision toward the use of school resource officers in disciplinary procedures implement within your school. All information gathered will be held strictly confidential as to its source.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule a date and time that is comfortable for you to meet. My contact number is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact me via email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. I look forward to hearing from you and that you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Tracy Thompson
Doctoral Candidate
Walden University

Appendix C: Participant Follow-up email invitation

Dear (Name),

Recently, an email was forwarded to you requesting your participation in a research study entitled, "*The values influencing assistant principals' decision to utilization of school resource officers*" to be conducted by Tracy Thompson, doctoral candidate from Walden University. The goal of this study is to fully understand the experiences and values of assistant principals as it related to the involvement of school resource officers in disciplinary procedure, which has not been the focus studies of similar relations.

All information gathered will be held strictly confidential as to its source. Your participation will collectively require approximately 1½ hour over two (phone and face-to-face) encounters. The first contact will be within two days after receiving your consent to participate. The purpose is scheduling a convenient date and time for the interview. My contact number is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact me via email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Tracy Thompson
Doctoral Candidate
Walden University