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National Assessment of School Resource Officer Programs

Survey of Students in Three Large New SRO Programs

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Executive Summary

Relying on past research on SRO programs, there were several questions we sought to answer. These research questions can be broken down into two basic concerns:

1) what factors in an SRO program affect students' **comfort level** for reporting crimes and 2) what factors in an SRO program affect students' **perception of safety**.

In this report, we examine SRO programs in four schools districts. We were primarily concerned with what variables affect students' comfort level reporting crimes to the SRO and perceptions of safety. The analysis was driven by data obtained through surveys of 907 students. Using these data, we addressed seven research questions:

1. Does frequency of interactions between students and SROs affect students' perception of safety?
2. Do positive opinions of the SRO affect students' perception of safety?
3. Is there a relationship between environmental factors such as neighborhood crime or past victimization and students' perception of safety?
4. Does frequency of interactions between students and SRO increase their comfort to report crimes to the SRO?
5. Does having a positive opinion of the SRO increase students' comfort level reporting crimes?
6. Do environmental factors or other variables negate the effects of interactions, positive opinions, or comfort reporting?
7. Does being comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO affect students' perception of safety?

Through univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis we were able to conclude that several factors are associated with students' comfort reporting crimes to SROs and their perceptions of safety in schools. In the first section of the report concerning students' comfort level reporting crimes to the SRO, it was found that:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between the number of student and SRO conversations and comfort reporting crimes. However, further examination proved that having frequent conversations with the student may be less influential than initially thought. This may be due to SRO reputation affecting student comfort level; that is, students who have met with or spoken to the SRO may be "spreading the word" about whether other students should approach them.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between a positive opinion of the SRO and feeling comfortable reporting a crime. Students who hold a positive opinion about the SRO are more apt to feel comfortable

reporting crimes. This finding was supported through the use of a regression model, which showed that students' opinion of the SRO remains significant when holding other variables constant. It was found that, compared with other students, students who have a positive opinion of the SRO are more than 2-½ times more likely to feel comfortable reporting a crime to the SRO.

- Students' perception of safety also has a significant relationship with feeling comfortable reporting crimes. Students who reported that they felt safe at school were more than 2-½ times more likely than other students to feel comfortable reporting crime.

The second section of the report focuses on students' perception of safety. It was found that:

- A majority (92%) of students who have a positive opinion of the SRO also report feeling safe at school, compared with 76 percent of students who do not have a positive opinion of the SRO.
- Neighborhood crime and feeling safe at school have an inverse relationship; that is, the lower the level of perceived crime in one's neighborhood, the safer that student feels at school.
- Students who have experienced some type of victimization feel less safe than students who have not.
- Very importantly, even when victimization and environmental factors are factored into the regression model, having a positive opinion of the SRO and being comfortable reporting a crime remain statistically significant.

Overall, the study showed that perhaps the most important and easily modifiable variable in both models is creating a positive opinion of the SRO among the student body. These results suggest that it is important to determine the best method for SROs to create a positive image. Inasmuch as this issue is beyond the scope of this study, further research is needed to address this issue.

It is important for students to report crime occurring on campus. The study findings suggest that students are more likely to report crime if they respect and feel comfortable with the SRO.

Introduction

Throughout the early 1990s, juvenile crime rates and particularly the increased violence in schools became a prominent national concern. According to the *1999 National Report: Juvenile Offenders and Victims*, arrests of juveniles peaked in 1994 with over 500 arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10-17 (OJJDP 1999). This represents a dramatic increase in the number of juveniles engaged in violent crime. Between 1986 and 1995, juveniles arrested for violent offenses increased 67 percent (Kelley et al. 1997). During this same time period juvenile victimization rates were also high; in 1994 approximately 2.6 million juveniles fell victim to violent crimes (OJJDP 1999).

Perhaps more importantly, some of the increased violence was taking place in schools. The 1999 National Report, cited above, found that 57 percent of all violent crimes committed by juveniles take place on school days (OJJDP 1999). Thirty-seven percent of high school students have been in a physical fight on school grounds during the past year (OJJDP 1999). While only 18 percent of the high school students admitted to ever carrying a gun, half of those who have carried guns took them to school (OJJDP 1999).

Troubling statistics like the ones highlighted above, coupled with extensive media coverage on the most violent incidents of school violence (e.g., Littleton, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Pearl, Mississippi), caused many Americans to view school violence as a national epidemic. As a result, school violence was targeted as a priority for national policy makers and law enforcement (Astor et al. 1997). Administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and law enforcement agencies have pooled their resources to combat the problem of juvenile violence. This movement towards securing American schools has led to the implementation of many preventive strategies, such as installing surveillance cameras and metal detectors (Lambert and McGinty 2002), long-term prevention programs, such as mentoring programs and teaching conflict resolution skills (Lambert and McGinty 2002), and the use of law enforcement agencies (Kipper 1996; Jackson 2002; Johnson 1999).

The latter strategy, using law enforcement in schools, has been viewed nationwide as a reaction to school violence (COPS 2003). Law enforcement agencies have assigned officers to particular schools or districts as a part of School Resource Officer (SRO)

programs. The COPS Office has awarded almost 700 million dollars to more than 2,600 law enforcement agencies, funding nearly 6,150 SROs. The goal of the program is to ensure safety while enhancing the students' quality of life by integrating officers into the school community. As an officer, the SROs' mission is to keep order. However, the uniqueness of their job involves serving in many additional roles. Beyond being enforcers, SROs are expected to act as counselors as well as teach students within their school community in order to prevent crimes from occurring (COPS Office 2003).

This report examines the impact SRO programs have on students' perceptions of school safety. In this analysis students' perceptions were measured by looking at 1) comfort reporting crimes to the SRO and 2) perception of safety at school. Although much of the previous research suggests that a majority of American students feel safe at school (Johnson 1999; Jackson 2002), it is important to determine what officers can do to improve the school environment for students who do not feel safe and maintain the feeling of safety among those students who already feel safe at school.

Background Information on School Resource Officer Programs

School Resource Officer programs are partnerships between school officials and local law enforcement, reflecting the community-policing strategies that are widely accepted in today's law enforcement community (Skolnick and Bayley 1986; Bayley 1998; Maguire and Mastrofski 2000). Community-oriented policing focuses on the development of community partnerships through creating a constructive dialogue between the police and community representatives with a goal of sharing information (Skolnick and Bayley 1986). This model decentralizes the decision-making authority of the police (Bayley 1998) and makes the officers more accountable to community members (Maguire and Mastrofski 2000). As an extension of the community-policing model, SRO programs adhere to many of the same philosophies, such as lowering barriers between the individual officers and members of the community and allowing officer familiarity with a particular community by recurring assignments. Officers participating in the SRO programs enter schools as a way to proactively prevent crime and delinquency by partnering with administrators, teachers, and students to share

information about potential dangers and target criminal justice interventions (COPS Office 2003).

Over the past few years, SROs have been placed in schools across the country. The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) believes that law enforcement officers assigned to schools make a difference in students' level of fear (COPS 2003). Having the ability to influence students' perception of fear is very important when trying to decrease the level of violence. Many violent acts committed by juveniles are motivated by fear of their social environment (Sheley 1999). Therefore, promoting a safe environment may reduce the number of students who feel it is necessary to carry and use weapons at school for protection.

Past research on the effectiveness of "SRO-type" programs focuses on two topics: 1) whether programs decrease the frequency of crimes in schools and 2) if the program improves the perception of the police. The research suggests that the mere presence of a uniformed police officer deters acts of crime (Kipper 1996; Johnson 1999). As part of Johnson's (1999) evaluation of an SRO program, 46 students were informally interviewed; a majority stated that officers' presence gave them a sense of security. Kipper's research (1996) on "SRO-type" programs also indicates that law enforcement integration into schools increases the likelihood that crimes taking place on school grounds will be detected, reported, and recorded. Johnson (1999) found that SROs in a southern city were able to visibly provide enforcement strategies that were successful in reducing school violence, drug-related behavior, and gang activities. It was also discovered that uniformed police officers could be successful in reducing the number of assaults that occur on campus (Jackson, 2002). These findings suggest that SRO programs may be able to curtail some types of delinquency.

One study of student attitudes indicated that SRO programs did not necessarily affect students' perception of police officers (Jackson 2002). However, in a study on attitudes of delinquent boys towards police officers, Leiber, Nalia, and Farnworth (1998) found positive encounters increase positive attitudes towards officers. Therefore, the quality of interactions between SRO and students may affect whether students feel safe in school and comfortable reporting crime. Jackson (2002) suggests that, juveniles' images of the police can shape their expectations of officers in schools. These results suggest

that the quality of interaction may be more important than just merely placing a police officer in a school.

Research Questions

Based on previous research regarding the success of SRO programs, we sought to answer a number of questions. We examined whether students' attitudes toward the SRO affected students' willingness to report crime. It is hoped that students' level of comfort with a person of authority to whom they can report crimes and wrongdoings will promote a safe and secure school environment. Many delinquent acts committed within schools go unaddressed because the officer could not obtain information from either victims or bystanders. For this reason, this analysis explores what variables could improve the SROs' ability to collect crime-related information.

A person's past experiences with crime and the social environment from which he/she comes can affect perceptions of safety in other environments. To address this, variables concerning neighborhood crime and past victimization were included in the analysis. Leiber, Nalia, and Farnworth (1998) found that social background variables such as minority status and subculture norms can affect the juveniles' perception of the police. This suggests that a youth who has a negative perception of the police may feel less safe while at school.

It is important to investigate these issues because answers can improve the SRO's ability to meet safety goals and expectations. The goal of this analysis is to determine how several interrelated concepts influence both comfort reporting crimes and perception of safety. Based on prior research, the following questions were formulated:

- Does **frequency** of interactions between student and SRO increase a student's comfort **reporting crimes** to the SRO?
- Does having a **positive opinion** of the SRO increase students' comfort level reporting crimes?
- Does **the frequency** of interactions between the students and SROs affect students' **perception of safety**?
- Do **positive opinions** of the SRO affect students' perception of safety?
- Does being **comfortable** reporting crimes to the SRO affect students' perception of safety?
- Is there a relationship between environmental factors such as neighborhood crime or past victimization and students' perception of safety?

- Do environmental factors or other variables negate the effects of interactions, positive opinions or comfort reporting?

Methods and Sample

As part of a larger national evaluation of School Resource Officers,¹ a 38-item survey instrument was developed and implemented to collect information regarding student perceptions of the SRO program at three sites, each in a different state.² Within these three sites, 907 students in four separate school districts were surveyed. The survey was administered to 6th and 8th grade students and/or 10th and 12th grade students in schools at the different sites.³

To meet the requirements of the human subjects review board, we used an active consent method of recruiting student respondents. Since all of the potential respondents were minors, parental consent forms were sent home prior to the administration of the survey. While only students with parental permission were allowed to participate in the survey, students with this consent still retained the right to decline to participate. This method of recruitment can bias the sample. Potential problems associated with the sample are explained in a later section of this report.

The process of administering the survey varied slightly in each location. The survey was distributed by a member of the research team either during English class or a study period, depending on the preference of school administration and teachers. At the start of each survey session, a brief synopsis of the purpose of the project and instructions on how to properly complete the survey were provided to the students. Detailed instructions were also printed on the first page of the survey. As part of the instructions, students were informed that their participation was voluntary and their answers would be kept confidential. Students were also instructed to place the completed survey in the envelope provided to them with the survey and to pass it in to the proctor or a member of the research team.

¹ This survey was conducted as part of Abt Associates' National Assessment of SRO programs.

² All names of the site locations, districts, and schools have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

³ Eighty percent of the students surveyed in Large New Site 3 were 6th or 8th graders and 20 percent of the students were 10th or 12th graders. One hundred percent of the students in Large New Site 4 were either 10th or 12th grade students. Fifty eight percent of the students from Large New Site 1 were 6th or 8th grade students and 42 percent were either in the 10th or 12th grade.

This survey was designed to measure the perceptions and attitudes of students regarding their particular SRO (see the appendix). The first section of the survey focused on demographics. The next section contained questions pertaining to how the students felt about the SRO program in their schools. Among the questions included were how often the student sees and interacts with the SRO, the student's opinion of the SRO, and in what activities the student sees the SRO participate. The survey's third and final section focused on issues of safety and comfort at school.⁴ The questions in the final section addressed where students feel safe and where they feel unsafe. It also asked about whether students were victimized at school within the last six months and inquired into the characteristics of the students' neighborhood.

Sample Selection

Three different site locations with four school districts were chosen to receive the survey.⁵ These sites were chosen by Northeastern University per specifications of Abt Associates to assess newly implemented SRO programs in schools with large student bodies.⁶

Table 1 shows the characteristics of each school district.⁷ The first site location included two separate school districts from a county in a Midwestern state. Large New Site 1 district #1 consists of neighborhoods experiencing high levels of crime and economical strain. As shown in table 1, the U.S. Census reported that approximately 12.4 percent of the families in district #1 subsist below the poverty line, which is significantly higher than that of the other sites. For example, in the first site location the student body population is much more diverse than the overall city population.

⁴ The administrators also worked with the research team to decide what parts of the survey they would allow their students to answer. Administrators from one location (N = 255) opted to exclude the last section (section c) of the survey. This section includes questions regarding safety issues, fairness within the school, crime, and victimization. Since 255 students did not answer the survey in its entirety, the N within the analysis will fluctuate greatly between variables.

⁵ All names of the site locations, districts, and schools have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

⁶ Since the site names are confidential, the source information is held by NU.

⁷ The NU researchers were unable to obtain demographic information for the Large New Site 1 school system. Since Large New Site 1 district #1 and Plain represent two different school districts, we obtained the demographic information from the respective school departments. For this reason, the NU research team has decided to include the information from the four districts in table 1 to give an illustration of the communities the schools reside in.

The Large New Site 1 district #2 greatly contrasts its counterpart. The area that surrounds the Large New Site 1 district #2 is very rural—the district encompasses a 72-square-mile radius with just 23 students per square mile (State Department of Education 2003). The community that encompasses Large New Site 1 district #2 also differs demographically; the school and town are composed primarily of white families and students. In addition, table 1 shows that only 4.4 percent of the families are living below the poverty line.

The second site, Large New Site 3, is a relatively prosperous town in a northeast state. However, it serves as a transition point between the county's lower to middle class urban communities and its middle to upper class suburban neighborhoods. As shown in table 1, a relatively low percent of families live below the poverty line. The population of this community is less diverse than that of other sites, with the majority being white. According the Department of Education in Large New Site 3, its schools are much more diverse than the overall population; in the 2001–2002 school year,⁸ there was a higher representation of minorities in the student body as shown in table 1.

The third and final site for the student surveys was in a Southwestern city. Large New Site 4 is the most urban site measuring 184.3 square miles. Large New Site 4 is unique because of its high representation (40 percent) of Hispanics as shown in table 1. In addition, 23 percent of the families in Large New Site 4 speak Spanish in their households (U.S. Census 2000). The school population is also largely comprised of the Hispanic students. According to the U.S. Census, approximately 10 percent of families in Large New Site 4 subsist below the poverty line.

⁸ Percentage based on district enrollment in grades 6–12.

TABLE 1: Characteristics of the School Districts

	Large New Site 1 District 1		Large New Site 1 District 2		Large New Site 3		Large New Site 4	
	Community	School	Community	School	Community	School	Community	School
Race								
White	69%	29%	86%	85%	62%	38%	50%	39%
Black	14%	25%	4%	3%	19%	36%	4%	4%
Hispanic	8%	26%	3%	3%	10%	16%	39%	50%
Asian	4%	0%	4%	0%	9%	9%	4%	2%
Native American	3%	16%	2%	7%	0.5%	0%	2%	5%
SES								
Median Family Income	42,689	-	65,230	-	69,254	-	38,272	-
% Below Poverty Line	12.4%	-	4.4%	-	4.6%	-	10%	-
# of Schools in District	4	-	4	-	10	-	126	-

Community data were retrieved from the US Census (2000)
 School statistics were obtained from each state's Department of Education

In this study, student demographics vary from that of the community. This can occur for several reasons. One reason for the drop in percentage of white students in the schools might be the decision to attend private rather than public schools. In addition, the Census shows that minority groups have a larger percent of their population in the younger age groups when being compared to the white population (U.S. Census, 2000). This could explain why there are more students who are of minority status than there are in the community as a whole.

Sample Demographics

The survey sample consisted of 907 respondents. As illustrated in table 2, 28 percent of the respondents were obtained from Large New Site 3 locations, 25 percent from Large New Site 1 and 47 percent from Large New Site 4. The high percentage from the Large New Site 4 locations may skew the analysis of the students' comfort reporting crimes to the SRO and their perception of safety because the research team was able to administer these surveys only to high school students. Furthermore, the data from Large New Site 4 may affect the results because a disproportionate number (47 percent) of the sample was from this site. This is evident when looking at the representation by grade level. Only 38 percent of the sample were middle school students, while 62 percent were in high school.

	N	%		N	%
Location			Race		
Large New Site 1	227	25%	African American	76	9%
Large New Site 3	255	28%	American Indian	29	3%
Large New Site 4	425	47%	Asian	37	4%
			Caucasian	334	39%
			Haitian	11	1%
Gender			Hispanic/Latino	301	35%
Male	393	44%	Middle Eastern	8	1%
Female	501	56%	Multi-racial	49	6%
			Other	18	2%
			Grade Level		
			Middle School	337	38%
			High School	570	62%

The analysis could be affected because it makes it difficult to interpret whether the differences across grade level are actually caused by the Large New Site 4 school environment and its SRO program or by age and grade differences. We were able to control for this by holding grade level and location constant in our analysis.

	Large New Site 1 District 1	Large New Site 1 District 2	Large New Site 3	Large New Site 4
N	50	174	255	425
Gender				
Male	28%	44%	41%	48%
Female	72%	56%	59%	52%
Race				
African American	29%	5%	15%	5%
American Indian	8%	3%	1%	5%
Asian	0%	3%	8%	3%
Caucasian	33%	81%	49%	15%
Haitian	0%	0%	5%	0%
Hispanic/Latino	14%	2%	9%	66%
Multi-racial	16%	3%	10%	3%
Other	0%	3%	3%	3%
Grade				
Middle School	58%	58%	80%	0%
High School	42%	42%	20%	100%

Comparing the demographic information obtained from each education department showed sites differed greatly in the racial/ethnic composition of respective school districts. Table 3 illustrates the sample demographics of the four school districts. It is evident that most of the racial/ethnic composition of the sample is comparable to the statistics from the state's Department of Education (shown in table 1). However, according to the State Education Department, Large New Site 1 district #1's student population is much more diverse than what the sample from the Large New Site 1 portrays. This is most likely due to the low response rate received in this school district. The diversity of its student body may have been masked by the students from Large New Site 1 district #2, which has a much more homogenous student body. There were only 50 students who participated from Large New Site 1 district #1 as compared with 177 students from the Large New Site 1 district #2.

Data Analysis

We took several steps to answer the research questions outlined above. First, we looked at three factors: 1) interactions with the SROs (includes three different questions from the survey, which asked whether the student knows the SRO's name, has had a conversation with the SRO, and how often the student sees the SRO), 2) students' opinion of SRO, and 3) comfort level reporting crimes. The first section of the analysis describes these factors. Initially, we explored the relationship between the first two factors and comfort reporting crime.

To explore the students' perception of safety, we first looked at the descriptive analysis of three factors: 1) feeling safe at school, 2) past victimization, and 3) neighborhood crime. We then looked at the bivariate relationship between students' perception of safety and these three factors, as well as the students' comfort reporting crime to the SRO. Finally, to answers these research questions more fully we developed a logistic regression model for both comfort reporting crime and perception of safety.

Experiences with the SRO

A. Interactions with SRO. For this analysis three measures of interaction between the student and SRO were chosen for analysis. The first variable (Students who know the

SRO's Name) asked the students whether they knew their SRO's name. The students were also asked to write the name on the survey for verification. The second variable (Times students have had conversations with SRO) is concerned with the frequency that the student and the SRO have conversed. The last variable (Average contacts per week), concerns the visibility of the SRO within the school, and asks how often the students see the SRO in any given week.

Table 4 illustrates that, overall, SROs are visible and known to most students, but questions remain about the extent of relationships that have developed between the SRO and students. When looking at the full sample, it is evident that half the students seem to have regular contact with the SRO and a slightly higher number know the SRO's name. Although 62 percent of the overall sample knows their SRO's name, 55 percent have never had a conversation with the officer.

	Total	All Middle	LNS 3	LNS 3	LNS 1	LNS 1	All High	LNS 3	LNS 4	LNS 4	LNS 4	LNS 1	LNS 1
	Students	Schools	MS #1	MS#2	District 1	District 2	Schools	HS	HS #1	HS #10	HS #5	District 1	District 2
N	907	337	131	74	29	103	570	50	185	30	210	21	74
Students who Know SRO's Name													
Yes	62%	80%	59%	99%	89%	94%	51%	83%	36%	24%	54%	33%	74%
No	38%	20%	41%	1%	11%	6%	49%	17%	64%	76%	46%	67%	26%
Times Students Have Had Conversations with SRO													
Never	55%	46%	55%	38%	36%	43%	61%	52%	57%	67%	65%	53%	63%
Once	18%	20%	21%	10%	18%	28%	16%	14%	12%	20%	20%	33%	11%
Several times	27%	34%	24%	52%	46%	29%	23%	34%	31%	13%	15%	14%	26%
Average Contacts Per Week													
Rarely/Never	49%	49%	50%	51%	45%	48%	49%	60%	49%	63%	52%	48%	43%
Frequently/Daily	51%	51%	50%	49%	55%	52%	51%	40%	51%	37%	48%	52%	57%

When looking at grade levels it was found that middle school students are slightly more likely to have regular contact with the SRO. In addition, students in middle school have more interactions with the SRO than do high school students. Initially, it was a concern that the overrepresentation of high school students in Large New Site 4 would

skew the data. To alleviate this concern, we compared schools across locations. Table 4 illustrates that, when grade levels are compared within location, middle school students do have better quality interactions at least as measured by frequency of conversations.

When looking at individual schools, table 4 illustrates that the only SRO program that truly deviates from the overall trend is Large New Site 3 middle school #2. In Large New Site 3 middle school #2, 99 percent of the students who participated in the survey knew their SRO's name, and 52 percent reported having several conversations with their SRO. These data also suggest that fewer students in Large New Site 4 have relationships or interactions with their SROs. Only 36 percent of students in high school #1 and 24 percent of students in high school #10 knew the name of their SRO. Sixty-seven percent of students in high school #10 and 65 percent of students in high school #5 never had a conversation with their SRO. Overall, high school #10 has the most negative responses across all three indicators. This may reflect the individual practices of the SROs in these jurisdictions.

B. Positive Opinion of SRO. Seventy-four percent of students across sites have a positive opinion⁹ of their SRO (see table 5). This is important because it shows that, in general, students like, respect, and look up to their SRO.

There seems to be a difference in how grade levels perceive SROs (see table 5). The high school percentages may also be affected because the respondents (N= 425) from Large New Site 4 were all high school students. However, regardless of this overrepresentation of Large New Site 4's high school students, it seems a higher percentage of middle school students hold a positive regard for the SRO. This is evident when comparing the middle schools in the other two locations to their high school counterparts. In the Large New Site 1 district #1, 93 percent of the middle school students reportedly have a positive perception of the SRO, while only 71 percent of the high school students within the district have a positive opinion; 90 percent of the middle

⁹ A factor analysis reveals that six factors are identified as positive based on the accepted component analysis coefficient of .60. Positive opinions were established if the student described the SRO as thoughtful (.772), fair (.660), smart (.798), a problem solver (.708), a good role model (.731), or caring (.736).

school students compared to 86 percent of the high school students described the SRO positively. The middle schools in Large New Site 3 follow a similar trend: 99 percent of the students in Large New Site 3 middle school #2 and 86 percent of students in the Large New Site 3 middle school #1, compared with 84 percent of the students at the Large New Site 3 high school, have a positive opinion of the SRO. This suggests that the middle school students in the sample, regardless of location, hold positive perceptions of SROs.

When looking at individual schools from Large New Site 4, they seem to have a low percentage of students who have a positive opinion of the SRO. Only 43 percent of Large New Site 4 high school #5 respondents and 50 percent of Large New Site 4 high school #10 respondents hold a positive opinion of their SROs in the program.

Table 5: Students' Attitudes towards SRO by Grade Level and Location

	Total Students	All Middle Schools	LNS 3 MS #1	LNS 3 MS#2	LNS 1 District 1	LNS 1 District 2	All High Schools	LNS 3 HS	LNS 4 HS #1	LNS 4 HS #10	LNS 4 HS #5	LNS 1 District 1	LNS 1 District 2
N	907	337	131	74	29	103	570	50	185	30	210	21	74
Opinions of SRO													
Positive	74%	90%	86%	99%	93%	90%	64%	84%	73%	50%	43%	71%	86%

C. Comfort Level with SRO. Sixty-four percent of the overall sample felt comfortable reporting a crime to the SRO. This percentage was relatively stable across all sites and grades. The large percent of students reporting they are comfortable reporting crimes is surprising based on the historic lack of reporting by students for all problems.

TABLE 6: Student Comfort Level with SRO by Locations and Schools

	Total Students	All Middle Schools	LNS 3 MS #1	LNS 3 MS#2	LNS 1 District 1	LNS 1 District 2	All High Schools	LNS 3 HS	LNS 4 HS #1	LNS 4 HS #10	LNS 4 HS #5	LNS 1 District 1	LNS 1 District 2
N	907	337	131	74	29	103	570	50	185	30	210	21	74
Feelings towards Reporting a Crime to the SRO													
Comfortable	64%	68%	64%	71%	55%	76%	62%	72%	68%	67%	46%	76%	77%
Uncomfortable	36%	32%	36%	29%	45%	24%	38%	28%	32%	33%	54%	24%	23%
Feelings towards Approaching SRO w/ a Problem													
Comfortable	50%	53%	41%	60%	50%	63%	49%	49%	50%	37%	42%	71%	57%
Uncomfortable	50%	47%	59%	40%	50%	37%	51%	51%	50%	63%	58%	29%	43%

Table 6 illustrates that high school 5 in Large New Site 4 had the lowest percentage of students who are comfortable reporting crime. This result could be related to the previous measures. The students in high school 5 also had the lowest percent of individuals holding a positive opinion of the SRO. However, 93 percent of the respondents of Large New Site 1 district #1 middle school held a positive opinion but only 55 percent of the students' felt comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO, suggesting that perhaps having a positive opinion does not always impact students' comfort level. These contradictory results indicate that more in-depth analysis is needed. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis was conducted.

Indicators of Students' Comfort Level Reporting Crimes to SROs

One of the major concepts and focal points of this report is what type of factors affects students' comfort level in reporting crimes to the SROs.¹⁰ For the SROs to ensure safety, they must be aware of problems. Therefore, the ability to obtain this information from students is extremely important.

A bivariate analysis of comfort reporting crime to the SRO by demographics indicates that gender and grade level do not significantly affect students' comfort level. There is, however, a significant relationship between the race of the respondent and the comfort level with reporting a crime to the SRO. White students are more comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO than non-white students. This may be related to the well-documented gap between whites' and non-whites' perception of the police in this country.

Three variables (seeing the SRO at school, knowing the SRO's name, and having a conversation with the SRO) were analyzed to address the first research question, which concerns whether or not interactions affect the students' comfort level with reporting crimes to the SROs. Table 7 shows that there is not a statistically significant relationship between SRO visibility and comfort reporting a crime to the officer. However, a

¹⁰ A similar analysis was conducted for the students' comfort level with reporting problems to the SRO. The results showed a similar trend as comfort level reporting crimes. However, the Ns were smaller. Furthermore, it was difficult to define problems (i.e., some students could define it as homework problems, while others consider this problems at home). Because of the wide spectrum of what constitutes a problem and the small Ns, we decided to not report this variable.

significant relationship exists between knowing the SRO's name and feeling comfortable enough to report a crime. Sixty-eight percent of students who knew the name of their SRO felt comfortable reporting crimes to him/her. However, 43 percent of students who did not know the name of their SRO reportedly felt uncomfortable. This suggests that merely seeing or passing the SRO in the hall is not a strong enough form of interaction to create a feeling of comfort with the students. However, making one's name known may assist SROs in obtaining the comfort level needed for students to feel comfortable enough to report crimes.

There is also a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of conversations and comfort. Table 7 shows that, as the frequency of conversation increases, so does the percentage of students who feel comfortable reporting crime. Sixty percent of students who never have had a conversation with the SRO reported that they felt comfortable reporting a crime. This percentage rises to 62 percent when the individual has had one conversation, and increases to 75 percent when the individual has had several conversations with the SRO. These results suggest SROs who frequently approach students to have conversations with them may be more able to generate the comfort level necessary for the students to feel comfortable going to the officer to report wrongdoing. Thus, more frequent and substantive interactions can produce more comfort reporting crime to the SRO.

Next, to analyze the relationship between holding a positive opinion and feeling comfortable reporting a crime, a cross tabulation was conducted. The results displayed in table 7 show a statistically significant relationship between having a positive opinion of the SRO and feeling comfortable. Students who hold a positive opinion are more apt to feel comfortable. Seventy-one percent of the students who reported having a positive opinion of the SRO also feel comfortable reporting a crime, while 46 percent of students who did not have a positive opinion felt comfortable enough to report crime. Moreover, only 29 percent of those who do have an opinion feel uncomfortable. Thus, it is very important for the SRO to be known and thought of in a positive manner to obtain the necessary information to keep the schools safe.

TABLE 7: Students' Comfort Level Reporting a Crime to SRO by Independent Variables

	% (n)			% (n)	
	<u>Comfortable</u>	<u>Uncomfortable</u>		<u>Comfortable</u>	<u>Uncomfortable</u>
Sex			Seeing SRO		
Male	64% (245)	36% (139)	Rarely/Never	66% (281)	34% (146)
Female	66% (325)	34% (171)	Frequently/Daily	63% (277)	37% (162)
Race¹			Conservations³		
White	71% (232)	30% (97)	Never	60% (290)	40% (193)
Non-white	62% (309)	38% (193)	Once	62% (97)	39% (59)
			Several Times	75% (180)	25% (61)
Grade Level			Positive Opinion⁴		
Middle School	68% (227)	32% (106)	Yes	71% (459)	29% (187)
High School	62% (342)	38% (210)	No	46% (107)	54% (125)
Knowing SRO's Name²					
Yes	68% (369)	32% (171)			
No	57% (187)	43% (138)			

Note: 1 = $\chi^2 = 7.028$, $p < .01$

2 = $\chi^2 = 10.297$, $p < .01$

3 = $\chi^2 = 15.471$, $p < .001$

4 = $\chi^2 = 46.319$, $p < .001$

A three-way cross-tabulation examined the relationship between having a positive opinion, frequency of conversations, and comfort level reporting crimes to further investigate how these variables affect the students' level of comfort reporting crimes to the SRO. It was found that having conversations with the SRO may be less influential than originally expected. Seventy-four percent of the students who reported being comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO and had a positive opinion of the SRO also reported never having a conversation with the SRO. This percentage does increase by approximately 10 percent each time the frequency of conversation increases, which suggests that having conversations with the SRO does have an effect on students' comfort level. However, the fact that such a large percentage feels comfortable and has a positive opinion of the SRO even when never having a conversation suggests that having conversations with the SRO may not have great influence. Perhaps this discrepancy could be explained by the SRO's reputation. Students who have met with or spoken to the SRO may be "spreading the word" about what type of person the SRO is. If this is

the case, it would be important for the SROs to reach out to the student leaders or other influential students in order to “get the word out” to the student body as a whole.

Students’ opinions are the most influential factor in their comfort level reporting crimes to the SRO. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this project it is impossible to conclude whether their perceptions directly affect the comfort level reporting crimes. However, it is important for SROs to continue to interact with students because they significantly affect the students’ comfort level. Furthermore, it still remains to be seen what affects the students’ opinion of the SRO. Interaction variables may affect the students’ opinion. Thus, these results do not suggest that SROs should decrease their level of interactions with individual students.

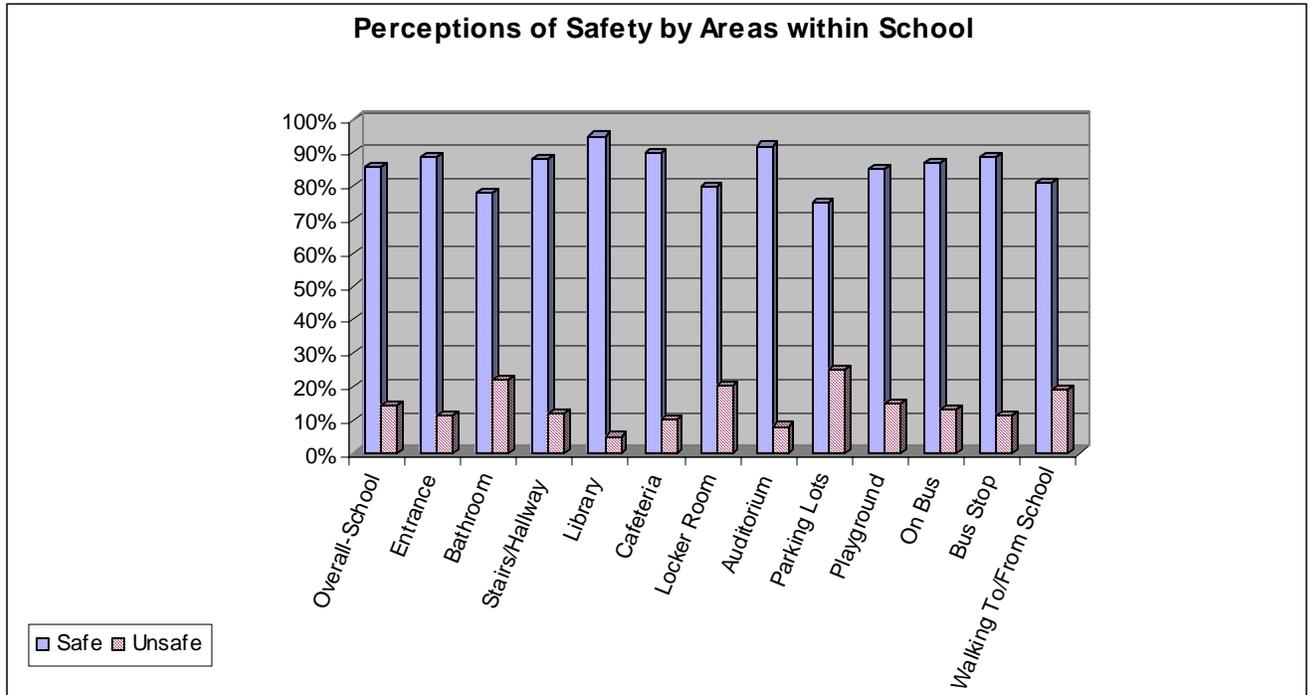
Descriptive Analysis of Students’ Perceptions of Safety

A. *Safety.*¹¹ The second major concept and focal point of this report is what variables affect the students’ perceptions of safety. As a society, we believe that schools should be safe havens for our country’s children. It is hoped that SROs would preserve this safe environment for our students. Thus, it is important to determine what types of variables have significant relationships with students’ perceptions of safety.

An overwhelming majority (87 percent) of the respondents¹² feel safe at school. While students feel safe overall there are some places where they feel more or less safe. The survey results, as shown in the figure, suggest that students feel the safest in the library and the auditorium, and feel the least safe in school parking lots, bathrooms, locker rooms, and in their travel to and from school.

¹¹ All the safety data, analysis and figures were based on schools with SROs. We were unable to compare these data with schools without SROs.

¹² Only 652 students answered the questions regarding safety. The surveys administered in Large New Site 3 excluded the questions pertaining to safety.



In addition to difference in places where the students feel safe, it was found that perception of safety varies by location¹³ (see table 8). At first look it may seem that middle school students feel more safe than high school students. However, when table 8 is examined more closely it seems that school safety might not be a product of age; in fact, it may be driven by the characteristics of the location. Students in Large New Site 4, especially at high school #5, feel the least safe, have avoided school more often, and have experienced more victimization than their counterparts. These findings are consistent with findings for high school #5, Large New Site 4.

When comparing the students from Large New Site 1 (Large New Site 1 district #1 and Large New Site 1 district #2), we found that perhaps it is not only location that influences students’ perception of safety but also the school itself may influence this. It is evident that within the Large New Site 1 there are differences within school districts; students in Large New Site 1 district #1’s middle school feel much less safe than their

¹³ The students’ level of fear and perception of safety may be affected by the infiltration of gangs at school in Large New Site 1 district #1 and high school #10. Although the survey data did not point to this, qualitative research suggests this as a factor in these communities.

counterparts at Large New Site 1 district #2. However, this discrepancy disappears when comparing the county’s high schools; it is clear that the high school students of Large New Site 1 district #1 feel safer, avoid school less, and experience less victimization than the high school students in Large New Site 1 district #2. This is particularly interesting because it suggests that the schools’ climate can affect the students’ perception of safety. Although the Large New Site 1 district #1 location is experiencing high crime rates and economical strain, 100 percent of the students feel safe at school.¹⁴

B. Neighborhood Crime. Students’ individual experiences are associated with whether they felt safe at school (Leiber, Nalia, and Farnworth, 1998; Jackson, 2002). To address this assumption in the sample, we examined the environmental factor of the perceived level of neighborhood crime.¹⁵

Table 8: Students’ Perception of Safety by Grade and Schools

	All	All Middle	LNS 1	LNS 1	All High	LNS 4	LNS 4	LNS 4	LNS 1	LNS 1
	Students	Schools*	District 1	District 2	Schools*	HS #1	HS #10	HS #5	District 1	District 2
N	652	132	29	103	210	185	30	210	21	74
Overall Perception of Safety at School										
Feel Safe	87%	92%	79%	96%	85%	88%	93%	75%	100%	97%
Feel Unsafe	13%	8%	21%	4%	15%	12%	7%	25%	0%	3%
Avoided School Because Afraid of Harm										
Never	88%	90%	79%	93%	88%	89%	97%	82%	100%	92%
Once	6%	7%	17%	4%	5%	3%	0%	9%	0%	5%
Several times	6%	3%	4%	2%	7%	8%	3%	9%	0%	3%

* Woodland Oaks is not included because the students did not answer the section of the survey pertaining to safety.

Approximately half of the students perceived their neighborhoods to have little to no crime. However, table 9 illustrates that not all of the students felt that they resided in crime-free environments. Thirty-five percent of the students from Large New Site 1 district #1 reported that there is a lot of crime in their neighborhoods and another 35 percent reported that they perceive that their neighborhood has some crime. Thirty-five

¹⁴ Please see case study for more information regarding this site.

¹⁵ Students from Large New Site 3 (N= 255) did not respond to the section pertaining to experiences and environment.

percent of high school #1 students and 38 percent of the students in high school #10 reported that there is some crime within their neighborhoods.

TABLE 9: Environmental Factors By Grade Level and Schools

	Total Respondents	All Middle Schools	LNS 1 District 1	LNS 1 District 2	All High Schools	LNS 4 HS #1	LNS 4 HS #10	LNS 4 HS #5	LNS 1 District 1	LNS 1 District 2
N	631	132	29	103	210	185	30	210	21	74
Perception of Neighborhood Crime										
A lot of crime	12%	10%	43%	0%	12%	12%	4%	15%	29%	4%
Some crime	24%	13%	36%	7%	27%	35%	38%	26%	33%	2%
Almost no crime	34%	24%	18%	26%	37%	42%	48%	35%	24%	30%
No crime at all	31%	53%	3%	67%	24%	11%	10%	24%	19%	64%

C. Past Victimization. To further explore how the respondents’ experiences affect perception of safety we looked at victimization¹⁶ variables. Initially there were nine items on the survey pertaining to the respondents’ experiences with victimization. The items ranged from relatively minor incidents of victimization such as someone “stealing from you” or “making fun of you” to more serious victimization such as “being hit” or “someone threatening” or “using physical force and/or weapon against you.” There was also one item concerned with sexual harassment or sexual assault.

For the preliminary analysis, the nine items¹⁷ concerned with victimization were combined into one variable, which measured whether the respondents had experienced any victimization within the last six months. As a combined variable, 57 percent of the sample had experienced some type of victimization (see table 10). Of this combined variable the most common type of victimization reported was harassment (34 percent); this was followed by being pushed, shoved, or grabbed (25 percent).

Slightly higher percentages of students in both high school #1 (61 percent) and high school #10 (63 percent) experienced some type of victimization. There also was an interesting contrast between the students in Large New Site 1 district #1’s middle school

¹⁶ Respondents from Large New Site 3 did not answer questions pertaining to their environment or personal experiences. As a result, the 255 respondents from Large New Site 3 were not included in this analysis.

¹⁷ The nine victimization items are: someone stole from you; intentionally damage property; someone harasses you; verbally threatened you; hit/kick you; push/shove/grab you; threatened to use physical force or weapon; used weapon against you; sexually threatened or assaulted you.

and high school; the students in the Large New Site 1 district #1 middle school had the highest percentage (86 percent) of students reporting that they experienced some type of victimization. This percentage is a much higher than that of the other middle schools. Surprisingly, their high school counterparts had the lowest percent (14 percent) of students reporting victimization. This is surprising because it was assumed that high victimization rates would continue or even grow as the students become older. These results could be affected by the small number of cases obtained in this district. Due to limitations in our data, we were unable to compare more schools across grades to see if this pattern occurred in other school districts.

Table 10: Students' Past Victimization by Grade Level and School

	All	All Middle	LNS 1	LNS 1	All High	LNS 4	LNS 4	LNS 4	LNS 1	LNS 1
	Respondents	Schools	District 1	District 2	Schools	HS #1	HS #10	HS #5	District 1	District 2
N	652	132	29	103	210	185	30	210	21	74
Experienced Some										
Type of Victimization										
Yes	57%	54%	86%	45%	58%	61%	50%	63%	14%	51%
No	43%	46%	14%	55%	42%	39%	50%	37%	86%	49%

Bivariate Analysis for Perception of Safety

An association exists between gender and safety with 91 percent of females reporting feeling safe compared to 81 percent of males. There also is a relationship between grade level and perception of safety. Overall, middle school students feel safer than their high school counterparts.

To explore whether interactions with the SRO affect the students' perception of safety, we conducted an analysis of three variables (seeing the SRO, knowing the SRO's name, and having conversations with SRO). When the interaction variables are analyzed individually, there is no statistically significant relationship between feeling safe and knowing the SRO's name or seeing the SRO frequently. However, having conversations with the SRO does have a statistically significant relationship with feeling safe. Table 11 indicates that the majority of students feel safe even when they have never had a conversation with the SRO; perhaps more importantly, a larger percent of students reported feeling safe when they have had several conversations with the SRO. The

interaction between SRO and students seems to play a smaller role in affecting perceptions of safety than some may have hoped.

In addressing how positive opinions of the officer affect students' perception of safety, there is a statistically significant relationship. As table 11 illustrates, a larger percentage, 92 percent, of students who have a positive opinion/perception of the SRO (compared with 76 percent of those who did not) also reported that they feel safe at school. Again, this result suggests that being seen in a positive light is very important for the SRO to maintain order and enhance a feeling of safety at schools. Because of the nature of the data collected, it is difficult to make assumptions about whether the SRO creates a feeling of safety. It is possible that feeling safe could affect the students' opinion of the SRO or there could be a relationship or interaction with unknown factors.

The relationship between being comfortable reporting crimes to SROs and perception of safety is presented in table 11. Ninety-four percent of students who felt comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO also said that they felt safe at school. Only 75 percent of students who were uncomfortable reporting crimes reported that they feel safe. Of more concern, only 6 percent of the students who felt comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO feel unsafe at school. These results suggest that feeling comfortable enough to report crimes to the SRO influences whether or not students feel safe at school. It appears that SROs who work in schools with a greater sense of safety receive more reports. This finding should be researched further in order to define the parameters of this relationship. However, these data indicate that when students perceive their schools as safe it can increase the level of reporting.

TABLE 11: Students' Perception of Safety by Independent Variables

	% (n)			% (n)	
	Feel Safe	Feel Unsafe		Feel Safe	Feel Unsafe
Sex¹			Positive Opinion⁴		
Male	81% (228)	17% (52)	Yes	92% (386)	8% (35)
Female	91% (315)	9% (32)	No	76% (153)	24% (48)
Race			Comfort Reporting Crime to SRO⁵		
White	90% (194)	10% (22)	Yes	94% (372)	6% (26)
Non-white	85% (332)	15% (60)	No	75% (171)	25% (58)
Grade Level²			Neighborhood Crime⁶		
Middle School	92% (121)	8% (10)	A Lot of Crime	73% (51)	27% (19)
High School	85% (424)	15% (76)	Some Crime	83% (122)	17% (25)
Knowing SRO's Name			Almost No Crime	89% (190)	11% (23)
Yes	89% (315)	11% (40)	No Crime	92% (173)	8% (15)
No	84% (219)	16% (43)	Major Victimization⁷		
Seeing SRO			Yes	63% (50)	37% (29)
Rarely/Never	11% (33)	89% (260)	No	90% (490)	10% (52)
Frequently/Daily	15% (49)	85% (276)	Sexual Threats/Assault⁸		
Conversations³			Yes	67% (38)	33% (19)
Never	84% (304)	16% (58)	No	89% (502)	11% (61)
Once	87% (97)	13% (15)			
Several Times	92% (142)	8% (12)			

Note:

1 = $\chi^2 = 11.675$, $p < .01$

2 = $\chi^2 = 5.048$, $p < .05$

3 = $\chi^2 = 6.255$, $p < .05$

4 = $\chi^2 = 28.511$, $p < .001$

5 = $\chi^2 = 44.257$, $p < .001$

6 = $\chi^2 = 19.195$, $p < .001$

7 = $\chi^2 = 44.694$, $p < .001$

8 = $\chi^2 = 23.313$, $p < .001$

In determining whether environmental or past experiences could affect perceptions of safety, we analyzed levels of crime in the neighborhoods the students live in as well as past victimization. Perceived level of crime within their neighborhood does have a significant relationship with feeling safe. Neighborhood crime and feeling safe have an inverse relationship; that is, the lower the level of perceived crime in one's neighborhood, the safer that individual feels at school. Ninety-two percent of the students who reported that there is no crime within their neighborhoods felt safe. However, 73 percent of the students who reported that there is a lot of crime in their

neighborhood felt safe at school. This is a significant drop in percentage, which implies that perceived neighborhood crime does affect whether the student feels safe, even while at school. Unfortunately, we are unable to explore the differences in perceptions of students who go to a school that does not have an SRO program so that we could distinguish whether having an officer in school affects the way students who reside in a high crime area feel while they are at school.

It has been documented previously that past victimization may affect students' perception of safety. For a better understanding, we collapsed crime incidents into three categories: minor victimization,¹⁸ major (or serious) victimization,¹⁹ and sexual harassment/assault. Analysis shows that students who have experienced any of the three types of victimization tend to feel less safe than those who have not (see table 11). This is most evident when looking at serious and sexual victimization. Eighty-nine percent of students who have not experienced a serious victimization feel safe compared with 67 percent of the students who have experienced this type of victimization. Similarly, 89 percent of the students who have not experienced sexual threats or assault feel safe at school compared with 67 percent of those who have experienced sexual threats or assault.

Multivariate Analysis of Comfort Level

While comfort reporting crimes to an SRO is associated with both interactions between students and the SRO and the students' opinion of the SRO, the conclusions that can be drawn are limited since this does not account for other factors that contribute to students' level of comfort in reporting crimes. In order to account for the effect of other variables, we examined the relationship between feeling comfortable reporting crimes and the outcome variables to answer whether or not other contextual variables negate the relationships found. Table 12 demonstrates that only two variables have a significant relationship with comfort reporting a crime. The findings suggest that students who had

¹⁸ A factor analysis reveals five factors identified as *Minor victimization* based on the accepted component analysis coefficient of .60. These five factors include: (1) having someone steal from you (.620), (2) intentionally damaging your property (.600), (3) harass you (.685), (4) hit/kick you (.674), and (5) push/shove/grab you (.684).

¹⁹ A factor analysis reveals two factors identified as *Major victimization*: (1) threatened to use physical force or weapon (.732) and (2) used a weapon against you (.863).

a positive opinion of the SRO are a little more than 2-1/2 times more likely to feel comfortable reporting a crime than those who do not have a positive opinion. The perception of safety measure ($p = .001$) also has a significant positive association with feeling comfortable reporting a crime to the SRO. Respondents who reported feeling safe at school were more than 2.5 times more likely to feel comfortable reporting a crime to the SRO than those who do not feel safe.

Table 12: Logistic Regression of Comfort Reporting Crime to SRO

Students' Perception of Safety			
	B	Sig	Odds Ratio
Grade Level	.165	.555	1.179
Gender	.163	.411	1.177
Race	-.247	.282	.782
Knowing SRO's Name	.146	.511	1.157
Conversation with SRO	.302	.220	1.353
Positive Opinion of SRO	.949	.000*	2.583
Neighborhood Crime	.161	.437	1.175
Perception of Safety	.972	.001*	2.642
Experience Major Victimization	.507	.105	1.659
Experience Sexual Harassment/Assault	.169	.633	1.185
Constant	-1.727	.002	.178
Model R-Square = .278			
N = 552			
* Note: $p < .05$			

Previous analysis illustrated that past experiences and environment affect how comfortable an individual is with an SRO. This significance no longer existed with additional analysis. Overall, students' personal opinions and perceptions of safety do affect whether the students feel comfortable enough to report crime to the SRO, while past victimization and environmental factors do not significantly affect the students' comfort level. This suggests that obtaining the necessary comfort level from the students can be affected and altered by the SRO and the school's program. However, other factors not included in this model affect students' comfort level.

Multivariate Analysis of Perception of Safety

Additional analysis was conducted to further explore how demographics, perceptions, victimization, and environment relate to perceptions of safety. Table 13 presents regression findings of whether other variables such as environmental factors and past experiences influence relationships discovered in the bivariate analysis. Several of

the independent variables are significantly related to feeling safe. Gender was found significant ($p = .014$), suggesting that a feeling of safety decreases for males. Having a positive opinion of the SRO ($p = .008$) accounts for students feeling twice as safe at school, regardless of grade level. Also illustrated is a positive association between feeling comfortable reporting a crime and feeling safe at school. Students who feel comfortable reporting crime are almost three times more likely to feel safe.

Consistent with our initial analysis, the environmental and experience variables play important roles in predicting the students' perception of the safety. The perception of crime in the students' neighborhood ($p = .010$) indicates that students who live in a neighborhood with crime are two times more likely to feel unsafe at school. Perhaps even more important is the effect victimization has on perception of safety. Students who have experienced a major victimization or sexual victimization feel four times and two times, respectively, less safe at school than their nonvictimized counterparts.

Table 13: Logistic Regression of Independent Variables Against Perception of Safety

Students' Perception of Safety			
	B	Sig	Odds Ratio
Grade Level	-.296	.552	.744
Gender	-.743	.014*	.476
Race	.234	.500	1.263
Knowing SRO's Name	.020	.951	1.02
Conservation w/ SRO	.618	.132	1.854
Positive Opinion of SRO	.831	.008*	2.295
Neighborhood Crime	.774	.010*	2.168
Comfort Reporting Crime to SRO	1.033	.001*	2.809
Experience Major Victimization	1.327	.000*	3.771
Experience Sexual Harassment/Assault	.975	.022*	2.651
Constant	-1.061	.157	.346
Model R-Square = .106			
N = 557			
* Note: $p < .05$			

Overall, it is not surprising that victimization affects how safe one feels at school. However, it may be surprising how influential the SRO program can be. It is very important to note that, even when victimization and environmental factors are introduced into the regression model, having a positive opinion of the SRO and being comfortable reporting a crime to him/her still is significantly related to whether or not students feel safe. Perhaps most importantly, this regression model illustrates that having a positive

opinion of the SRO continues to have a significant impact on the students' perception of safety even after controlling for grade level, gender, race, SRO and student interactions, student's neighborhood crime, and past victimization. This may indicate that regardless of school environment or personal experiences having an SRO who is able to obtain a positive reputation can increase the perception of safety.

Discussion

The goal of this report was to identify factors that affect both students' comfort reporting crimes to SROs and their perceptions of safety in schools. Through univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis we were able to conclude that several factors are associated with students' perceptions. In the first section, we examined the students' comfort level with reporting crimes to SROs; the results in the bivariate analysis indicated that knowing the SROs' name as well as having conversations with them might positively affect whether the student felt comfortable enough to report crimes. Once these variables were analyzed in a logistic regression model, only the positive opinion variable remained statistically significant. This suggests that SROs who can be seen in a positive light by the student body may be more capable of obtaining information pertaining to crimes and delinquent acts occurring on school grounds. It also may mean that the number of interactions is less important than the overall impression of the SRO.

The results of the logistic regression model presented in table 11 also illustrate that the students' perception of safety affects whether or not students feel comfortable enough to report a crime to the SRO. Students who feel safer are more likely to report crimes to the SRO. This suggests that it is important for SROs to promote safety both as a goal in itself and as a method of increasing student reporting of crime.

The second section of this chapter examined how individual and school level factors as well as comfort with the SRO affected students' perception of safety. The analysis results initially suggested that grade level of the students affected how they perceived safety. This was evident in both the univariate and bivariate analysis; however, the grade level variable had no impact on the statistically significant relationships when added to the multivariate analysis. Therefore, it can be concluded that, within this sample, students' perceptions of safety in this model are more likely to be affected by

variables such as level of neighborhood crime, past victimization, comfort reporting crimes, having a positive opinion of SRO, and gender than by grade level.

While there are strong relationships with the environmental and experience variables, these variables not do negate the effect of the variables that are within the SROs' control such as comfort reporting crimes and having a positive opinion of SROs. It is unfair to expect SROs to be able to change the environment which the students reside in or to be able to stop all victimization. However, it is a reasonable expectation for the SROs to gain the trust and favorable views of the students they encounter every day. Since the students' comfort level and positive opinions still have a statistically significant relationship with the students' perception of safety and they are variables that can be altered by the behaviors of the SRO, SROs should put in an effort to obtain these perceptions from the students to improve school safety.

Overall, this study revealed that perhaps the most important and easily modifiable variable in both models is creating a positive opinion of the SRO among the student body. These results suggest that it is important to determine the best method for the SROs to create a positive image. Inasmuch as this issue is beyond the scope of this study, it is important for further research to be conducted to address this issue. Qualitative research including interviews with students may help to uncover why students trust or distrust the SRO and how frequency of contacts or the quality of these contacts change the perception of students toward SROs. Obtaining these answers would be beneficial to the program as well as for the community. In his conclusion, Jackson (2002) suggested that positive attitudes and experiences of the police could decrease the likelihood of participating in delinquency.

However, these conclusions should be replicated. This study was a cross-sectional analysis, which does not allow for before-and-after comparisons to be made. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude whether the SRO program improves safety or if the mere presence of an officer in school impacts the perception of safety.

This study also implied that there might be differences in victimization by grade level. It would be interesting to examine this further. Although it is not realistic to expect the presence of an officer in schools to stop victimization, it would be beneficial to

discover who is being victimized most often. This information would allow for the proper allocation of funds and programs.

Lastly, a study of a wider range of schools is necessary. It would be helpful to look at more metropolitan school districts as well as more rural communities to see if these results are consistent. This would allow researchers to fully understand issues that affect students' perceptions of safety and of the SRO program, which would maximize policymakers' and police departments' ability to create and improve SRO programs nationwide. It would also be interesting to compare similarities and differences between schools with and without SRO programs.

This document is a research report submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice. This report has not been published by the Department. Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Appendix

Student Survey Questionnaire

This document is a research report submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice. This report has not been published by the Department. Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

PROGRAMS: SURVEY OF STUDENTS

Abt Associates Inc.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY

1. Why are you being asked to complete this survey?

- The U.S. Department of Justice recently provided grant funding to the police or sheriffs department serving your school to deploy sworn officers or deputies as *School Resource Officers* in your school.
- As part of the National Assessment of School Resource Officer Programs, Abt Associates and Northeastern University are asking administrators, teachers and students about their perceptions of quality of life, strengths and weaknesses of the School Resource Officer Program and school safety problems.
- The results of these surveys will help inform the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as educators and police officials nationwide, about your experiences with School Resource Officers and possible effects of this approach to school safety.

2. How should I complete the survey?

The survey is made up of multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions. Check the box, or circle the number, to answer multiple-choice items. Write your answer in the space provided for fill-in-the-blank items. A blank sheet of paper is attached to the survey if you need more space or you want to add comments about the survey.

Do not place your name or any other personal information anywhere on the survey.

3. What if I do not know the answer to a question?

Simply leave the answer blank – do not check a response if you do not know the answer to the question.

4. What do I do with the survey when I complete it?

Place the completed survey in attached envelope, seal the envelope and put the sealed envelope in the container at the front of the room. Please do not write on the envelope.

5. What if I have questions about items on the questionnaire?

Questions may be asked of the individual administering the survey at any time.

Do you have any questions before we proceed?

SECTION A INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF

1. What is your sex? (please check one)

- Female
- Male

2. What grade are you in? (Please circle one)

3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th

3. What is your race? (please check one)

- White
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Multiethnic
- Other

SECTION B QUALITY OF LIFE

4. In general, when you are at school do you feel:

- Very safe
- Somewhat safe
- Somewhat unsafe
- Very unsafe

5. How safe do you feel at school when you are in the following places:

	Very Safe	Somewhat Safe	Somewhat Unsafe	Very Unsafe	Do Not Know	I Never Go There
Any entrance to school	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Bathrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Stairwells and hallways	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Library	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Parts of the cafeteria	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Gym	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Locker rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Auditorium	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other places inside school (list)						
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Parking lots	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Fields	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Athletic events	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Social events (dances etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
At the bus stop	<input type="checkbox"/>					
On the bus	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Walking to or from school	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other places outside school (list)						
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					

6. How fearful are you of being picked on at school by a member of the following groups?

	Not at All Fearful	A Little Fearful	Somewhat Fearful	Very Fearful
By students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By intruders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By gangs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. How fearful are you of being harmed at school by a member of the following groups?

	Not at All Fearful	A Little Fearful	Somewhat Fearful	Very Fearful
By students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By intruders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By gangs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. How fearful are you of being picked on on the way to and from school by a member of the following groups?

	Not at All Fearful	A Little Fearful	Somewhat Fearful	Very Fearful
By students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By intruders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By gangs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. How fearful are you of being harmed on the way to or from school by a member of the following groups?

	Not at All Fearful	A Little Fearful	Somewhat Fearful	Very Fearful
By students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By intruders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By gangs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Do you ever avoid the following places in school because you are afraid of being harmed there?

	Never Avoid	Avoided Once	Avoided a Few Times	Avoided Many Times	Always Avoid	Never Need to Go There
Any entrance to school	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Bathrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Stairwells and hallways	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Library	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Parts of the cafeteria	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Gym	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Locker rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Auditorium	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other places inside school (list)						
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Parking lots	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Fields	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Athletic events	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Social events (dances etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
At the bus stop	<input type="checkbox"/>					
On the bus	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Walking to or from school	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other places outside school (list)						
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>					

11. During this academic year, how many times do you think you will avoid going to school because you will be afraid of being *harmed*?

Never
 Once
 2-3 times
 4-5 times
 More than 5 times

12. During this academic year, how many times do you think you will avoid going to school because you will be afraid of being *picked on*?

Never
 Once
 2-3 times
 4-5 times
 More than 5 times

13. Has feeling unsafe in school made it difficult for you to learn and concentrate on your schoolwork during class?

Not at all
 Sometimes
 Often
 All the time

14. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoy school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My teachers maintain good discipline in my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most students respect each other in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The principal and assistant principal maintain good discipline at my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school rules are fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school rules are enforced strictly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The punishment for breaking the school rules is the same no matter who you are	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Last year, how often did the following things happen to you in school?

	Almost Every day	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Other students have made jokes about you because of a personal characteristic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other students have threatened or intimidated you because of a personal characteristic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other students have physically harmed you because of a personal characteristic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. If any of the above happened to you, please answer the following question. If none of the above happened to you, please skip to Question 17.

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Did you tell your parents about it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you tell any teachers about it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you tell the School Resource Officer (SRO) about it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you tell your friends about it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you tell your counselor/nurse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Did you tell your principal or assistant principal?
- Did the school find out about it in any other way?

17. Last year, how often have did you do the following in school?

- | | Almost
Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Stood up to a bully who was picking on another student? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Made jokes about another student because of his or her personal characteristics? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Threatened or intimidated another student because of his of her personal characteristics? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Physically harmed another student because of his or her personal characteristics? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Targeted another student for repeated harassment? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

18. If you see another student getting picked on this year, how often will you do one of the following?

- | | Almost
Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mind my own business | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tell a teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tell the bully or bullies to stop | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Join in because of peer pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Join in because the student probably deserved it | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19. How many times will your teachers have to interrupt your class(es) to deal with student misbehavior or disruption during the next month of school? _____ times

SECTION C STRENGTHS AND WEAKENSES OF SRO PROGRAM

20. Do you know the name(s) of the School Resource Officer(s) in your school? Yes (please specify) _____

No

21. How comfortable do you think you will be in approaching the School Resource Officer to report a crime this year? Very comfortable

Comfortable

Not comfortable

22. **How comfortable do you think you will be in approaching the School Resource Officer to report a problem a student is having this year?**
- Very comfortable
 Comfortable
 Not comfortable
23. **Do you think that you and the SRO will usually say hello when you pass in the corridor or on school grounds this year?**
- Yes
 No
24. **How many times in the next month will you have a conversation with the SRO that will last more than 5 minutes?**
- Once
 Twice
 Three or more times
25. **How many times in the next month will you *report* an incident or problem to the SRO?**
- No times
 Once
 Twice
 Three to five times
 Six or more times
26. **How many times in the next month will you *work with* the SRO to *solve* a problem?**
- No times
 Once
 Twice
 Three to five times
 Six or more times
27. **What is your opinion of the SRO? (check all that apply)**
- Thoughtful
 Fair
 Smart
 Someone who solves problems
 Disciplinarian
 Useless
 Unapproachable
 Unavailable
 Hostile or mistrustful of kids
 Other (please specify)

28. **To whom would you go first for help in your school if you were a victim of a crime? (check only one answer)**
- Teacher
 Guidance counselor
 SRO
 Administor (for example a principal)
 I would go to my mother or father first and let them talk to someone in the school
 Other (please specify)

29. Please write below what you feel are the SRO program's 3 greatest *strengths*, if any.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

30. Please write below what you feel are the SRO program's 3 greatest *weaknesses*, if any.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

These questions have been taken or adapted from the following reports and survey instruments:

Bureau of Justice Statistics, *School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*. U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 2001.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Atlanta, Georgia, 1999.

Crime Prevention Center, *Evaluation of Grant Funded School Resource Officer Programs*. Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, March 2000.

Dennis Kenney, *Crime in the Schools: A Problem-Solving Approach*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, August 1998.

National Center for Education Statistics, Working Paper No.96-21: *1993 National Household Education Survey (NHES: 93) Questionnaires: Screener, School Readiness, and School Safety and Discipline*. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., October 1996.

National Center for Education Statistics, *Public School Teacher Questionnaire, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-2000 School Year*. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 2001.

SECTION D COMMENTS

Please use the space below for any comments or clarifications that you wish to add.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!

This document is a research report submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice. This report has not been published by the Department. Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.