

## ABSTRACT

### URBAN AND RURAL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS' EFFECT ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

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Barry University, 2008

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The purpose of this study was to compare differences between urban and rural high school principals' perceptions of school resource officer's (SRO's) effect on school climate. SROs have been placed in schools without knowing their potential effect. A total of 50 high school principals, grades 9 through 12, were sampled from 25 urban and 25 rural settings. Participants were queried in survey form regarding their perceptions of the effect of school resource officers on school climate in traditional North Carolina public high schools. A survey instrument was mailed to 50 North Carolina principals who were randomly selected from the *Educational Directory* of North Carolina. A \$5.00 gift certificate accompanied each survey to enhance participation. Proper and ethical procedures were followed, throughout the study, to safeguard all records and ensure anonymity of the participants.

Thirty-four (68%) of 50 surveys were returned (15 from urban and 19 from rural). Data was analyzed via the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 15.0* using t-tests to determine differences between urban and rural principals in their perceptions of the effects of SROs on school climate vis-à-vis five spheres of influence. A two-tailed, independent means t-test was used to calculate the differences between the means for each of the six research questions at an

alpha level of .05. The researcher failed to reject all six null hypotheses because statistically significant differences were not found. This research brought about a number of implications pertaining to the effect that SROs are making on school climate in connection to the related five spheres of influence. The results of this study could assist law enforcement and education leaders in selecting SROs, as well as their effective and appropriate utilization. Recommendations for future research were also made including, but not limited to, the investigation of why principals have a positive view of SROs, and assistant principals', students', and parents' perceptions of SROs' effect on school climate regarding the different spheres of influence.