An Analysis of Active Shooter Response Plans in Educational Institutions

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An Analysis of Active Shooter Response Plans in Educational Institutions

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Abstract

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Statement of the Problem

An active shooter event in educational institutions is a phenomenon that never seems to fully go away. If only taking into consideration ten major events since 1996, there have been 110 deaths stemming from active shooters (Stone & Spencer, 2010). After the occurrence of an event, there is a great deal of attention given to it, which includes media coverage, academic review, and outcry from the public for something to be done about active shooters in schools.

Even with all of this attention, active shooter events still continue to happen. After realizing that not all active shooter events can be prevented, it is extremely important to prepare for the possibility of one. Furthermore, it is important for educational intuitions to accept the reality that an active shooter event can happen anywhere. With those assumptions in mind, educational institutions can and should properly plan, train, and prepare for an event.

Method of Approach

The researcher examined secondary academic research on the topic of school violence, active shooter response plans, and other current literature on the topic of active shooters in educational institutions. From this current review of literature on current trends and policies, it is the goal of the researcher to formulate a set of guidelines and findings, to offer a starting point to create a comprehensive active shooter response plan. Furthermore, in an attempt to solidify the
findings and recommendations, the tenets of the General Strain Theory and Routine Activities Theory are applied to this phenomenon.

Results of Study

The findings from this seminar research paper first shows that there is a real need for an effective and comprehensive active shooter response plan in educational institutions. This includes partnering with law enforcement personal when drafting a response plan, effectively practicing said response plan, and constantly improving the response plan. It was also found that certain institutions may not always take this threat seriously, but the possibility exists that it can happen to any educational institution. Lastly, it was determined that even though not all acts can be prevented, the amount of damage that an event can cause, can be mitigated with proper planning, preparation, and implementation of an comprehensive active shooter response plan.
Table of Contents

APPROVAL PAGE i

TITLE PAGE ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

ABSTRACT iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

SECTIONS:

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. LITERATURE REVIEW 5

A. Historical Perspective and Past Events
B. Framing the Problem and Theoretical Explanations
C. Response Plans and Important Considerations
D. Literature Review Analysis

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 27

A. General Strain Theory
B. Application of General Strain Theory
C. Utilizing General Strain Theory for Preventative Measures
D. Routine Activities Theory
E. Application of Routine Activities Theory
F. Utilizing Routine Activities Theory for Preventative Measures

G. Reasoning’s

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. General Policy Recommendations
B. Law Enforcement Recommendations
C. Educational Recommendations

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION FOR ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE PLANS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

VI. REFERENCES
I. INTRODUCTION: AN ANALYSIS OF ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE PLANS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

School violence, specifically firearm related violence, involving an active shooter, is a timely topic that affects many different professions and groups. Furthermore, these affects can range from actual trauma sustained from an event, to emotional and psychological problems, which can last from a few days to a lifetime for all involved. Professions, groups, and stakeholders that can be affected by this type of an event include educators, law enforcement personal, first responders, pupils enrolled in said educational institutions, and the community as a whole.

According to Stone and Spencer (2010) there have been ten major acts of violence in schools, causing the deaths of over 110 students and staff, since 1996. These ten events are not isolated and there are more many more examples of school shooting related deaths and injuries. Looking at those statistics alone, one can argue that this topic deserves more attention, and that there is a need for stronger school safety plans.

One last thought and idea that frames this problem comes from Colonel Dave Grossman, a recognized expert on the topic of school violence. Colonel Grossman continually cites that few, if any students, are killed or injured, because of fires in schools. This is due to the fact that educational institutions continually and constantly practice fire drills. These drills are mandated by all levels of government and are very effective. Grossman strongly advocates for the improvement of school safety plans in regards to active shooters. (Grossman & Christensen, 2008).

A main issue and problem with this topic, is that each time a school shooting occurs there is a great deal of attention, outcry, and scrutiny given to the event, however, as to date, there is
not a great deal of consensus on ways to prevent, lesson, or eliminate these acts. As each event occurs, there seems to be an improved level of understanding, however there is no single or easy answer.

Current research conducted by Stone and Spencer (2010) show that a majority of school violence and active shooter response plans are simply inadequate and insufficient, for threats that educational institutions face today. One cited reason for this lack of safety, is that many programs are formulated by school officials with no training on the topic of school security or have experience dealing with violent acts. When taking into consideration these reasons, it is important to identify areas of improvement within active shooter response plans and how they pertain to educational institutions.

Due to the vast importance of this subject, along with reoccurring active shooter events, it is the goal of this seminar research paper to provide improvements in school safety plans. Overall, it is imperative that existing plans are improved upon to enhance safety for the students, staff, and first responders. If a plan does not currently exist, it should be the first priority of a school or district to create one.

Furthermore, a tertiary goal is to stress the importance of combining the expertise and best practices of law enforcement personal with education institutions to create the most effective response plan, to an active shooter event, and finally practice said plan. With this idea in mind, it is a goal of the researcher to show the importance of educator’s practicing safety plans with law enforcement personal.

One idea that frames this problem comes from Colonel Dave Grossman, a recognized expert on the topic of school violence. Colonel Grossman continually cites that few, if any students, are killed or injured, because of fires in schools. This is due to the fact that educational
institutions continually and constantly practice fire drills. These drills are mandated by all levels of government and are very effective. Due to these reasons, Grossman strongly advocates for the improvement of school safety plans in regards to active shooters. (Grossman & Christensen, 2008). It is also assumed that not all acts of school violence cannot be prevented, they can be lessened through better planning, preparation, and practice.

The significance and implication of this study is important, as school violence can have an immense impact on pupils, school staff, first responders to an event, and the community in which a violent act occurred. More research on this topic needs to be conducted, as firearm related violence in educational settings continues to happen. There needs to be a greater amount of research in regards to the initial problem of firearm related violence, prevention strategies and policies, effective violence reduction plans and/or policies, and how to respond to these types of events.

An initial limitation is that there is not a great deal of longitudinal research on the topic of school violence, specifically research pertaining to firearm related violence in schools, specifically targeting active or school shooters. While there has been occasional research throughout the years, there has only been a specific research on the topic since the school shooting occurring in Columbine.

A further limitation of this study is the actual examination of educational response plans poses a difficult question. If specific plans are examined for academic study and flaws are found, this information may make its way into the hands of an individual with the intent of carrying out an active shooter event. With this idea in mind, there has to be a great deal of caution imposed when examining these types of plans and limiting the finds to educators and law enforcement personal, until improvements are implemented.
The researcher will examine secondary research from many different disciplines studying the topic of school violence. This research will stem from academic and professional peer reviewed academic journals. Areas of disciplines reviewed will be comprised of criminal justice and law enforcement, educational, sociological, and psychological journals. Governmental research will also play a crucial role in this research, as there is a great deal of information on school safety, work safety, and violence reduction plans.

The researcher will attempt to gain historical, current, and future trends on school violence to frame this topic, in regards to school safety plans. The primary research will focus on prevention strategies and policies which have been found to be effective in preventing or reducing acts which have traditionally resulted in firearm related school violence. After this research has been completed, recommendations will be made for school safety plans in regards to school shootings.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

To gain an understanding and to show a real need for the creation and improvement of school response plans to an active shooter, a review of prior school shootings is extremely important. This review of past events offers a great deal of evidence to show that there is a real need, instead of a perceived need at the request of educational institutions, the law enforcement community, or from public outcry.

A. Historical Perspective and Past Events

A. Historical Newman and Fox (2009) researched rampage style educational shootings from 1974-2008, with special emphases on events occurring after 2002. One of the first important ideas discussed is that many of these events were restrained to kindergarten through grade 12 institutions, but in 2004 there was a shift to college campuses as well.

After examining four rampage style shootings in American educational institutions, Newman and Fox (2009) found that five conditions were present in all events. It was also observed that these same conditions were often found in a majority of other shootings, but do not have to be present for an event to occur. A summary of the conditions are as follows: the shooter has a very poor perception of themselves in the world, have been exposed to abuse or suffer from a mental illness, view violence as a problem solving tool, were able to avoid surveillance by the school, and have access to weapons (Newman & Fox, 2009).

Newman and Fox (2009) found that prior to the Columbine event; most rampage shooters drew inspiration from violent media. After the event, however, most rampage shooters began to observe the Columbine shooters as anti-heroes and drew inspiration from this event. Three of the four case studies closely examined for this research found that the actor(s) wanted to surpass
the Columbine event and were inspired by it. It was also found in two of the four events studied; the actors had a fascination with firearms and other weaponry (Newman & Fox, 2009).

The researchers then shifted focus to rampage style shootings in college settings and noted that they were only able to find two events that fit the rampage shooting definition from 1964-2002. Newman and Fox examined five major events after 2002 and found a great deal of similarities, but also found some important distinctions. The first being is that violent actors at the college level do not act out to enact revenge; they do so to express hostility at everyone. It was also found that actors in college events have had time for a mental illness to progress into a serious condition. This was thought to also contribute to the events being planned in a great deal of secrecy. All of these findings create a very difficult situation for colleges to identify and prepare for (Newman & Fox, 2009).

Newman and Fox (2009) pointed out one significant difference between kindergarten through 12th grade institutions and college. That is a majority of violent actors in colleges have an immigrant status or background, while most high school rampage shooters are Caucasian, native born, males. The researchers suggested that it was difficult for the individuals to navigate college, which created a great deal of hostility (Newman & Fox, 2009).

To deal with this issue in colleges, it is suggested that a great deal of resources has to be devoted to the identification of individuals. This includes the inclusion of mental health professionals and providing these services. It is the hope that serious mental illnesses can be dealt with before their condition contributes to a rampage shooting (Newman & Fox, 2009).

Kellam, Prinz, and Sheley (2000) researched the topic of school violence for the National Institute of Justice conference on criminal justice research and evaluation. Their research
covered community partnerships to reduce school violence, controlling violence in the schools, and the prevention of youth violence. One main section of interest was Sheley’s section on controlling violence in schools. To research this topic, Sheley surveyed a sample of 48 American high school administrators to observe youth violence trends. The findings were on par with current national trends and one main finding is that students are bringing weapons to school for personal security. It was also found that weapon related violence in educational institutions does not compare to violence occurring within their same communities. The only difference is that educational violence is highly publicized (Sheley, 2000).

In regards to educational responses to school violence, Sheley (2000) found that there is no one clear strategy an educational institution can take to reduce violence, from the opinion of school administrators. Schools have to take a multi-faceted approach, utilizing numerous strategies to effectively deal with firearm related school violence. Sheley (2000) also found that only one in five school administrators find firearms a serious safety concern. It was only when the institution experienced school violence, did the administrators change their perception on this topic (Sheley, 2000).

Sheley (2000) then examined measures taken by the schools to reduce school violence in their institutions. Almost all of the schools would automatically suspend someone for weapon violations, as well as designate their schools weapons and drug free zones. A small proportion of schools utilized police officers on campus and an even smaller percentage utilized metal detectors or school security (Sheley, 2000). One of the most statistically significant measures to reduce acts of violence on campus included the use of on-site police officers, photo identification cards for both students and staff, and school monitors (observers throughout the campus). It was
also noted by the researcher that this is a difficult comparison to make as not every school/administrator surveyed used the exact same measures (Sheley, 2000).

One last important finding and comment that Sheley (2000) made is that communities also have to become involved in reducing firearm related violence in schools. The community as a whole, including law enforcement has to tackle some hard issues to reduce violence. This includes limiting firearm access to juveniles and creating a safe community as a whole. Communities also have to work with schools to give students a feeling of safety and give them tools to succeed. This includes better conflict resolution skills, so violence is a less sought after remedy for disputes (Sheley, 2000).

Hong and Eamon (2012) examined the topic of school violence on a micro and macro level from a student’s perspective. The sample included a nationally representative sample of 10-15 year old students. One of the main findings is that older male students were found to feel less safe in schools. Feeling safe in schools decreased as the socio-economic status decreased within the sample. Hong and Eamon (2012) thought that this occurred as this seems to be around the peek bullying age within schools. The researchers also determined that race and ethnicity did not always play a statistically significant role in the perception of violence occurring in school.

Hong and Eamon (2012) also found that the area in which a student lives also has a correlation on the perception of safety a student has. This was thought to tie in with the idea of community, if the community promotes a feeling of safety, so will the school. This section of the research was conveyed as a very important finding, as a safe community is important for building safe schools.

The findings of the research suggest that schools have to include intervention programs, as well as, better school safety programs. The researchers suggested that school programs
include positive methods for teachers to stop disruptive behavior, reinforcing positive behavior, and utilizing consequences for violations. Hong and Eamon (2010) also postulated that higher risk students should receive special attention, which includes poverty stricken, older, male, students. All of this information is extremely important regarding perceptions, because students are found to carry some sort of a weapon if their real or unrealistic perception of safety is threatened while in school (Hong & Eamon, 2010).

Chapin and Coleman (2008) surveyed 1,500 middle and high school aged students to research how they feel about the possibility of firearm related school violence affecting them. This idea was called optimistic bias or the idea that a school shooting or firearm related violence cannot happen to them while at school (Chapin & Coleman, 2008). This is considered an extremely important topic, as this mindset can give a school shooter or other violent actor an opportunity to carry out a plan within a school. If this condition exists in schools students may see or hear warning signs that student is contemplating a violent act, but will brush this idea off, thus allowing it to come to fruition (Chapin & Coleman, 2008).

Chapin and Coleman (2008) found that a majority of the students did not believe that an act of school violence could occur at their school or personally affect them. It was also found that even highly publicized school shootings do littler to concern students about the possibility of an act of violence occurring. This statistic, however, drastically changed once a student took part in a school program which outlined what school violence is and how it can affect them. This data shows that students are very perceptive to this issue and it can be improved with school based programs. This data is very important to note, as it can make them more aware of the possibility of violence in their schools. This can greatly contribute to school safety and surveillance of warning signs that an active shooter event is in the planning stages (Chapin &
Past events have shown that there is a need for the creation, implementation, rehearsal, and improvements of a response plan to an active shooter. There are many reasons found in this section that easily justify their creation and use; including reoccurring events and the potential loss of life. There are other federally mandated plans of a similar nature including fire alarms and severe weather drills for these same reasons. These types of mandates should also include a requirement for the implementation of an effective active shooter response plan. As one understands that there is a real need for an active shooter response plan, it is also helpful to understand why these events occur and offer some theoretical explanations for the phenomenon of active shooters in educational environments. This analysis is important, as it may offer insight on effective prevention and reactive strategies. The following review of literature’s goal is to do just that, by framing the issue and offering theories for active shooters.

B. Framing the Problem and Theoretical Explanations

Daniels, Volungis, Pshenishny, Gandhi, Winkler, Cramer and Bradley (2009) examined school shootings from 2002-2008, but applied lessons learned from prior shootings dating back to 1974. The researchers also made a very clear distinction by outlining and researching school shootings, but more specifically rampage shootings. The act must be completed on school property by a current or former student. There also has to be multiple victims impacted by the event, that may be chosen at random, or singled out by defining characteristics (Daniels et al., 2009). This was a very important distinction as it rules out gang or narcotic related acts of violence. Another very important component of this research is that researched the intervening acts of school personal to prevent rampage shootings.
Daniels et al. (2009) first examined shootings that took place in kindergarten through high school level institutions. This section included a great deal of information as to why these events occurred and outlined numerous warning signs of an impending event. In a majority of the cases the researchers examined, the rampage shooter showed numerous warning signs to family, friends, and educational staff. This included making overt and veiled threats and talking about completing an act. It was also noted that there was a breakdown in communication between mental health professionals and educational institutions. These types of shortfalls were described as failures of the schools surveillance system for detecting these types of threats (Daniels et al., 2009).

Lastly, Daniels et al. (2009) reviewed rampage or active shooter incidents taking place at college level educational institutions. Some important challenges were outlined in this section which included the open and vast spaces that most college campuses have and issues in communicating an active shooter event. The researchers suggest a campus wide alert system encompassing numerous measures including text messages to warn students about a possible or actual threat on campus (Daniels et al., 2009). With the open nature of a college campus it can be extremely difficult to fully secure a campus to prevent access to a rampage shooter.

In regards to the causers of rampage shootings, some strong evidence exists that the actors in these events had negative past relationships with students involved in the events. This included bullying and harassment of would be rampage shooters, along with delinquent behavior by these individuals.

Overall, Daniels et al. (2009) found that averted school shootings have some common policies, ideas, and thoughts in common. First and foremost, is that the school has built a strong rapport with students which has created an environment where they are comfortable in coming
school faculty or staff with concerns. If this open environment exists the school has created a strong surveillance system to identify possible rampage shooters.

The researchers also found that a strong and well-rehearsed reaction plan also has to be in place in case an event does occur. Everyone in educational institutions has to be involved if events are to be averted and serious events can be lessoned. When the researchers examined four schools that had successfully averted a rampage shooting, they credited a great deal of their success with planning, practicing, and involving local law enforcement. If it had not been for this preparation they were unsure if they would have had the same results (Daniels et al., 2009).

Kimmel and Mahler (2003) examined how adolescent masculinity and homophobia contribute to school violence. One of the first ideas presented in the research is that a violent response is due to over compensating conformity to masculinity. It was found throughout research a majority of school shootings, that the violent actors were bullied and harassed for not fitting into gender stereotypes (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003).

The researchers also examined many schools of thoughts on why school violence which includes violent television programs, movies, video games, and the internet. Other areas of research included psychological disorders, the availability of firearms, the lack of armed security in schools, and other political explanations (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). It was also noted that each of these reasons include a great deal of research, but no research or investigation has examined the local culture of the community or the school, including views on gender. Kimmel and Mahler (2003) argue that a majority of school violence occurs when the masculinity is questioned or threatened. This threat can simply be to the individual or how others in that person educational setting see the individual. If they are unable to identify with the majority of
their peers as a “man” or “masculine” person, they have to overcompensate for this perceived deficiency by violent means (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003).

Estevez, Jimenez, and Musitu (2008) conducted an exhaustive research study on school violence. The study focused on four main areas including the difference between violence and school violence, theories explaining school violence, analyzing the victims of school violence, causers of school violence, and lastly intervention strategies (Estevez et al., 2008).

An important focus of their fourth research area focused on protective factors of schools, especially in the classroom. There was also an in-depth analysis of characteristics and situations that are conducive to violent behaviors in schools. This included educators creating a highly competitive environment which can alienate some students, ultimately causing the social rejection of certain members. When this occurs it often creates a bullying situation with a victim. Once a tipping point occurs, the bully and victim relationship can switch. The prior victim then becomes a bully, enacting revenge against their tormentors (Estevez et al., 2008).

The researchers also stated that creating rapport between students and teacher’s is paramount in preventing acts of school violence. This creates a safe environment to convey problems and concerns. If issues are caught early enough the bully victim relationship can change, preventing any future acts of violence outright. This same safe environment is also important for reporting concerns to their teachers, if they believe a fellow classmate is going to enact revenge, through violence (Estevez et al., 2008).

Another important component of Estevez et al. (2008) research identified school led behaviors which are promoting school violence. These include lack of educator motivation, poor organization, negative student-teacher relationships, a poor classroom environment, and schools
tolerating violent actions. While one of these factors by themselves may not create a violent culture within a school, a combination of them can become problematic (Estevez et al., 2008).

The researchers then offered intervention and prevention strategies that were best thought to mitigate and minimize acts of school violence. These include programs that encourage all students to participate, as to not create an environment where a student can become socially isolated. Another strategy is to create a school environment where all students feel safe no matter the circumstance. If this area of safety exists within a school, an educational institution can become less apt to issues with bullying. A common idea developed from these strategies which is teachers must accept the idea and strategies whole heartedly. If there is not buy-in from all of the teachers, programs can become lax and inconsistent. If this occurs students are allowed to fall through small holes in the system, thus creating a situation in which an educational institution is trying to prevent (Estevez et al., 2008).

After examining the current literature and thoughts on this issue, it is easy to understand the complexity and challenges that active shooters pose in educational institutions. This includes why an individual might chose to commit an act, how hard it is to identify an actor, let alone prevent an incident from occurring. Combining these reasons, as well as the previous school shootings, the importance of a response plan is placed into greater perspective.

Introduction to section 3: In order to properly formulate, utilize and update an effective active shooter response plan, it is also extremely important to examine past and current trends on effective responses. The following section examines what works, what does not work, and what the best policies and procedures are on this topic.
C. Response Plans and Important Considerations

Buerger and Buerger (2010) examined the topic of active or school shooter contingency plans and how these plans impact educators and law enforcement. The researchers also made it very clear, that there are simply too many contingencies to account for. Due to this fact, the researchers advocate for flexible plans that are easily adaptable to new, unplanned, and dynamic situations (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

A unique viewpoint held by this article is that educators, administrators, and other members of school staff are the true first responders to any incident of school violence. Due to this reality, it was postulated that school staff should be trained to handle what they can, by themselves, until further help can arrive (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

Buerger and Buerger (2010) examined many different strategies within the article and reiterated the point that each institution has to tailor the suggestions to their specific situation. A constant and sound policy is that every school has to have a lockdown policy. It is found that students and educators who shelter in place minimize themselves as targets from an active shooter. This includes barricading themselves in classrooms with whatever means they have at their disposal, turning off all lights, and remaining silent. This tactic is believed to be extremely effective in reducing the target profile (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

A common shortcoming found by the researchers is that some plans and/or procedures do not account for mass gatherings of students or exigent circumstances. Buerger and Burger (2010) outlined that in past active shooter occurrences, fire alarms were activated by the shooter. This situation creates numerous targets for an active shooter, as well as provides concealment for an active shooter or shooters. This also provides a problem for law enforcement, once they arrive, as locating the shooter can be difficult, as they easily blend in (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).
Mass gatherings of students also become a serious issue such as sporting events, lunches, assemblies, and so on. These situations present a cluster of students to a would-be active shooter, as well as present a challenge to schools and law enforcement to plan for. Buerger and Buerger (2010) suggest that each staff or faculty member be given freedom to make choices which have their student’s best interest in mind. These same individuals should also have a base level of training of what to do in emergency situations (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

Buerger and Buerger (2010) also covered one area of concern that is tied with rural areas. This is that rural citizens often have access to firearms and may respond to an act of violence themselves. Even though these individuals have honest intentions, they provide numerous problems. They can make the situation worse by giving law enforcement another possible threat to rule out or engage. These individuals are also not trained to deal with an active shooter situation and will cause more harm than good. One last issue with an armed citizen responder is that they can become another victim to a shooter, which can tie up scarce resources (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

Stone and Spencer (2010) examined the evolution of school shooting and violence response plans over the last fifty years. This research included the use of school resource officers and how effective they can be when creating a school shooting response plan. The researchers also outlined the evolution and use of school emergency plans including fire drills, natural disaster drills, and civil defense drills created in the 1950’s. Lastly, their research examined and explained state and federal mandates which require schools to create contingency plans for multiple threats that educational institutions face (Stone & Spencer, 2010). A great deal of the research was spent on school resource officers in schools and how important they can be for the planning, prevention, and implementation of safety plans. The researchers
also stated that school resource officers can act as a liaison officer between a law enforcement agency and an educational institution. They are able to pass along information about the school including its layout, as well as policies and procedures of each entity (Stone & Spencer, 2010).

The next idea researched is the best tactic for schools to deal with an active shooter. In many cases a modern active shooter plan for an educational institution is to lockdown and shelter in place. This includes target hardening of locked classrooms by barricading doors with desk and other objects. This includes reducing the target footprint by remaining as quiet as possible, shutting off lights, closing shades, and drawing as little attention as possible. It is also stated that any school can have a plan, but the practicing of the plan is just as important. One recent improvement on this front is that states are now mandating that this is practiced at least once a school year. The researchers also acknowledged that even the best or well intentioned plans have difficulty being implemented when cost and politics are taken into consideration. One last thought in this section stated that a plan has to be thorough, but easily applied. If a school safety plan is too complex it can become too confusing for educators and law enforcement to implement during a violent event (Stone & Spencer, 2010).

Stone and Spencer (2009) spent a great deal of time offering recommendations for both schools and school resource officers. One of the first recommendations is that a school resource officer visits each teacher and their classroom to help identify safe areas in their classroom which provide the best shelter in place areas. These areas almost always include cover behind a heavy desk or books, which can act as a buffer from shots fired during an event (Stone & Spencer, 2010).

Stone and Spencer (2009) stated that when creating an active shooter response plan, egos have to be eliminated; both educators and law enforcement have to accept each other, and work
together. Both groups will have to accept and work within the constraints of their organizations to put safety at the forefront of their plan. An interesting suggestion posited by the researchers is that future school construction takes into consideration the Federal Bureau of Investigations ballistic testing. This was offered for shelter in place plans, which would offer protection to students and staff from stray bullets (Stone & Spencer, 2010).

Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, and Jimerson (2010) examined high profile school shootings from the early 1990’s forward. The main concern with their research focused on prevention strategies and how effective current measures and laws are. A brief history was discussed which covered the gun-free schools act, zero tolerance policies, target hardening of locations, and profiling of suspect students. While the gun-free schools act expels students who bring a firearm to school, it simply displaces student, and does little in preventing weapons from entering a school zone. Zero tolerance policies were also found to be fairly ineffective, as it has been found to be disproportionately applied (Borum et al., 2010).

Target hardening of schools through the use of metal detectors, school resource officers, school security, and cameras have shown promise, but there is limited research at this time to determine their effectiveness. When students see this careful attention to detail it may deter certain groups of students from attempting an event. Profiling of students may also prove to show promise as well. It can identify possible or probable students who may show warning signs of past school rampage shooters. This type of prevention strategy is also untested as there is not a great deal of current research (Borum et al., 2010).

Within this body of research Borum et al. (2010) strongly advocated for the use of the National Incident Management System Incident Command System NIMS/ICS when planning for an incident. The researchers also stated that schools have to include law enforcement and
emergency management personal. These are the individuals who schools are going to turn to once an incident starts, so they have to be involved (Borum et al., 2010).

Borum et al. (2010) also advocated for the use of the Virginia Threat Assessment Model. This model is used to respond to a known incident of violence on a school campus. This is an easy to use model as it utilizes a tree styled flow chart. It begins with a principal being notified of a possible problem and then helps them decide if said threat is valid and what to do. Solutions can include contacting law enforcement, recommending counseling, and many other remedies (Borum et al., 2010).

This model was also tested in 35 schools for a period of one year. During this time it was found to be very effective and offered the schools a great resource in identifying and dealing with different threats. It was also noted that this model is best used as a guide or a template, as each educational intuitions needs are different. The researchers also noted that each incident has to be taken seriously. With that being said there will be many false accusations and threats, but a school cannot become complacent (Borum et al., 2010).

Robles-Pina and Denham (2012) examined the utilization of school resource officers hired by school districts and school resource officers contracted to work in a school district. They also evaluated school resource officers on their ability to reduce school violence and reduce bullying in schools. Research conducted in the past ten years has shown that school resource officers are effective in reducing incidents of bullying in schools. It was also found that the hiring of a school resource officer is a cost effective measure, because they reduce incidents of school violence and bullying. Lastly, they have been found to increase the physical and psychological well-being of students. This information is extremely important, as it can be used to offer justification for hiring a school resource officer (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).
It was also found that a school resource officer cannot simply be thrown into an anti-bullying program without training. If this is done it does an injustice to the school and the officer. They should be included in a schools program, but need to be given the resource to succeed. This often means sending the school resource officer to in-service trainings with other educators (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).

It is suggested through research that once a school resource officer is properly trained they should then provide training to administrators, educators, and students in regards to school safety, anti-bullying efforts, and other school safety related topics. Robles-Pina and Denham (2012) also suggest that school resource officers be utilized in conflict resolution and peer mediation programs. Once a school resource officer has become accustomed to all aspects of the school, they are better able to build relationships within the school, creating an open environment of communication (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).

Robles-Pina and Denham (2012) also noted some important finding within their research and that is independently hired school resource officers were better trained to deal with bullying intervention programs. It was found that contracted school resource officers did not often have the same level of training, and ultimately confidence to intervene with incidences of bullying. This was viewed as an opportunity for contracted school resource officers to receive more training before or while being in a school resource officer position. It was also found that school resource officers provide a positive face for law enforcement amongst students. This positive face provides a comfortable environment for students to make contact with police officers in and out of school. Lastly, anti-bullying efforts are very important, as bullying has been found to contribute to acts of school violence. If these acts are eliminated or reduced, serious acts of violence can be prevented (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).
Caster (2008) created a list of considerations that a chief of police or head administrator in law enforcement has to take into account regarding school shootings. One of the first thoughts is that the chief of police is often thought of as the expert in regards to school safety. Due to this perception it is their responsibility to remain up to date on the most up to date school violence deterrants. Lastly, it is the administrator’s responsibility to act as a liaison to convey important policy considerations to the local board of education and school administrator (Caster, 2008).

Some other thoughts into active shooter prevention plans and reaction plans included the caveat that there is no perfect profile of an active school shooter. One constant, however, is that most active shooters at the high school level have displayed warning signs or shared their plans. Agencies and schools have to be constantly looking for these warning signs. To accomplish a strong surveillance program both educational and law enforcement administrators have to train their personal these warning signs. This may also include routinely searching social media websites for any signs of an impending act (Caster, 2008).

Some closing thoughts on an active shooter response included thoughts on current training for all police officers in an agency, especially school resource officers. Each officer has to be trained to respond to an active shooter in an educational institution with little resources. It is also extremely important that everyone involved in an active shooter response plan understand the mindset of an active shooter. Their only goal is to inflict a maximum number of casualties within the school. This is very important to convey in a person’s agency to create the quickest response as possible (Caster, 2008).

Deane, Holohan, and Bennett (2005) examined the New York State Police school resource officer program. The program examined the implementation of 36 school resource officers deployed across 62 school districts throughout New York in 2002. The program was
initially deemed successful which expanded the program to a total of 92 school resource officers covering a total of 118 school districts. While in their perspective assignments the school resource officer was tasked with helping school districts create and update their emergency response plans, oversee problem solving initiatives, provide on-site police services, and present numerous school safety related programs. Another main tenet of this position was to provide in house training to school personal on responding to acts of school violence (Deane et al., 2005).

Another component of a school resource officers job function was to collect and manage data about their schools prior to and while serving in their position. This provided information was coded as both qualitative and quantitative data, which created the data set for this journal article. Some of the highlights of the school resource officer program included 276 successful suicide counseling sessions, 91 confiscated weapons (11 of which were firearms), over 8,000 presentations given, and 203 felony arrests. The program was also credited for receiving reports of previously unreported crimes including sexual assaults. The program was initially thought to be successful due to the statistics collected and safer schools throughout up-state New York (Deane et al., 2005).

Garrity (2008) reviewed a June 2007 report to President George Bush on school violence and reported the findings to the National Sheriff’s Association. This information outlines the findings of the reports and offers planning and training for agencies on the topic of firearms related violence in schools. One of the first finding is that mental health agencies, educational institutions, and law enforcement agencies have to create partnerships. These partnerships are important for sharing information amongst each other to identify individuals who pose a threat. Another recommendation is to create intervention programs for those identified as a
possible or probable threat. To accomplish this, protocols and plans have to be in place, if a situation arises. One last major recommendation is a mandate or requirement that all educational institutions have a plan in place for an active shooter event at their school (Garrity, 2008).

One of the biggest issues that came up from this report is the balance of privacy versus safety. To help with this issue, quality training has to be provided to counselors and schools to clarify when they are obligated in sharing information about an individual who is thought to be a threat. The report also suggested the creation or changing of legislation to facilitate this type of reporting. Another important policy adoption was to encourage schools to create safe environments where they feel comfortable communicating concerns. This also included prevention programs which teach students and parents the warning signs of an active shooter. One last major recommendation was the use of on campus law enforcement and required training of emergency response plans by all entities involved (Garrity, 2008).

A second section of the article interviewed six county sheriffs who had responded to and dealt with an active shooter in their jurisdiction. The interviews provided insight on the topic of active shooter response in regards to what went wrong, what went right, and what can be done to improve a response plan. A majority of the interviews stated that they were overwhelmed by the media and they were also overwhelmed by parents trying to get information. The sheriff’s stated the importance of having open lines of communication with everyone involved and setting up a proper staging area. An example of an 800 student school can mean there are more than 1500 parents descending on an incident. This can further tax an agency that will be spread very thin already responding to an active shooter (Garrity, 2008).

An agency also has to remain humble during a taxing event like a school shooting and accept all of the help that it can take. It was stated if one’s agency is not used to processing or dealing with
calls of this nature, bring in an agency that does, and utilize them. Other important lessons learned included finding a way to train as many officers or deputies in your agency as possible in how to respond to an active shooter. If an event is going to happen it is an agencies responsibility to prepare one’s employees for the event, proper training can lessen the seriousness of an event and safe lives (Garrity, 2008).

Another interview provided two very important pieces of advice in regards to school shootings. One is that it is the responsibility for an agency to plan for the unthinkable and then prepare for it. The mindset also has to be taken that it can happen here and it is the responsibility to prevent it if possible. The second piece of advice is if a plan is found to be broken, it has to be repaired. This advice should apply to any law enforcement topic, but is especially important for school related prevention and intervention plans (Garrity, 2008).

After learning about past events, current trends, and best practices; a total picture begins to emerge. That picture is that active shooter response plans in educational institutions are needed and that a plan has to be well thought out. It needs to include contingencies for every conceivable situation, but allow for rapidly changing, dynamic events. Furthermore, once a plan has been created and implemented, they have to be reevaluated and practiced to create proficiency amongst staff and first responders.

D. Literature Review Analysis

The information contained in the literature review has presented some strong evidence in support of a proper active shooter response plan. One of the first pieces of evidence that exhibits this need is the recent prevalence and repeat acts of active shooter events in educational institutions. If one only takes into consideration ten incidents of active shooters incidents from
1996 through 2010, there have been over 110 student deaths (Stone & Spencer, 2010). This large loss of life over a handful of incidents only represents a small proportion of these events, but still shows the real need to deal with this phenomenon.

Current research also shows that preventing and lessoning these incidents is extremely difficult. One reason for this difficulty is that there is not a clear or perfect profile of a school shooter. The only known information is that these individuals tend to be white, male students, who may have been the victim of bullying. Moving beyond this vague profile, there are numerous theories as to why these individuals perpetrate these acts. These reasons include: not being able to fit in with peer groups, having their masculinity threatened, and being the victim of continued and unrelenting bullying (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003) (Hong & Eamon, 2010).

Even though this difficulty exists, it does not mean that there is nothing that can be done, as there are numerous strategies that can detect, prevent, and mitigate an active shooter incident in an educational institution. One of the first strategies is to create a safe school environment where students feel secure. In this secure environment students feel safe to share concerns with teachers and administrators about any potential bullies. This safe environment can also prevent bullying from becoming a catalyst for an active shooter. Lastly, this safe environment creates an effective surveillance network for identifying potential active shooters (Chapin & Coleman, 2008) (Caster, 2008) (Hong & Eamon, 2010).

It has also been shown that a well-rehearsed response to an active shooter such as sheltering in place and reducing the target profile has proven to divert an active shooters attention. While this is not an ideal situation to be in, it has found to be a best practice (Buerger & Buerger, 2010) (Stone & Spencer, 2010).
The utilization of school resource officers has shown to be an extremely effective measure in both the prevention and response to an active shooter incident. They can act as a counselor, trainer, and responder to any type of event at a school, with an extremely quick response time. This type of response has also proven to be cost effective in the long term and promotes a safer school (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012) (Deane et al., 2005).

Overall, the research has shown that no one strategy is completely effective in preventing, lessoning, or mitigating an active shooter in an educational environment. What is effective at achieving these goals is a multi-faceted approach that can act as a sandbox. If one safeguard or prevention strategy fails, the other ideas act as filler sand, either preventing an active shooter from committing an act or lessoning the impact.
III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENERAL STRAIN THEORY AND ROUTINE ACTIVITIES THEORY.

There are numerous theories on crime, some of which attempt to explain violent crime, but there are a limited number of theories that easily explain violence in educational institutions, specifically active shooters. There are two such theories that do a thorough job of explaining violence in educational institutions and why it can occur; one is Robert Agnew’s general strain theory and the other is Marcus Felson and Lawrence Cohen’s routine activity theory. This section will include an overview of the theories, reasoning for the choices, an application of the theory, and how each apply to the formulation of school safety violence prevention and response plans.

A. General Strain Theory

To solidify this claim, it is important to first gain an understanding of this theory, thus a brief overview of general strain theory is presented. This theory postulates that certain individuals respond to internal and external strains and/or stressors, with criminal activity. These strains include objective and subjective stress, which is experienced by an individual, vicariously, and by anticipating the strains (Agnew, 2006). An objective strain is something that is normally disliked by a majority of individuals. One such example is having one’s identity called into question. This can include a juvenile male’s masculinity being threatened by their peers. This idea then has to be proven wrong, in order for that male juvenile to assert that they are in fact masculine, which can include responding with a violent act. This same idea was discussed by Kimmel and Mahler (2003), who believe that male students act violently to prove that they are masculine, when peers bully or tease them, on masculine grounds.

A subjective strain is thought to be an act or set of conditions that only affect a small number of individuals or one person (Agnew, 2006). In the context of educational violence,
this could be an individual not being able to fit into a certain group. This is a subjective strain, because individuals feel that they need to be in said group, whether they actually belong there or not. Another example of a subjective strain could include a student receiving or not receiving attention from their peers in school. It could be argued that being ignored is an objective strain, but the subjective idea comes from an individual feeling that they deserve the attention (Agnew, 2006).

The objective and subjective strains are then characterized by experienced, vicarious, and anticipated strains. A vicarious strain is a strain that is experienced by those who are close to them or are routinely around them (Agnew, 2006). These groups include family members and close friends. These strains can especially impact a possible school shooter, when peers, in their own group, are repeatedly bullied, picked-on, and even assaulted (Agnew, 2006).

Experienced strains are stress or strains that are simply experienced by the individual and apply only to them (Agnew, 2006). These include being debased and embarrassed by fellow classmates, being physically assaulted, and overall being targeted by bullies. Once these strains reach a point within the individual, they then must turn to a solution, including crime, which includes acting violently with firearms (Agnew, 2006).

An anticipated strain is one that an individual believes will continue to happen with no chance of ending. This type of strain maybe present in a bullied student, who believes that a violent act is the only way to end the bullying or strain. One such violent act to ensure that this will not happen to them again is to kill or severely injure the perpetrator(s).

Not only are the types of strains important; but the frequency in which strains occur, reason for the strain(s), and a perceived answer to resolve the strain (Agnew, 2006). While a single incident of a strain may or may not warrant a response, if the strains are consistent with no
end in sight, a solution by the person being strained will most likely be sought after. It is also important if the strains are seen as just or unjust by the individual experiencing the strain. For the purposes of focusing on school violence, an individual repeatedly assaulting and bullying a person can be seen as unjust by a student. If the bullied individual then seeks outside help from teachers, parents, or peers and nothing is found to be effective, a bullied student then has to create a solution to their problem (Agnew, 2006).

B. Application of General Strain Theory

When taking into consideration ideas from Agnew’s General Strain theory and what has been found in the research, a few distinctions can be drawn. One of the first distinctions is that active shooters are often put under numerous strains. These strains can include being bullied and picked on, not being able to fit into certain peer groups (Estevez et al., 2008), and possibly having their masculinity questioned by their peers (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Furthermore, these actions are seen as major wrongs by the victims. Whether these wrong acts are thought to be real (objective) or perceived (subjective) and with no end in sight, the then victim, has to seek out relief. When traditional means, which includes reporting the bullying, cannot fix their predicament, they may then turn to a criminal act, which is acting violently to end their strain.

C. Utilizing General Strain Theory for Preventative Measures

From the overview and application of General Strain Theory, it is possible to make the assumption that bullied individuals turn to violence to solve their problems. From making this assumption, preventing major and repeated acts of bullying in educational institutions, may in turn reduce or even prevent active shooter situations in educational institutions. To prevent or...
reduce bullying, it may be advantageous to implement anti-bullying and violence prevention programs in educational institutions. It may also be important to create information surveillance systems in schools to alert educators to acts of bullying or bullied individuals talking about taking matters into their own hands. Overall, a strong prevention effort, can act as a first line response to violence in an educational institution.

D. Routine Activities Theory

The routine activities theory, also has some positive tenets which could explain an active shooter in an educational institution, however, it is unable to come full circle in giving a complete explanation. At best, the routine activities theory is able to explain why an event is able to occur, but does not offer an explanation as to why it occurs.

Cohen and Felson’s (1979) routine activities approach is best described by a set of circumstances, which can easily contribute to criminal activity. These circumstances include an offender, a target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979). If one of these circumstances is not present, it is very difficult, if not impossible for a crime to occur. If an actor is not present, there is no one to commit the crime. If there is not a target for a crime, it cannot occur. Lastly, if a capable guardian is in place, an offender would not deem the target suitable (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The best use of this theory is when it is combined with another theory, which in this case is general strain theory.

E. Application of Routine Activities Theory

Utilizing this theory is straightforward, if an offender, for example a constantly bullied student decides that he or she has had enough stress or strain, they become motivated. If that
student attends an educational intuition that does not seem imposing to an active shooter event, they then may feel they are able to commit the act. Finally, if there is no one at the intuition to stop them, including a school resource officer, belief of a strong police presence, or a vigilant faculty or staff member, the individual may decide to carry out a violent act (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

F. Utilizing Routine Activities Theory for Preventative Measures

This theory is especially helpful in formulating a proper response to an active shooter in an educational setting. One of the first applications is preventing or reducing a motivated offender. This can primarily be accomplished through the utilization of violence prevention programs. This also includes creating a safe atmosphere within the school. If these types of actions can be taken, an event can be prevented, because it has never been planned by a potential offender (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Another application of this theory is introducing a capable guardian into the school system. For the purposes of an educational institution, a capable guardian should be considered a school resource officer. Whether an officer is permanently assigned or is assigned numerous educational facilities, on-site officer acts as a strong deterrent. They are able to quickly respond to any type of active shooter event. If this is not feasible, a school should at the very least institute a single entrance into the school, which is monitored at all times (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

One last application of this theory is properly strengthening the target (educational institution). By making it a difficult target, a motivated offender may be too intimidated to even attempt an active shooter event. This idea ties in with the utilization of a single entrance and
locking all other entrances into the school. This may also include installing surveillance cameras, metal detectors, and other security measures (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

G. Rationale

General strain theory and the routine activities theory were chosen as the theories best explain the events leading up to a violent event, in an educational institution and ultimately explaining the culmination of these events or strains. Other proposed theories on school violence have included other criminological based theories and psychological theories. A potential criminological theory includes the social control theory (Levin & Madfis, 2009). Psychological theories on school violence often can include reasoning’s which cite conduct disorder, anti-social personality disorders, and a myriad of other psychological issues (Ferguson, Coulson & Barnett, 2011).

While the social control theory has some promising tenants, there are some functional issues, which fail to explain the actual event or cause of a school shooting. Hirschi’s social control theory suggests that criminal behavior stems from an individual failing to form a bond to their society. This bond can be affected when their beliefs, attachment, involvement, or commitment wanes or is simply not present (Wiatrowski, Griswold & Roberts, 1981).

While an argument could be made that each of these ideas could lead to an individual taking issue with their environment, it does not provide a reasonable explanation for an act of violence. One could make an argument that one’s beliefs could become affected, up to and including necessitating the perceived need for violence, but there is still not a clear nexus. An individual may also make an argument that stresses caused by the tents of the social control theory, can also be called strains, creating further cause to believe that general strain theory is more applicable to active shooter situations.
An issue with applying psychological theories on active or school shooters is that there is no clear, discernible profile (Ferguson et al., 2011). With the lack of a concrete profile, it is difficult to apply psychological concepts, which are often very precise, due to the lack of a proper sample size, as school shootings are relatively rare events. According to Ferguson et al. (2011) it is also difficult to gain a great deal of research on school shooters, as they often commit suicide, which does not create a large sample to apply a diagnosis after an event. This problem is further compounded, as many of the individuals who commit a violent act, such as a school shooting, do not have a great deal of documented contact, with mental health professionals.

With those ideas in mind, cited research from Ferguson et al. (2011) stated that 71% of researched active shooters thought that they had been wronged. It was also cited that 98% of these individuals had experienced a major loss within their life (Ferguson et al., 2011). This is extremely important information, as both of these ideas; being wrong and experiencing a loss, are considered strains. Ferguson et al. (2011) also stated that the following traits also apply to school shooters, which include a current depression, anti-social tendencies, and a perceived injustice against them. All of these traits further lend to the idea that strains are present in active shooters, further solidifying the choice for Agnew’s General Strain Theory.
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Section III includes three sub-sections of recommendations to enhance the safety of students and personal, that attends and works in educational institutions. These recommendations also apply to law enforcement and other agencies acting as first responders to an act of violence occurring in an educational institution. The first section of recommendations includes general policy recommendations that apply to all interested parties for an effective response to active shooters in educational institutions. These groups include educators, educational administrators, law enforcement officers, law enforcement administrators, and miscellaneous stakeholders.

The second section includes recommendations which apply to law enforcement personal in regards to training, assisting educational institutions, and effective prevention and response procedures.

The third and last section includes recommendations for proper implementation and training of a response plan, how to respond to an active shooter event in an educational institution, and other pertinent information.

A. General policy recommendations

One of the first and possibly most important findings is the need for schools and law enforcement to annually practice their active shooter response and contingency plans. As stated in the literature review, schools are required to conduct fire drills (Grossman & Christensen, 2008). Grossman and Christensen (2008) also posed the following question, how often are students injured or killed due to a fire in schools? Grossman and Christensen (2008) cited that it was a rare event. This same rationale needs to apply to the topic of school shootings. One such
way to ensure that this occurs, is a federally or state mandated policy for schools to create and practice an effective response plan. This mandate should include provisions for an educational institution to conduct a drill, biannually during the school year. The mandate should also include a provision for minimum standards in a response plan (Stone & Spencer, 2008).

The minimum standards for an effective active shooter response plan should include provisions for an effective lock-down procedure. Once students and faculty are locked down, each safe area should be properly secured by a locking door. If feasible or practical, faculty should then place barriers such as chairs and desks in front of the entrance to the safe area. While this is occurring, all students are to remain as quiet as possible to effectively reduce their target profile, to an active shooter. The room is also to have the ability to turn off the lights and draw a shade across windows if possible (San Diego Police Department, 2003) (Stone & Spencer, 2008).

Other standards should include limiting entry to the school through one main entrance. If possible, the entrance should also remain locked and allow visitors to be “buzzed” through or allowed to enter. This type of entry system allows the educational institution to greatly limit who is on campus and may provide early warning if an event does occur. This type of security may be difficult for open style kindergarten through grade 12 facilities, as well as college campuses. This poses a unique threat and may necessitate the need for campus security. An open campus and any campus for that matter should also utilize an alert system. This can be multi faceted by including loudspeakers, email notification, automated phone calls, and text message alerts (Stone & Spencer, 2008).

Another tenet of an effective plan includes the mapping and marking of areas within a school. An example can be designating rooms with letters or numbers, which can be used to
identify areas within an educational institution. If an event occurs, reporters of an incident can convey important information to a 911 or emergency dispatcher to better direct resources. It can also be used to direct law enforcement or first responders to certain areas of a school to locate clusters of injured victims or the location of the violent actor (Department of Homeland Security, 2008) (Stone & Spencer, 2008).

Findings from current research has shown that educational institutions may not always plan and practice for violence. The findings also indicate that the level of training and practice is not done with frequency to indicate proficiency in regards to active shooter policies. There are many reasons for this; including lack of resources, effective policy, administrative support, staff support, and apathy by different parties involved. No matter the reasoning this practice cannot continue to happen as it exposes schools and students to possible acts of violence. A federally mandated drill or practice of a schools response plan can help ensure that this does not occur (Grossman & Christensen, 2008) (Stone & Spencer, 2008).

Research may also indicate that the lack of partnership between law enforcement and educational institutions may be due to cultural differences. Each group is comprised of certain personality types, cultures, and norms. These differences will have to be overcome and a common ground will have to be formed, for the betterment of all parties involved. One such way to bridge the gap between law enforcement and educators is the use of a school resource officer. When working in this role, a school resource officer acts as a liaison officer. This individual can help explain why law enforcement acts in a certain way and why educators act in a certain way. Beyond bridging this gap, a school resource officer has numerous benefits which include an on-site first responder, an on-site trainer, and another person that students can share concerns with (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012) (Stone & Spencer, 2010).
A school resource officer has been found to be an effective program leader for anti-violence prevention programs for students and informational programs for educators. The anti-violence prevention programs have been shown to reduce bullying and increase conflict management skills amongst students. This type of education is beneficial, as it may reduce a known cause for school violence. The in-house training provided to educators is also beneficial, as a school resource officer is able to tailor it to that school’s specific need (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).

A similar recommendation is enlisting the help of local law enforcement, fire departments, and rescue personnel when creating, refreshing, or implementing any policy relating to active shooters or any emergency situation. Each group has a certain stake in the creation of the plan, as they would be responding to an event, if one were to occur. Each group can also offer a unique perspective to a response plan. This is also beneficial in creating solutions to conflicting goals of the agencies (Garrity, 2008).

**B. Law enforcement recommendations**

In most circumstances, law enforcement takes a reactive role to an active shooter event, acting as first responders. One way to reverse this trend is to appoint or hire a school resource officer. These individuals are a real asset to law enforcement agencies and schools alike. As stated in the general recommendation section, this position acts as a liaison officer, first responder, program facilitator, and a problem solver within the school system (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).

If a school resource officer is not available within a jurisdiction, at the very least a law enforcement administrator or appointee, should create a working partnership with the local
educational institution. This partnership fosters communication and allows each group to convey important concerns to each other. This also allows law enforcement to become involved in a schools surveillance of violent activity. These communicated concerns can include rumors of violent threats. It is important for law enforcement to take these threats or rumors of possible school shootings very seriously. Past school shootings have occurred, because these threats were not taken seriously. This partnership is important, because law enforcement has experience in investigating these claims and has resources available to them, that educational institutions do not (Caster, 2008) (Robles-Pina & Denham, 2012).

Law enforcement also has the responsibility to effectively train their officers to handle situations within their jurisdictions. This includes taking annual tours of every educational institution within jurisdictions and making sure every officer knows the proper response plan, per the agency and the educational institution (Caster, 2008).

One last recommendation for law enforcement agencies, which do not have a school resource officer program, is to visit schools during routine patrol. It is best practice to visit with school administration to announce the visit and to clear up any confusion about an officer's presence. A normal presence within the school may act as a strong deterrent to individuals who are in the planning process. This can also foster a safe environment within the school system, which has also been found to reduce acts of violence from occurring.

C. Educational recommendations

A plan does not do any good if it is never practiced; furthermore, there is also no excuse for an educational institution to not rehearse a response plan. While the main goal of an educational institution is learning, learning does not come before student safety. A plan should
be practiced to such an extent, where faculty and staff, don’t have to refer to response manual or plan, to know how to act. It is this type of proficiency that has the potential to limit loss of life and foil the plans of a would-be shooter. This type of proficiency is also important in circumstances that do not necessarily have a strict plan or response. The continued practice, leading to proficiency, may allow faculty and staff to think on their feet during an event, which could save lives. The continued practice also makes sure that new faculty and staff members become familiar with the plans. The continued practice is also important to act as a reminder that an active shooting can happen to any school district. There is a fine line to instill proficiency versus instilling fear, but the happy medium has to be found, as to now create an atmosphere of complacency (Grossman & Christensen, 2008).

An educational institution has the responsibility to its students and faculty to practice a response plan to an active shooter with their students and without their students. Training that includes students, should include coded drills, where educators lock down their school, including classrooms. This includes, teachers actually locking their room and practicing total silence in the classroom. This type of hands on training creates proficiency among school personal. With the students present during the drills an added realism is present, as well as a real stress. It is this type of training that allows for the effective handling of a real event. It is also important to convey to students during these drills, that this is proven to save lives, and they should take these situations seriously. Furthermore, it is important to not cause any undue stress or trauma to students, during this type of training (San Diego Police Department, 2003).

Training conducted without students can be done at any faculty in service training and allows for a more serious tone. It is also advantageous to utilize law enforcement during these times. If a school has an assigned school resource officer, this would be the ideal choice. The
more serious tone refers to the realities of an active shooter event. This includes what faculty can expect to happen during an event and how law enforcement will respond (San Diego Police Department, 2003).

This is an important message, as a law enforcement response is not to stop and render aid to people injured during an event. The current training and standard to an active shooter response is to actively seek out and stop the threat. This type of response is often quick and depending on the circumstances, violent. It is important to prepare faculty and staff to this reality, as they will then be given the task of taking care of themselves and other potentially wounded individuals, until medical assistance is able to respond (Department of Homeland Security, 2008).

It is also important to constantly improve and revise an active shooter response plan. This improvement and revision process is important as safety standards evolve and new issues arise. This is also important as a school or school district make changes to their facilities and improve their overall service. It may even be advantageous for similar school districts to compare their plans. Each district may have a better standard practice than another district. This comparison can allow them to shamelessly steal their ideas, to create a better response and prevention plan (Department of Homeland Security, 2008).
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION FOR ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE PLANS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

After examining the literature review, theoretical perspective, and recommendations some patterns begin to emerge. The first is that even with a proper anti-violence prevention programs and an effective surveillance network, active shooter events can still occur. Due to this fact that, it is imperative that educational institutions have an effective and comprehensive active shooter response plan. It is also advantageous for these plans to include provisions for drills with and without students, as well as a scheduled, annual, reevaluation of the response policy. These plans also have to include a shelter in place and target reduction strategies. These tenets have been proven from past active shooter events to reduce the damage from an active shooter event.

Another major finding is that schools and law enforcement agencies should partner for the planning and implementation of active shooter response plans. If this partnership exists, both groups are able to plan for a thorough and comprehensive response. This response can further be aided if a school resource officer is utilized and present in the educational institution. School resource officers were also found to be a valuable asset in the prevention, planning, and response to an active shooter response plan.

The researcher also acknowledges that an active shooter response plan may not be able to fully plan for every contingency, but a rehearsed, well thought out, and comprehensive response plan, is one of the best defenses in mitigating an event.
VI. REFERENCES


