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Policing Education: An Empirical Review of the Challenges and Impact of the Work of School Police Officers

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Abstract

Public concerns regarding school safety and zero-tolerance education policies have contributed to the growth of a workforce of school police, or frontline school safety professionals who are typically placed in schools with the authority to arrest students (Brown, 2006). Thus, school police represent a workforce positioned at the nexus of multiple systems, including education and juvenile justice, and whose work likely brings them into contact with underserved youth and families. Despite national representation of this growing workforce (e.g., National Association of School Resource Officers), little is known about the responsibilities, roles, training, and influence of school police. This manuscript aims to (a) advance understanding of the school police workforce, including in relation to school police training, needs, roles, and influence, through a systematic review of scholarship in the social sciences, with a focus on peer-reviewed research in education, psychology, social work, criminology, and juvenile justice; and (b) generate empirically supported recommendations integrating key conclusions that pertain specifically to targeting the challenges faced by the school police workforce and identifying the best strategies to enhance safety-related goals while mitigating disproportionate legal and educational consequences for underserved youth and families.

Keywords

School police officers; School resource officers; Education; Juvenile justice; Youth; Policy

Public concerns regarding school safety, zero-tolerance education policies, and increases in Federal and state funding have contributed to the growth of a workforce of School Police Officers (SPOs), or frontline school safety professionals who are typically placed in one or more schools with the authority to arrest students (Brown, 2006). In this paper, the term SPO is used to refer to members of the school police workforce, who are most typically employed fulltime by municipal or state law enforcement and sometimes referred to as School Resource Officers (Travis & Coon, 2005). While the first SPO program was implemented in 1953 in one county and there were fewer than 100 SPOs in 1970, there are currently an estimated 20,000–30,000 officers patrolling elementary, middle, and high schools in the U.S. (James & McCallion, 2013; Weiler & Cray, 2011). The decade between 1997 and 2007 was

characterized by a particularly sharp growth in both the number of full time SPOs patrolling schools, and the number of law enforcement agencies employing an SPO weekly (James & McCallion, 2013). It is estimated that U.S. schools spend \$14 billion a year for school safety personnel and practice (Kupchik, 2016).

The growth of the SPO workforce has coincided with a growth in criminalizing student behavior. In urban jurisdictions, an estimated quarter of new charges filed against youth were school-related and one out of every six charges in school occurred in cases where no crime was committed, but an SPO was present (James, Logan, & Davis, 2011; Na & Gottfredson, 2013). SPOs are also more likely to occupy schools enrolling larger populations of students of color (Morris, Epstein, & Yusuf, 2017) and underserved youth (Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011). These youth are disproportionately targeted by exclusionary discipline practices, with a particular rise in suspensions and expulsions for Black and Latina girls (Crenshaw, 2014). According to the U.S. Department of Education biennial Civil Rights Data Collection survey (CRDC), in 2016, Black students were 2.6 times more likely to receive suspensions and represented the largest percentage of suspensions for subjective offenses (Curran, 2016). Suspension and expulsion are a key influence on subsequent arrest among girls (Morris et al., 2017).

Thus, SPOs represent a workforce positioned at the nexus of multiple systems, including education and juvenile justice, and whose work likely brings them into contact with underserved youth and families. Despite national representation of this growing workforce (e.g., National Association of School Resource Officers), little is known about the characteristics and influence of SPOs. Thus, while the intended outcome of supporting a growing SPO workforce is school safety, it is unclear whether this workforce is individually and organizationally positioned to achieve this goal; and whether the positive or unintended negative consequences of SPO labor are associated with identifiable characteristics of the workforce. To date, these questions have not been examined systematically despite a growing empirical base on the work of SPOs.

This paper aims to (a) advance understanding of the SPO workforce, including in relation to SPO training, needs, roles, and influence, through a systematic review of scholarship in the social sciences, with a focus on peer-reviewed research across disciplines. This represents the first systematic review of the SPO workforce, with potential to cast recommendations with attention to the work-force specifically. Furthermore, this paper aims to (b) generate empirically supported recommendations pertaining to SPO workforce development informed by aim 1 as well as through a targeted review of SPO-based program evaluations and documented SPO-related city and state-based programming. This review will generate empirically supported recommendations to address the challenges faced by the SPO workforce and identify the best strategies to enhance safety-related goals while mitigating disproportionate legal and educational consequences for underserved youth and families.

Given the increasing interest across scholars, interventionists, and educators, research on SPOs has grown. However, much of the current work is descriptive and lacks critical synthesis to inform our understanding of the SPO workforce. This paper builds on two prior reviews (Hirschfield, 2018; Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012) and one meta-analysis

(Fisher & Hennessy, 2016) by including studies that inform characteristics of the SPO workforce. This represents a major contribution given that no prior reviews include this focus on the SPO workforce. In addition, this study includes information on the influence of SPO work on school discipline as well as crime, arrest, and safety. Of the existing reviews, some focus only on school discipline (Fisher & Hennessy) whereas those that include a broader set of outcomes do not use systematic literature search strategies and focus on crimes committed off of school property (Hirschfield, 2018); and those that do employ systematic review strategies include a narrower focus on school-based interventions led by police (Petrosino et al., 2012). This paper advances prior work by (a) focusing on the characteristics of the SPO workforce, (b) connecting information about their influence to these workforce characteristics, (c) incorporating a broad definition of potential outcomes of SPO work in order to incorporate the richest set of evidence, and (d) advancing integrative recommendations that target the workforce toward promoting school safety.

Review Methodology

Studies included in this review were selected through systematic searches in PsychINFO, Google Scholar, and the National Criminal Justice Reference Service Abstract Database. Studies initially screened were selected by searching databases for any study in a peer reviewed source published between January of 1999 and May of 2018 that included a common variant of key terms describing SPO (e.g., school resource officer, school police, school officer) and key terms relevant to the workforce indicators identified (e.g., roles, training, influence). The decision flowchart detailing the number of articles identified, screened, and included is summarized in Fig. 1, according to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group 2009).

All abstracts of identified articles were reviewed, and all articles that provided empirical data on the roles, training, and influence of the SPO workforce were included, yielding a total of 28 papers. Papers were excluded if they were not peer reviewed, did not pertain to any workforce indicators, or were published prior to zero-tolerance policy shifts in 1999. Studies using quantitative, qualitative, or multiple methods were included. For studies on the influence of SPOs, studies were excluded if they did not use quasi-experimental methods that included a comparison group. These exclusionary criteria were applied in all cases with the exception of a series of studies on school discipline from one meta analysis (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016), which used pretest posttest designs modeling shifts in outcomes in relation to when SPO programs were implemented. Table 1 summarizes key methodological and design characteristics and findings from included studies, and is organized in two parts: (a) individual and organizational factors related to SPO roles and training, and (b) Influence of SPO Work and Programs. Part A is further organized according to whether studies inform individual characteristics or organizational/ecological factors; and Part B is further organized based on the association between SPO presence and student crimes, arrest, and safety or school discipline outcomes.

Defining the SPO Workforce

Between 42% and 68% of US public schools employ an SPO at least once per week (Hirschfeld & Katarzyna, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, 2018). SPOs are most typically employed by local or state law enforcement agencies, but can also be employed by schools, federal grants, or through shared cost agreements. Funding for SPOs comes from city, county, or school district dollars (Cray & Weiler, 2011). Because SPOs are employed by different agencies and not required to register with any centralized database, little is known about their demographic characteristics, other than that are likely to be male (87%), White (79%), and about 40 years old on average if they resemble U.S. law enforcement demographics (Banks, Hendrix, Hickman, & Kyckelhahn, 2016).

School Police Officers represent a growing workforce (Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, & Baum, 2006) with increasingly broad job descriptions that include responsibilities such as supervising traffic, controlling disruptive students, attending parent and faculty meetings, patrolling campus, helping criminal justice officials gather intelligence, and facilitating delinquency prevention programs (e.g., D.A.R.E; National Association of School Resource Officers). Given these broad responsibilities, SPOs are typically in a busier role compared with other non-specialized law enforcement officers despite the fact that they operate in a more constrained environment (Finn, Townsend, Shively, & Rich, 2005; Thureau & Wald, 2009). Although SPO responsibilities can vary within the same state by virtue of distinct organizational structures, SPOs who are sworn police officers (representing over 90% of the workforce; Travis & Coon, 2005) have authority to enforce the penal code, carry firearms, and have jurisdiction off of school property. SPOs differ from other law enforcement officers because they have further authority to enforce school rules (e.g., possession of cell phones; school dress code violations) that would not be enforceable outside of the school setting, engage in searches of students and their possessions, and enforce arrest or removal from school property without parent consent.

The sections that follow present a synthesis of the empirical evidence generated by this systematic review (for individual study findings, see Table 1). In juxtaposing the evidence on SPO roles, training, and influence, we are positioned to move beyond the relatively piecemeal and descriptive nature of research in this area and move toward a more holistic understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by this workforce. This further allows us to better-understand the challenges and conflicts inherent in the way that the SPO role is structured and in the way SPOs are expected to function, and therefore provide recommendations that can leverage the skills and motivation of this workforce to promote learning in safe school environments.

SPO Roles, Training, and Influence

The evidence reviewed in the section informing SPO roles and training is limited to descriptive and correlational studies, though multiple raters using a variety of methods inform this body of work. Thus, the major strength of the research evidence on SPO roles and training comes from synthesizing this evidence to provide a holistic picture of the role

and function of SPOs from multiple perspectives, which are described throughout this section. Importantly, where information is available from official sources that dictate aspects of SPO roles or training (e.g., National Association of School Resource Officers), these are specifically named, described, and juxtaposed with corroborating or conflicting information from other reporters. The evidence reviewed on the influence of SPO work, in contrast, seeks to be explanatory but is limited by a paucity of research that employs full experimental designs with equivalent comparisons. Thus, the section on SPO influence includes quasi-experimental studies and details their methodological strengths and limitations, organized by school discipline versus school crime and safety as outcomes.

Conflicting Roles

School Police Officer roles include three primary functions: educator/teaching, informal counselor/mentor, and law enforcer (Canady, James, & Nease, 2012). These roles are defined, in writing, by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and corroborated by SPO self-reports (Travis & Coon, 2005). However, SPOs report spending different amounts of time in these roles (Finn & McDevitt, 2005; Kelly & Swezey, 2015) with the most time spent on law enforcement and the least on teaching; and report different levels of satisfaction in each role (Kelly & Swezey, 2015; McKenna & White, 2018) with the least satisfaction related to teaching responsibilities. SPOs participate in the least amount of training to support counselor and educator roles. These roles are prioritized differently by state and national policies, with an emphasis on law enforcement by the state and an emphasis on education federally (James & McCallion, 2013; McKenna & White, 2018).

The roles occupied by SPOs are distinct, carry potentially conflicting responsibilities, and require different skill sets (Brown, 2006; Schlosser, 2014). The primary responsibilities of the law enforcer role range from “detering on-campus violence and criminality” to “conducting criminal investigations” to “making arrests as needed” (Thomas, Towvim, Rosiak, & Anderson, 2013). The most often-endorsed activities reported by SPOs are consistent with this role, and involve patrolling campuses and arresting students (James & McCallion, 2013). Almost 90% of law enforcement officers complete law enforcement training and this training is typically paid for or incentivized (Banks et al., 2016; Reaves, 2010), positioning SPOs to be the most adept in this role, compared to in the counselor or educator roles. The research evidence bears this out, suggesting that SPOs use law enforcement tools most often, there is agreement among school administrators and law enforcement agencies that SPOs should function in this role, and students perceive SPOs as enforcers of the law (Devlin & Gottfredson, 2016). However, there are two important caveats: most SPOs do not receive specialized training about schools, juvenile law, or adolescent development (Travis & Coon, 2005) and SPOs can use legal tools (including arrest) to respond to violations of school discipline even if these violations do not constitute criminal acts (Hirschfield, 2018).

Furthermore, the law enforcement role contradicts the responsibilities of the educator and mentor roles. The primary responsibilities of the educator role include teaching school staff, teaching students from curricula (e.g., D.A.R.E.), advising on emergency preparedness, and teaching parents and the community. This requires the skill sets possessed by teachers,

centering effective facilitation of content and process, navigating relationships with parents and other teachers, and community building. Often, it remains unclear what the specific intentions of teaching school staff or parents are, beyond a general mission of promoting school safety. The informal counselor/mentor role is even less defined, yet it is idealized and emphasized as important despite evidence that SPOs do not receive training or support to become mentors (Martinez-Prather, McKenna, & Bowman, 2016; Robles-Piña & Denham, 2012). Furthermore, the boundaries of this role are exceedingly broad (e.g., “guidance through challenging issues”; “dealing with stress”) and influenced by the competing goals of building trust among students *and* identifying at-risk students early (Thomas et al., 2013). Myriad examples of this conflict are cited in the reviewed literature (e.g., students seeking help with a drug problem may get arrested; Fisher & Hennessy, 2016), and center on the risk inherent in damaging any potential trust built (or potentially built) in an SPO-student relationship if and when the demands of the law enforcer role eclipse those of the other roles (Mallett, 2016).

The literature reviewed also informs the function of these roles, and suggests that these conflicting roles work to devalue the actual training of SPOs as well as the expertise of teachers. Indeed, the expertise of SPOs lies in law enforcement and they uniformly receive little to no training in informal counseling or mentorship (Martinez-Prather et al., 2016). Yet, across all studies examining this pattern, SPOs report that they feel pressured to mentor and educate (McKenna & White, 2018; Thureau & Wald, 2009), feel the most satisfied when they perceive themselves as mentors (Kelly & Swezey, 2015) and perceive little support for, or knowledge of, this role by law enforcement or education administrators (Barnes, 2016; Travis & Coon, 2005).

Yet, it is possible that SPOs engaging in educator or counselor roles function to uncover and report more student crimes, as demonstrated in a 3-year longitudinal study of 480 schools, which suggest that counselor-educator oriented SPOs report more crimes than SPOs engaging only in law enforcement roles (Devlin & Gottfredson, 2016). This is not surprising given the lack of training that SPOs receive in providing any education or mentorship. Furthermore, the growing presence of SPOs—and the need to justify this presence—have created a climate in which teachers and staff increasingly call on SPOs for minor disciplinary issues and classroom management in general (Kim & Geronimo, 2009). Indeed, nationally representative school surveys suggest that schools are typically safe, with 85% reporting no physical fights with weapons (Travis & Coon, 2005). Youth crime, including violent crime and crime on school property, has been characterized by a trend toward decline since the 1980s—and prior to—the proliferation of SPO programs (James & McCallion, 2013). Given this broader context, a pattern that necessitates justifying SPO roles in mostly safe schools may devalue the training and skills of teachers in classroom management and relationship building. This context has been most richly described in qualitative studies—for instance, as one SPO stated, “we are doing what the educators ought to be—controlling the students in the classroom” (Barnes, 2016, p. 200). This pattern is particularly problematic because classroom management needs are far more typical than school violence (Travis & Coon, 2005) and, in this way, SPOs became enforcers of school rules, not laws. There is some evidence for exactly this pattern, with SPOs reporting that “calming students down” is

the most frequent reason for placing them in handcuffs (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006; Wolf, 2014).

However, this process also taxes the system and may function to exacerbate the stigma associated with being an SPO. On one hand, teachers may value quick removal of individual students from classrooms. On the other hand, this process may ultimately contribute to further misunderstanding of SPO roles and isolation from other stakeholders. As SPO's engage in more student removals and court referrals, the caseloads of probation officers, judges, prosecutors, and public defenders also increase. In one county, probation officer caseloads increased to 150 youth per officer when SPO court referrals increased (Teske, 2011). In turn, this may promote an unfavorable reputation about SPOs among other law enforcement and court stakeholders as less skilled and amateur "kiddie cops" (Weiler & Cray, 2011), exacerbate the stigma associated with being an SPO, and dampen support from supervising officers who have a stake in maintaining the reputation of SPO programs. In turn, lower perceived support is associated with lower job performance among SPOs (Finn et al., 2005) and lower perceived individual power (Schlosser, 2014).

A system-serving logic also undergirds this overall pattern, wherein the SPO workforce and the organizations administering SPO programs are placed in a position to have to justify and sustain a workforce that has been growing since the 1990s (James & McCallion, 2013). Many SPO positions started with limited term grant-funds that required takeover from city, county, and school district funders (Raymond, 2010). Some have argued that the increased pressure for SPOs to manage more classroom issues and provide more mentorship to students is in response to a need to sustain the workforce itself (Hirsch-field, 2018). This is further consistent with research suggesting that law enforcement and school administration misunderstand, but overwhelmingly support, the presence of SPOs in schools, while teachers tend to report mixed feelings about SPO presence (Chrusciel, Wolfe, Hansen, Rojek, & Kaminski, 2015; Cray & Weiler, 2011). This context helps explain the increasing discretion exercised by members of this workforce combined with the absence of institutional training to do so—discussed in the next section.

High Authority, Little Preparation

School Police Officers represent a workforce seemingly underprepared to achieve the goals of their work but who also possess relatively high authority and discretion in responding to student behavior. As a specialized work-force, SPOs lack systematic training on the roles they are assigned (Finn et al., 2005; Robles-Piña & Denham, 2012; Thureau, Buckley, Gann, & Wald, 2013). NASRO recommends, but does not require or track, that SPOs receive 40 hours of specialized training. Thus, the average training of the SPO workforce is not known, but studies suggest that less than half of SPOs receive any additional training (Thureau & Wald, 2009), even when additional training is offered by their schools. In one study, less than 40% of SPOs received training on special education in general despite holding beliefs that special education students are more disruptive and use health as an excuse for disrupting the classroom (Martinez-Prather et al., 2016; May, Rice, & Minor, 2012). In other studies, over 50% of SPOs expressed wanting more training with a focus on juvenile law and school policies (Martinez-Prather et al., 2016) and in conjunction with school staff (McKenna &

White, 2018). Importantly, however, none of these studies include representative samples of the SPO workforce, potentially because there is no centralized recording of which law enforcement officers work as SPOs. Despite this, a review of state policy suggests that 31 states do not require specialized youth-focused training for SPOs, and of the states that do, none systematically document the content or empirical basis of their trainings (Brown, 2006; Morris et al., 2017). Furthermore, there are no uniform selection procedures despite evidence from one correlational study (Canady et al., 2012) and one intervention study (May, Fessel, & Means, 2004) suggesting that only highly selected and trained school police promote perceived safety.

The degree of authority and discretion possible in the role of an SPO is critical to understand and contextualize information about their influence. On the one hand, SPOs can exercise high levels of authority over students and discretion over decisions of how to respond to student behaviors. Of the few studies to report on the discretion exercised by SPOs, one finds that 100% reported using discretion when making arrest decisions (Wolf, 2014), and another finds that SPOs reported they frequently exercise high discretion in making decisions about how to question students about crimes or disclose information to schools about student sealed court records (Kupchik & Bracy, 2010). A report from the ACLU underscores that it is important to consider that youth are required to attend school by law and they have limited privacy when they are in school. In most cases, SPOs only need reasonable suspicion that a student is breaking school policy (not law), to search students or their possessions (Kim & Geronimo, 2009). Further the investigatory and prevention aspects of SPOs jobs create a structural context in which SPOs are informally rewarded by school administration to learn information about students labeled as problematic, leverage their relationships with students to identify other students to investigate (Barnes, 2016; Hirschfield, 2018), and punish minor violations of school rules. For instance, by virtue of their roles and job descriptions, SPOs can issue tickets or citations requiring students to appear in court. These decisions are subjectively influenced, and the very limited evidence that exists suggests that SPOs are issuing such citations at higher rates than they were in the mid-1990s (Edmiston, 2011). As one recent review in this area underscores, it is possible that this pattern is, in part, explained by the demands that SPOs face to “be useful” and remove low-achieving students from the school context (Hirschfield, 2018).

On the other hand, SPOs face competing demands in their roles and exercise little power in the face of decisions from either law enforcement or school administrators (Schlosser, 2014). Namely, schools are largely incentivized to remove poor performing students (Na & Gottfredson, 2013), and school administrators can enforce removal of particular students by SPOs (Petrosino et al., 2012). This further serves to justify the presence of SPOs on school campuses, which is a stated priority of law enforcement organizations (NASRO). Furthermore, SPOs have little say over the shift in responsibilities (e.g., for minor behavioral problems or classroom management) from schools to SPOs. This can create fear, negatively influence school climate, and add to SPO (and student) confusion about the boundaries of the SPO role (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). This pattern is corroborated by SPO-reported quantitative, qualitative, and observational studies, which suggest that SPOs view their relationships with school administration as sometimes confusing or conflicting (Lambert & McGinty, 2002; Thureau & Wald, 2009; Schlosser, 2014). Similarly, as sworn police officers,

the majority of the SPO workforce has little say over obeying orders from law enforcement agencies who typically initiate preventative legal responses, including random school drug searches (Thurau & Wald, 2009). These competing structural demands, combined with conflicting roles and little preparation to engage in the roles that SPOs find most rewarding create a context of social control.

Social Control with Faulty Logic

The deterrence effect that SPO programs seek—to prevent future crime due to fear of rapid response by the consistent presence of officers on school campuses—neither leverages the skill sets of SPOs nor acknowledges the economic and social costs embedded in settings with high surveillance (James & McCallion, 2013). The idea of schools functioning as institutions of social control is not new (Noguera, 2003), but the theories on which it is based are widely criticized and flawed (Brady, Balmer, & Phenix, 2007). If we assume, as deterrence theory does, that SPOs function as walking warning signs to students, then it is necessary to acknowledge that this deterrence effect would dampen if SPOs are successful in being mentors and educators. In fact, there is no evidence for either premise—national surveys of students suggest that the presence of SPOs is unrelated to their perceptions of school safety or their own propensity to violate rules or engage in violence (Swartz, Osborne, Dawson-Edwards, & Higgins, 2016; Theriot, 2016; Theriot & Orme, 2016). Indeed, there is no evidence that SPO presence is related to a deterrence effect on school violence, gun violence or mass shootings (Brady et al., 2007; James & McCallion, 2013).

Although only half of students report interacting with fulltime SPOs (Theriot & Orme, 2016), greater interaction with SPOs is related to less school connectedness (Theriot, 2016). In turn, reduced school connectedness and greater perceived unfairness are related to higher levels of delinquency (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005; Theriot & Anfara, 2011). Though the directionality of these relations are not known, it is clear that—even at the correlational level—there is no support for the assumption that SPO presence deters negative behavior.

The Influence of the Work of SPOs

The overarching conclusion of the studies on the influence of the work of SPOs is that SPOs do not have a positive influence—and may have a negative one—if they perform the jobs they are positioned and trained to perform. The majority of studies in this review suggest that the presence of SPOs is linked to a higher likelihood of exclusionary school discipline practices (Kim & Geronimo, 2009) and school criminalization, which refers to policies leading to student entry into the legal system for behaviors that are crimes, public order/status offenses (e.g., truancy), or violations of school policies (e.g., dress code; Hirschfeld & Katarzyna, 2011). However, findings are somewhat mixed and no experimental evidence exists, limiting causal inference.

School Discipline—The most robust examination of the influence of SPOs on school discipline comes from a meta-analysis of seven quasi-experimental studies, which suggests that the presence of SPOs in high schools is related to higher rates of exclusionary discipline in schools over time (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). These seven studies all used a pre-post

design and were positioned to compare within-school rates of suspension or expulsion before and after SPO programs were implemented. Despite high heterogeneity among samples, this study found a mean rate ratio effect size of 1.21 suggesting that the risk of exclusionary discipline is moderately stronger in schools with SPOs present. However, these seven studies did not use a comparison group, even a non-equivalent one, reducing the confidence with which SPO presence can be associated with shifts in exclusionary discipline. Two large-scale studies that used a comparison design and were not included in the original meta-analysis, however, corroborate these findings (Brady et al., 2007; Zhang, 2018). Specifically, a study of 10 schools in one large city found that schools with SPO programs had significantly higher rates of school discipline compared to schools in the same city, but without SPO programs (Brady et al., 2007). Another study of 238 middle and high schools provides particularly compelling evidence because of its employment of a large sample of schools with and without SPO programs (Zhang, 2018). In this study, a broad array of exclusionary discipline practices, including student incidents, removals, and suspensions, was assessed over a 3-year period of time. Findings suggest that schools with SPOs have higher levels of exclusionary discipline compared to schools without SPOs, regardless of how long SPO programs had been in place. This effect is sustained even after accounting for school size, socioeconomic status of enrolled students (average percent of students living in low SES households), language (average percent of students with limited English proficiency), and gender (average percent of male students). Together with the meta-analysis described above (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016), this study by Zhang (2018) provides the most robust evidence that SPO presence is likely related to exclusionary discipline when discipline is measured broadly (e.g., including incident reports, arrests for fighting at school).

These patterns are somewhat countered by three other smaller studies, which together support a non-significant effect of SPO presence on school discipline (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). These studies are strong in that they use a comparison group, but this methodological strength is mitigated by low meta-analytic power with a study size of 3, and reliance on archival data defining discipline narrowly (i.e., school suspensions; Link, 2010; as cited in Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). This limited scope is in contrast to the aforementioned longitudinal studies, which together examined SPO influence on arrests for fighting, incident reports, and general crime reported to law enforcement.

Although this research does not allow us to draw definitive or causal conclusions, the evidence suggests that there is a strong possibility that the work of SPOs influences greater discipline at worst, and has no impact at best. In turn, harsh discipline is linked with student isolation (Mallett, 2016), which counters the mentorship and education roles of SPOs. Furthermore, it is related to lower levels of school belonging (Swartz et al., 2016), which negatively influences SPO-student relationships as reported by SPOs and students (Schlosser, 2014; ; Theriot, 2016).

School Crime, Arrest and Safety—Student arrests have increased by 300–500% yearly since Zero Tolerance policies were instituted, and the increased suspension and expulsion rates are related to declines in academic achievement, student cohesion, school satisfaction (Mallett, 2016), lower graduation rates (Teske, 2011) and an increased likelihood of arrest

prospectively (Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014). The SPO workforce functions in this broader Zero Tolerance context, which includes multiple policy shifts and is influenced by the work of myriad stakeholder groups. Knowledge about the influence of the work of SPOs is critical to support evidence-based recommendations.

The best designed and most representative study of SPO influence to date suggest that *increases* in the SPO workforce in schools is related to increases in reporting of crimes, higher likelihood of harsher punishments for students, higher rates of weapon and drug crimes, and more reporting of non-serious violent crimes, compared to rates in schools without SPOs (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). Specifically, this study is methodologically stronger than most in that it employed a longitudinal design, included a non-equivalent comparison, reported on change over time using pre- and post- test, and used random sampling to obtain a representative sample of high schools. Although there is no evidence of a causal association and only principal reports were used in this study, these results are corroborated by another study using a representative sample with multiple administrative reporters that assessed these same patterns across elementary, middle, and high school (Swartz et al., 2016). Despite its cross-sectional design, this study found that schools with SPOs are more likely to detect serious violence but are no more likely to be safe, defined by recorded incidences of violence on school property and administrator reports of perceived school climate measured by recording frequency of bullying, racial tensions, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and student disrespect and disorder in the classroom. What is less clear, however, is whether there is an increase in reporting of crime or of actual delinquent behavior. However, data from the Center's for Disease Control and Prevention's nationally representative sample of youth in schools demonstrate no changes in student-reported crime during the same time period, as measured via anonymous youth report (Kann et al., 2014). This provides some confidence in the assertion that SPO presence is related to an increase in criminalization in the absence of evidence for an increase in criminal behavior. This general pattern is consistent with criminology theory proposing that greater surveillance created by SPO presence will increase the reporting of crime and not necessarily engagement in criminal behavior (Hirschfield, 2018). Empirical examinations of this theory in the school context have been rare, with one concrete exception: one study that compared perceived to actual substance use, and found no difference in behavioral measures of substance use among students in schools with SPOs, despite reports from school administrators suggesting that they perceived reduction in student substance use in these same schools (Bhabra, Hill, & Ghate, 2004).

The patterns evidenced in the studies by Na and Gottfredson (2013) and Swartz et al. (2016) are also supported by other quasi-experimental studies with non-equivalent or statistically controlled comparisons, which suggest that SPO presence is related to increases in arrests for disorderly conduct even after account for student poverty (Theriot, 2009), non-serious violent crime (Na & Gottfredson, 2013), and possession or use of drugs (Zhang, 2018) despite there being no relationship between SPO presence and student-reported substance use (Bhabra et al., 2004). This overall pattern is qualified by the results of three of the reviewed studies, which suggest that schools with SPOs had no change in their overall crime rates (Barnes, 2008), had lower arrest rates for simple assaults (Theriot, 2009), and had fewer serious crimes (Zhang, 2018). Importantly, the studies conducted by Barnes (2008)

and Theriot (2009) were the only two that relied exclusively on archival crime and arrest data, suggesting that the impact of SPOs, if any, may not be detectable in arrest and crime data examined cross-sectionally. This is potentially due to the influence of multiple intervening variables on arrest and crime data (e.g., shifts in local policy), which are particularly difficult to delineate when a study design is cross-sectional and does not employ a comparison (Hirschfield, 2018). In support of this idea, Brady et al. (2007) archival study on student outcomes finds a reduction in crime rates across all schools sampled, regardless of whether or not they employed SPOs. Indeed, the study by Theriot (2009) found that student poverty accounted for any observed differences in overall arrest between schools with and without SPOs. Furthermore, the study by Zhang (2018) suggest that fewer serious crimes are reported in schools with SPOs, after controlling for student socioeconomic status, but this finding is evidenced only in cases where SPO presence had been sustained in the school for 3 or more years—underscoring the importance of reporting change processes over time.

Furthermore, one quasi-experimental study employing a comparison design with multiple stakeholders and students suggests that SPO presence is unrelated to perceptions of student safety or positive social behaviors (McKay, Covell, & McNeil, 2006). This pattern has also been observed in other correlational studies, which suggest that perceptions that SPOs promote safety are held among relatively high achieving students, teachers, and administrators (Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2011). Similarly, one of the only studies to compare perceived safety with actual safety found that the influence of SPOs was limited to the former and not the latter (Swartz et al., 2016).

Taken together, the results of studies on the influence of SPOs on school discipline are consistent with previous reviews in suggesting, at best, a null effect and, at worst, an increase in exclusionary discipline measured broadly (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016; Hirschfield, 2018). Similarly, the results of studies on the influence of SPOs on schools safety, crime, and arrest are consistent with prior reviews in suggesting a null effect on safety and increases in crime and arrest, by most measures (Hirschfield, 2018; Petrosino et al., 2012). This pattern is also supported by Hirschfield's (2018) study finding higher levels in off-campus crime for schools with SPO programs. The influence of intervening variables, including poverty, has not been addressed by most studies and we echo assertions by all of the cited review studies to incorporate stronger quasi-experimental designs or random assignment to condition where possible.

Importantly, across studies, SPOs, law enforcement and school administrators, students, and teachers agreed that the goal of the SPO workforce is to promote school safety (Casella, 2003). It is clear that the studies reviewed on the influence of SPOs do not suggest that the SPO workforce is uniformly succeeding in this goal. Thus, the recommendations detailed in the following section are informed by the integrative synthesis of studies included in this review, and cast the question: how can SPOs be supported to promote school safety while reducing the potential negative or null impact of their work?

Recommendations: Safer Schools through a More Effective SPO Workforce

Taken together, the research reviewed above supports the notion that SPOs engage in conflicting roles, and that there is an increasing press to justify their presence in schools by expanding the boundaries of those roles to include mentorship without institutional support or training. This creates an overall context in which SPOs function in the service of social control. Evidence on the influence of the work of SPOs further corroborates their social control function. Though findings on SPO influence are mixed, the majority of evidence from the best-designed studies suggests that SPO presence is associated with greater exclusionary discipline and arrest, especially for minor offenses (Hirschfield, 2018; Petrosino et al., 2012). Moreover, there is no evidence that SPO presence is associated with school safety, particularly given the relatively low incidence of violence on school campuses (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016; McKay et al., 2006). Furthermore, there are no studies that examine the association between removing SPO programs from schools and school or student outcomes—these studies simply have not been conducted. Given the state of this evidence, the recommendations that follow underscore limiting the size, roles, and function of SPOs to support a smaller workforce through a more transparent partnership with schools.

Bounded Roles, Supported by Training

There is a need and desire for specialized training for SPOs that promotes competence, reduces the stigma associated with being stationed in schools, and enhances job satisfaction (Kelly & Swezey, 2015). This underscores a need to create an employment context that supports and incentivizes SPO training and allows qualified SPOs to self-select to become school law enforcement instead of law enforcement making selection decisions (Thurau & Wald, 2009). Scholars also emphasize the importance of collaborative models in which both schools and SPOs have a say in selection decisions to promote collective efficacy early on (Thomas et al., 2013), as well as models that incorporate student voice (Thomas et al., 2013).

Furthermore, some specialized SPO training programs have emphasized trauma-informed (Gill, Gottfredson, & Hutzell, 2016) and restorative justice (Nussbaum, 2017) trainings for SPOs in order to mitigate the daily stresses of their work roles and allow for more effective responses to struggling students (Raymond, 2010; Steinberg et al., 2011). SPOs perceive these training programs with high levels of satisfaction and consistent with supporting higher quality student learning (Steinberg et al., 2011). Furthermore, the conflicts and competing demands associated with the broadly construed roles of SPOs require schools to reconsider whether SPOs should be enforcers of school rules that do not constitute illegal behaviors (Ofer, 2011). The findings from this review suggest that these conflicting roles may create mistrust and fear among students targeted by SPOs enforcement of rules and teachers whose classroom management skills might be devalued. Across studies reviewed, scholars suggest that schools should not ask SPOs to enforce school rules, should consider whether SPOs are responsible for issues that occur off campus or not, and therefore should create standards that outline when SPOs can respond to behavioral issues, what constitutes an effective response, and the circumstances under which SPOs will intervene using

particular strategies (suspensions, expulsions, arrests, reported crimes; Fisher & Hennessy, 2016; Hirschfeld & Katarzyna, 2011; Mayer & Furlong, 2010).

Enacting these recommendations can mitigate the confusion that SPOs express in performing their roles, strengthen SPO-student relationships, and promote efficacy (Thomas et al., 2013; Thureau & Wald, 2009). Reducing role confusion and promoting satisfaction can, in turn, create a more sustainable workforce. This is particularly important because the ability of SPOs to work with schools in sustainable ways is associated with positive perceptions of SPOs among school administrators and linked to SPO programs' success in reducing crime and arrest (Wolfe, Chrusciel, Rojek, Hansen, & Kaminski, 2017; Zhang, 2018). Furthermore, clarifying and limiting the roles of the SPO workforce would likely result in need for a smaller number of SPOs deployed at fewer schools. While the literature reviewed suggest that this process will likely reduce exclusionary discipline practices, it is not clear whether reducing the number of SPOs in a school will have other unintended consequences. This latter question has simply not been examined in the empirical literature. However, as elaborated below, written agreements between schools and law enforcement agencies can support processes that effectively limit SPO presence in schools.

Create a Formal and Transparent School-police Partnership

The best available recommendation to formalize a school-SPO partnership is through a detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that can be created through a collaboration between SPOs, teachers, administrators, parents, and students (Thomas et al., 2013; Thompson & Alvarez, 2013). An MOU is a comprehensive agreement between school and law enforcement that incorporates written guidelines clarifying SPO work. Research suggests that SPOs typically do not have knowledge of MOUs in place or rarely refer to them (Thureau & Wald, 2009). National studies estimate that about half of schools with SPOs do not have MOUs, and the ones that do lack sufficient detail (Cray & Weiler, 2011). Implementation of MOUs is associated with a fewer court referrals, violent felonies, and higher graduation rates, although impacts on the SPO workforce have not been measured directly (Teske, 2011). Importantly, MOUs can be created when schools are interested in reducing or limiting the size and role of SPOs because they reduce role confusion and provide clear guidelines that SPOs cannot criminalize students' violation of school rules if students have not committed a crime.

Furthermore, MOUs can reduce role confusion among SPOs, promote understanding of the boundaries and scope of the SPO workforce among education and law enforcement agencies, and enhance student-SPO relationships (Cray & Weiler, 2011; Thureau & Wald, 2009). Effective MOUs typically can include descriptions of SPO and administrator roles and responsibilities, processes for selecting SPOs, minimum training requirements, how partners exchange and gather information, program and SPO evaluation, student rights, and transparency and accountability (Thomas et al., 2013). Furthermore, Thomas et al. (2013) recommend including a standard operating procedure that provides guidance to SPOs about the offenses that require legal versus in-school procedures, delineates the chain of command for officers, and identifies exactly what—if any—education and mentorship responsibilities

SPOs hold (for an example, see: https://b.3cdn.net/advancement/6000bf7319fcc5e333_xvm6b211j.pdf).

Collaborate with SPOs to Create and Strengthen Emergency Plans

Concretely, one of the most important characteristics of the SPO workforce is their training and ability to respond rapidly to emergency situations on school campuses (Barnes, 2016). Yet, not all schools with SPOs have emergency plans and protocols despite SPOs reporting that this represents an area of expertise (James & McCallion, 2013). Scholars recommend that schools with or without SPO presence on their campus, collaborate with SPOs to create such rapid response protocols, and that these collaborations include student perspectives and promote collaboration between SPOs and other school stakeholders (Travis & Coon, 2005; Zullig, Ghani, Collins, & Matthews-Ewald, 2017). This advances the student relationship-building goals that SPOs find valuable and important, while leveraging the expertise of law enforcement toward the goal of safety.

Involve SPOs with Cross-sector Collaborations with Community Agencies

Across studies in this review, there is little evidence that SPOs formally collaborate with any particular set of stake-holders outside of school who can promote access to resources that support the goals of SPOs to promote school safety. Cross-system collaborations can create formal partnerships between SPOs and health, mental health, and other service providers (Thomas et al., 2013). Under circumstances when SPOs are present in schools, this can create a specific role for SPOs as liaisons who can connect students and families with resources and, potentially, avoid more severe sanctions (Teske, 2011). This represents a much more bounded role in the spirit of “mentor-ship,” and leverages the fact that SPOs come into contact with many struggling students. At the same time, this approach does not require that SPOs directly provide the emotional support they are not trained to provide.

Conclusion

In integrating research on the roles, training, and influence of SPOs, an overarching conclusion of this review is that this workforce experiences role confusion, ambiguous partnerships with schools, and limited support to perform the most satisfying aspects of their work (e.g., mentor-ship). These workforce characteristics likely create a context in which SPOs use the tools they are best positioned to use—arrest and discipline. This, in turn, contributes to the observed pattern: heightened criminalization of student behavior. Synthesis of the research evidence reviewed in this paper supports clarifying and limiting the roles of the SPO workforce and questions the need for either the growth or maintenance of the size of this workforce, particularly in the absence of SPO training and intentional school-police partnerships that involve student and family input. An overarching implication of these recommendations is that the presence of SPOs should not be considered inevitable; and that researchers can play an important role in casting testable questions that critically examine whether and to what extent SPOs should continue to be placed in schools, under what circumstances, and for what particular goals.

Furthermore, research in this area will require an analytic lens that considers the needs of underserved children and families, and that centers race in this analysis given the history of disproportionate negative legal system consequences for people of color (Nolan, 2015)—an overarching gap in current research on SPOs. Indeed, a historical analysis of the proliferation of mass incarceration via processes of racial injustice—exemplified by the policing and criminalization of black and brown spaces, experiences, and lives—is central to our understanding of the *social justice* implications of school policing (Thompson, 2017). Research that has examined these dynamics finds that schools disproportionately target black girls for school discipline in ways that betray implicit and explicit gender and racial biases (Crenshaw, 2014). These school-based processes have been linked to sustained pathways of criminal justice system involvement and contribute to the proliferation of mass incarceration for people of color (Javdani, Sadeh, & Verona, 2011). Thus, we echo recommendations for scholars to employ systems accountability frameworks in their research that directly assess the ways in which current approaches, such as SPO programs, can re-produce power structures that further marginalize disenfranchised groups (Jumarali, Mandiyan, & Javdani, in press), and underscore that rigorous experimental designs have an ethical imperative to be “blind to condition, but not to oppression” (Javdani, Singh, & Sichel, 2017). Toward these goals, it is hoped that the recommendations from this study can be employed to first limit, bound, formalize, and support the SPO role and, next, to re-imagine the role of SPOs even more boldly in the vision of school safety for all youth rather than with a lens of fear and social control that disproportionately impacts the lives of youth on the margins.

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Highlights

- Systematic review of literature on the roles, training, and impact of school police officers (SPOs).
- SPOs occupy conflicting roles with high authority and little preparation.
- Presence of SPOs is associated with no changes or increases in exclusionary discipline.
- Presence of SPOs is associated with an overall null effect on safety and increases in student arrest.
- Recommendations center on clarifying and limiting the roles of SPOs through formalized partnerships.

Fig. 1.

Flowchart documenting identification, screening, and inclusion of articles reviewed.

Included articles were published between January 1999 and May 2018. Adapted from The PRISMA Group (Moher et al., 2009).

Table 1

Summary of key findings from literature included in systematic review

Workforce indicator	Authors	Method	Summary of key findings	Findings summary
(A) Individual and organizational factors related to School Police Officer (SPO) roles and training	Chrusciel et al. (2015)	Cross-sectional survey	<i>School administrators</i> Law enforcement executives and public school principals	Majority support a need for SPOs Mixed perceptions about whether SPOs enhance safety from school violence
	Devlin and Gottfredson (2016)	Longitudinal survey with comparison group	<i>School surveys</i> 480 schools from the School Survey on Crime and Safety for 3 years	Schools with SPOs reported more crime than those without SPOs Schools with SPOs engaging in roles relating to education and mentorship reported more crimes than schools with SPOs engaging only in law enforcement roles
	Jackson (2002)	Cross-sectional comparison survey	<i>School surveys</i> 900 youth participants from four public high schools in one SPOs	Students in schools with an SPO did not report differences in their perceptions of law enforcement or of offending compared to students in schools without SPO
	Kelly and Swezey (2015)	Cross-sectional survey	53 SPOs representing 179 middle and high schools in two urban US jurisdictions	45% of SPOs report spending the majority of time in the role of law enforcement officer 51% of SPOs reported that counseling was most time consuming, and reported highest job satisfaction (93%) and rated it as most important; 66% of SPOs report satisfaction with teaching and report doing less than 10 hours per week of it; Relationships are moderated by SPO gender, with women reporting higher satisfaction,
	Lambert and McGinty (2002)	Cross-sectional survey	<i>School surveys</i> 161 principals, 159 SPOs and 57 police administrators in one state	Principals, SPOs and law enforcement administrators differed in their perceptions of job expectations for SPOs
	Martinez-Prather et al. (2016)	Cross-sectional interview study	<i>SPOs</i> 6 months of interviews with SPOs in one state	40% of SPOs have not received specialized training in practice in schools 50%+ report wanting more training to promote job efficacy. Training is related to SPO disciplinary response
	McKenna and White (2018)	Cross-sectional survey	<i>SPO Survey</i> 564 SPOs from on US state (81% male, 54% white, Median age 44)	Over 75% had been in law enforcement over 1- years, though 41% had been in school law enforcement less than 5 years Majority reported engaging in law enforcement roles most frequently; Second most frequent role endorsed was that of mentor
	Robles-Piña and Denham (2012)	Cross-sectional mixed methods survey and interview	<i>SPOs</i> 184 SROs, 106 hired by school districts and 78 from municipal and county law enforcement	All SPOs had limited training. SPOs hired by school districts had more knowledge and school policies and were more likely to use conflict resolution than law enforcement hired SPOs

Workforce Indicator	Authors	Method	Sample	Summary of key findings	Findings summary
Organizational and Ecological Factors	Schlosser (2014)	Case study with observation and interview	<i>SPO-student interaction</i>	Law enforcement-hired SPOs had less school policy knowledge and reported higher likelihood of using legal interventions	Role conflicts emerge between competing demands to enforce law and engage in counseling or teaching
	Thureau and Wald (2009)	Qualitative interview study	<i>SPOs and police chiefs</i> SPOs and chiefs in 16 school districts in one state	Police chiefs viewed SPO role as helpful, but had limited knowledge about SPO roles; SPOs defined school-police partnerships as both cooperative/collaborative and confusing/conflicting	Majority of SPOs had no knowledge of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
	Barnes (2016)	Qualitative interview study	<i>SPOs</i> 12 SPOs from middle and high schools, selected from random sample of schools in one state	SPOs perceived that school administration and staff does not have clear understanding of the role of SPOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles devalued by school • Roles misunderstood by school • Conflicting and paradoxical understanding (monitor halls versus respond to all issues) • SPOs value forming relationships with students
	Cray and Weiler (2011)	Stratified random sample of 67 school districts in one state	<i>Multiple methods</i> School administrators National Data from National Center for Educational Statistics Coding of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)	<p>“Nobody knows what to use us for, where to put us, or how to fit us into the school system” (p. 199)</p> <p>50% of schools did not have an MOU with law enforcement agency; existing MOUs lacked detail</p> <p>No training provided to school administrators on role of SPOs</p>	
	Teske (2011)	Multi-method case study of one US County	<i>Official education and court data</i> Juvenile Court Automated Tracking System, incident level	After systems change effort including an MOU, court referrals reduced by 67%, graduation rate increased to 80%, felony referral rate decreased by 31%, school detentions decreased by 86% and court referrals to youth of color decreased by 43%, and 73% reduction in serious weapons on campus	Greater SPO interactions related to more positive perceptions about SPOs
	Theriot (2016)	Cross-sectional survey of students	<i>Student survey</i> 1956 students from five high schools and seven middle schools in one US region		Greater SPO interactions related to less school connectedness and exposure to more school violence
	Theriot and Orme (2016)	Cross-sectional survey of students	<i>Student survey</i>		Interactions with SPO were unrelated to feelings of safety; positive attitudes about SPOs were related to more perceived safety. Students with more school connectedness reported more perceived safety

Workforce Indicator	Authors	Method	Sample	Findings summary
(B) Influence of SPO work and programs Crimes, Arrest, & Safety	Wolf (2014)	Cross-sectional population survey	1956 students from five high schools and seven middle schools in one US region <i>SPOs</i> 28 SPOs representing workforce in one state (67% response rate)	100% reported using discretion in arrest; 77% arrest to calm student and 68% arrest to show consequences Student attitude and behavior history were most important factors in making arrest. 71% report that arrest decision in schools differed from arrest decisions in community
	Wolfe et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional school survey	<i>School Principals</i> 487 principals in one state	SPOs employed for longer are viewed more favorably SPOs viewed as acting fairly are more supported, seen as effective, and trusted by school principals
	Zullig et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional survey of students	<i>Student survey</i> 1065 students in grades 9–12 from seven public schools	Positive perceptions about SPO are positively related to school climate
	Barnes (2008)	Non-equivalent comparison with post-test only	<i>Official school crime</i> Data for public schools from one state	Schools with SPOs have no difference in crime rates compared to schools without SPOs
	Bhabra et al. (2004)	Non-equivalent comparison with pre- and post-test	<i>School administrator and student survey</i> 11 UK schools and two comparison schools	School administrators perceived reductions in substance abuse. Behavioral measures of substance use suggested no differences between schools with SPO and those without, on student substance use
	Brady et al. (2007)	Non-equivalent comparison with pre- and post-test	<i>Archival student outcomes</i> 10 intervention schools compared to all others in NYC	Small decline in crimes at both intervention and comparison schools
	McKay et al. (2006)	Non-equivalent comparison with pre- and post-test	<i>School administrator, officer and student survey and focus groups</i> Two intervention and two comparison schools in Canada	Perceived outcomes from police, administrators, teachers, and students from intervention schools suggest positive attitudes toward intervention Survey data suggest no impact on student safety or positive social behaviors
	Na and Gottfredson (2013)	Longitudinal non-equivalent comparison with pre and post-test	<i>School Survey on Crime and Safety</i> National random sample of 470 US public schools, principal reports	Increase in SPO workforce related to increases in reporting of crimes, likelihood of harsher responses, higher rates of weapon and drug crimes, and non-serious violent crimes, compared to rates in schools without SPOs.
	Swartz et al. (2016)	Cross-sectional propensity score comparison design	<i>School surveys</i> Nationally representative sample of 1699 elementary, middle, and high schools	Schools with SPOs are more likely to detect serious violence compared to propensity score-matched schools, but no more likely to have safer school climates or reduced incidences of actual violence

Workforce Indicator	Authors	Method	Summary of key findings		Findings summary
	Theriot (2009)	Cross-sectional, statistically controlled non-equivalent comparison design	<i>Arrest data</i>	28 schools in one large US district, where 13 schools had SPO for at least 3 years and 15 did not	Schools with SPOs had arrest rate of 12 per 100 versus comparison school with a mean arrest rate of 4, but student poverty explained this relationship. Disorderly conduct arrests increased whereas simple assault arrests decreased in SPO schools
	Zhang (2018)	Longitudinal non-equivalent comparison group	<i>SPOs and Students</i>	238 middle and high schools in one state	SPO presence related to increase in drug-related crimes and out of school suspensions and reduced serious crimes if SPO present long-term.
School Discipline	Brady et al. (2007)	Non-equivalent comparison with post-test only	Official Report/Archival	Student Outcomes 10 intervention schools compared to all other NYC schools	Intervention schools had higher levels of exclusionary discipline and suspensions than non-intervention schools Small decline in crimes at both intervention and comparison schools
	Fisher and Hennessy (2016)	Meta-analysis of seven effect sizes	<i>Multi-method</i>	Meta-analysis using pre-post designs	Presence of SPOs in high schools related to higher rates of exclusionary discipline in schools at post-test
	Fisher and Hennessy (2016)	Meta-analysis of three effect sizes	<i>Multi-method</i>	Meta-analysis using comparison group designs	Schools with SPOs present were no more likely to report disciplinary infarctions compared to schools without SPOs present

For studies on the influence of SPOs, studies were excluded if they were already included in the calculation of effect size in one identified meta-analysis included in our review (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). Studies with findings pertaining to more than one indicator appear only once, though all relevant findings are presented. If two different designs or analyses were used in the same paper, that study will appear in more than one row.