

2019

The Relationship Between the Employment of School Resource Officers, School Discipline, and School-Based Arrests Variables

Johnathon D. Monson
University of North Florida, n00945978@unf.edu

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The Relationship Between the Employment of School Resource Officers, School Discipline, and
School-Based Arrests Variables

by

Johnathon Monson

A Thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Psychological Science

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

July, 2019

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This thesis titled “The Relationship Between the Employment of School Resource Officers,
School Safety and Discipline Variables” is approved:

Approved by this committee:

Date

Dr. Angela Mann
Committee Chairperson

Dr. Hope Wilson
Committee Member

Accepted for the Department of Psychology:

Dr. Lori Lange
Chair of the Department of Psychology

Accepted for the College of Arts and Sciences:

Dr. George Rainbolt
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Accepted for the University:

Dr. John Kantner
Dean of the Graduate School

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Abstract

The school resource officer (SRO) program is a program developed in the United States with the goal of making schools a safer environment for students across all grades (Cray & Weiler, 2011). To date, the majority of research surrounding SRO programs focuses on recommended characteristics and qualities of SROs, as well as appropriate utilization of SROs (Weiler & Cray, 2011). However, relatively little is known about the effect of increased presence of SRO's in the school setting. With SRO's being tasked with disciplinarian roles Barnes (2016), it would be important to look at the effect of SRO's on school discipline variables such as out-of-school suspension (OSS). With OSS being linked to increased risk for arrest (Theriot, 2009), it would be important to analyze the effect of these variables on each other. Taking it one step further, minority populations are typically disciplined at a higher rate than their white peers (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). The purpose of this study is to examine the increased presence of SRO's, OSS and minority and their effect on school-based arrest. The results support previous research in finding that OSS and number of SRO's employed were significant predictors of school-based arrest. However, percentage of minority population was not found to be a predictor of school-based arrest. More research is needed to understand the extent of the relationship between OSS, SRO's, and school-based arrests and how it might be possible to reduce this connection.

Keywords: school resource officer, school-based arrests, school-based discipline

The Relationship Between the Employment of School Resource Officers and School Safety and Discipline Variables

In recent years, school systems have increased their usage of school resource officers (SROs). SRO's are essentially police officers contracted from Sheriff's Office's or Police Department to work in the school system. Prior to the 1990s, police officers were seldom assigned to schools (Brown, 2006; Weiler & Cray, 2011). In 1997, it was reported that 10% of public schools had an SRO "stationed" at the school at least once a week while another 12% reported at least having access to an SRO (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). As of 2014, an updated version of the report shows that the number of schools reporting having an SRO once a week has risen to 30% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Brown (2006) mentions that, even though law enforcement was involved in school systems prior to the 1950s, law enforcement working in schools were not necessarily sworn police officers. While police officers began being placed in schools after the 1950s, the dramatic increases in police presence in schools were not seen until the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 (Brown, 2006; Owens, 2016). Similarly, in 2018 after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting in Parkland, Florida, there was a significant outcry to increase police presence even further (see Mahoney, 2018). The increased presence of law enforcement in schools since the 1990s has been so notable that, in 1991, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) was created.

Interestingly, NASRO reports there are no requirements for local education agencies (LEAs) to monitor the employment of SROs and, consequently, there is no systematic tracking of the employment of SROs in the United States (James & McCallion, 2013; Robles-Piña, 2012). Additionally, there are complications in tracking the employment of SROs as noted by Robles-Piña (2012). More specifically, some school systems hire their SROs through county law

enforcement agencies while others have their own hiring and management system for SROs (Robles-Piña, 2012). The Office of Safe Schools Safe Schools Appropriation Expenditures Report from the Florida Department of Education (2018) offers comprehensive data regarding the employment of SROs disaggregated by county and level of school. This report also delineates allocations each state assigns to their SRO programs as well as the origin of funding. There are, however, limitations to this data as it is dependent on the districts self-reporting to the agency. As a result, there is tremendous variability in the data and the state of SRO utilization in schools remains unclear.

Contextual Factors Related to the Proliferation of SROs in Schools

Lack of School Staff Training in Classroom Management and School Violence

Prevention. Classroom management consists of the actions that teachers would take to maintain order in the classroom and keep the students engaged (Emmer & Stough, 2001). There are 5 main areas of classroom management that have been considered to be most effective. These strategies include; maximizing structure, teaching and reinforcing expectations, actively engaging students, acknowledging appropriate behavior, and using strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior (Simonsen et al., 2008). When examining teacher preparation in this area, only 28 states required that teachers be exposed to evidence-based classroom management practices for elementary or secondary education (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere & MacSuga-Gage, 2014). Only 74% of teacher preparation programs reviewed in this study offered a course related to classroom management, however, it is unclear if these courses were mandatory or how many teacher candidates enrolled in these courses. Roughly 50% of programs offering classroom management courses were able to provide evidence of teaching evidence-based practices. The most commonly cited evidence-based classroom management strategies being utilized included

methods to promote appropriate behavior while decreasing inappropriate behaviors. The consequences for this lack of training are severe. Teachers who lack classroom management skills have almost three times as many disruptions as those that were more effective with classroom management practices (Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2011), making it more likely students will come into contact with escalated disciplinary practices. When considering the lack of training many school staff receive in managing behaviors in the classroom, it is perhaps not surprising that student behaviors remain an issue for schools. With the lack of classroom management techniques, it appears that students are being removed from classrooms for minor offenses through disciplinary techniques that were originally created for major crimes (zero-tolerance policies, arrests by SROs, out of school suspensions, etc.).

Criminalization of Behavior through School Discipline. The criminalization of behavior through school discipline refers to the addition of metal detectors and surveillance cameras in the school system, as well as the advent and expansion of zero tolerance policies (Wolf, 2013). Zero tolerance policies, in particular, are thought to have first become institutionalized through legislative mechanisms such as the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (Giroux, 2003). The Gun-Free Schools Act mandates that any student who brings a firearm to school will be expelled for a year (Johnson, Boyden, & Pittz, 2001). Eventually, zero-tolerance policies were also adopted as a response to gang violence, drugs, and other weapons on campus (Heitzeg, 2009; Wolf, 2013). Zero tolerance policies have evolved and expanded to use exclusionary discipline such as out-of-school suspension (OSS) to address minor offenses, including one student sharing an aspirin with another or a student that forgot they had a Swiss Army Knife in their pocket (American Bar Association, 2001).

Since the advent and expansion of zero tolerance policies, out-of-school suspension has been used to address minor offenses leading to suspension include: disobedience, disrupting the classroom, using profanity, and acting with disrespect (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). According to the Advancement Project (2005), gun violence and drugs often account for very little of the zero-tolerance policy-related arrests. In Palm Beach County school system in Florida, for example, gun violence and drug possession only account for a combined 25% of zero tolerance policy related incidents that required police involvement (Advancement Project, 2005). In fact, the Advancement Project reports that 42% of police involved incidents were related to violations of code of conduct, or behavior that is considered harmful to the students' peers. In one instance, a 15-year-old student considered intellectually disabled was arrested and charged as a violent offender for allegedly stealing \$2 from another student under zero tolerance policies and was held in jail for six weeks before having his case dropped. A similar case involved two students who were arrested and brought to court for stealing \$7 from another student. In another instance, two 15-year-old students were on a bus throwing peanuts at each other and accidentally hit the bus driver with a peanut. Both students were suspended and faced criminal charges (Berger, 2002). Schools can become so focused on the rules and punishing those that break them that they may lose sight on why the behavior itself occurred and what might be done to prevent the behavior in the future (Irby, 2014).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline. The pushing out of students from schools through exclusionary discipline triggering a cascade of other risk factors resulting in incarceration is deemed the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP; Welch, 2017). More specifically, students – in particular Black students, students living in poverty, and students with disabilities – who receive out-of-school suspension often fall behind academically making them more likely to drop out

resulting in increased risk for arrest and entry into the juvenile justice system (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Heitzeg, 2009; Hjalmarsson, 2007; Theriot, 2009). There is evidence that suspending students actually leads to more behavior problems rather than less and that students who have received even one out-of-school suspension are up to 10 times more likely to ultimately drop out of school (Gonzales, Richards, & Seeley, 2002; Jerald, 2006; Losen, et al., 2015; Mayer, 1995; Rumberger, 1987; Skiba et al., 2006; Wraight, 2012). Despite the research suggesting that exclusionary discipline is not only ineffective, but harmful, use of such practices is widespread and continues to persist.

Training, Qualifications, and the Role of SROs

Qualifications for School Resource Officers. The literature has examined both the knowledge, practices, and characteristics of effective SROs. The research is mixed in terms of desirable characteristics of SROs, however, honesty seems to be consistently rated as important. In a survey-based study completed by 377 participants including school administrators, school SROs, and law enforcement officer administrators, honesty was identified as the leading quality desired in school resource officers (Lambert & McGinty, 2002). Honesty and trustworthiness are seen as critical to helping the SRO build interpersonal relationships with the students (Finn, Shively, McDevitt, Lassiter & Rich, 2005). Although these personality characteristics are viewed as important, it's unclear what impact they have on the roles and actions of SROs. For example, in studies conducted with traditional police officers, personality characteristics actually play little to no role in overall perception and job performance (Sanders, 2008). Further research is needed in this area to understand how the characteristics of SROs relates to job performance and impact.

Training of School Resource Officers. It stands to reason that training may be one of the most critical aspects related to impact and job performance for SROs. Unfortunately, there is no

research to explain what the minimum or adequate training for SROs looks like. One area of suggested training stems from an SROs interaction in the school system. SROs are inherently law enforcement officers and do not receive the same styles of training awarded to other school officials. It is mentioned that SROs would benefit from learning school-based preventions such as positive behavioral interventions (Thompsons & Alavarez, 2013).

NASRO (2018) reports several tiers of optional training for SROs. A basic SRO course begins at roughly \$495 per person. They list a multitude of other programs that add to those costs including an advanced SRO course (\$395 per SRO), adolescent mental health training (\$225 per SRO), crime prevention through environmental methods (\$395 per SRO), an SRO management course (\$395 per SRO), and effective internet safety course (\$395 per SRO). In order to stay current on all optional training, it would cost roughly \$2300 per officer. This does not include travel expenses or other related costs. For agencies that employ multiple SROs, these training costs are notable.

So how much training do SROs actually receive? In a review of 19 SRO programs, it was found that SROs are not typically given adequate training before employment in schools (Finn, Shively, McDevitt, Lassiter & Rich, 2005). One survey administered by SROs found that SROs report enforcing rules at their discretion and that 77% of the SRO participants had decided whether or not to arrest a student based upon prior criminal records rather than any training given to them (Wolf, 2013). A significant portion of the SROs had also arrested a student simply based on the wishes of the teacher, even if the offense was considered minor.

Of those SROs that received training, over 75% to 82% received training done “in house” or were provided by state-level training agencies like the Florida Association of School Resource Officers (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2011). This training, however, is

optional, and as mentioned, can be cost-prohibitive for agencies. The IACP (2011) notes that one of the primary reasons listed for agencies not offering greater training is lack of funding.

The Role of School Resource Officers. In addition to evaluating the characteristics and training for SROs, research has sought to understand the roles and utilization of SROs in schools. NASRO (2018) recommends that SROs serve as teachers, informal counselors, and law enforcement officers and that they should be prohibited from participating in student discipline leaving that to school administrators. This relates to what is known as the “triad role.” Under the triad role, the SRO is not just seen as a law enforcement officer but also as an educator and counselor. As an educator, the SRO is able to teach students and faculty about a wide range of issues including: bullying, gang prevention, crisis prevention/intervention, and constitutional rights of the students. Also mentioned in the article, spending the extra time to help educate the students and faculty can create a more positive relationship. As a counselor, the SRO can be expected to spend time with students in a more private setting helping to discuss any stress or issues that students might be facing. With regards to training, mentor may be a more appropriate term as SROs do not receive the training and licensing required to be considered a counselor. While the SRO may not be a licensed counselor, they have the ability to refer students to the appropriate care they may need through mental health services.

Despite these recommendations, it seems that, in general, the role of SROs varies greatly and is not well-defined. Barnes (2016) conducted an interview-based study of school administrators and SROs. In this study, school administrators reported that they rarely knew how to properly utilize the SRO assigned to their schools creating role ambiguity for SROs. The SROs in this study expressed they were expected to monitor restrooms or check for students wearing hats instead of maintaining their police duties. They viewed these assignments as

diminishing their authority. Role ambiguity also has implications for officer job satisfaction. In a survey-based study involving 52 SROs examining the day-to-day activities of school resource officers, role ambiguity directly negatively impacted job and personal satisfaction (Rhodes, 2015). The impact of negative personal and job satisfaction has on job performance is unknown.

Interestingly, SROs report that teachers no longer handled disciplinary actions in school (Barnes, 2016). Meaning that, SRO's are being expected to handle classroom matters that, in the past, have been handled by school administration (e.g. talking in class, being disruptive, etc.). In fact, most school principals believe that SROs should be utilized in disciplinarian (Rhodes, 2015). Given that many SROs find themselves serving as disciplinarians despite the NASRO recommendations, it is perhaps not surprising that the SRO program has become a program that criminalizes student behavior (Theriot, 2009). Instead of a scuffle or disruptive behavior being handled in the classroom, students are charged with assault or disorderly conduct. Around 77% of SRO participants report arresting students to simply calm them down after disorderly conduct and another 68% of SROs answered they had arrested students for minor offenses to show students that actions have consequences (Wolf, 2013). These SROs reported that 55% of these arrests for minor offenses were simply because the teacher wanted the student to be arrested. In fact, the data suggests SROs are more likely to arrest juveniles than they are adults (Brown, Novak, & Frank, 2009). The reasons for arresting juveniles more frequently included that juveniles act more irrationally, are less fearful of officers, and are more susceptible to peer pressure. This study also suggests that officer interactions with juveniles are often more adversarial in nature. Using SROs in this way has serious negative consequences. In Colorado where SROs are primarily used to respond to inappropriate behaviors, students perceived their

schools to be less safe (Weiler & Cray, 2011). Exposure to SROs in school has also been linked to reduced feelings of school connectedness (Theriot, 2016).

Despite the seeming disparity between ideal roles for SROs and current practice, there are models of success. In the United Kingdom, School Liaison Officers (SLO) are typically utilized for coordination of social services (Brown, 2006). This is similar to the idea of community-oriented policing incorporating a partnership between the police and the community where community feedback is solicited, and the community is consulted regarding what areas police should focus on (Dukes & Hughes, 2004). There is some evidence that having stronger police-community relationships may prove beneficial to improve student perspectives of police (Johnson, 1999). By already having a mutually positive relationship between the SRO and the community, most students ultimately reported that having the SRO in the school made them feel more secure.

Problem-oriented policing teaches SROs to Scan, Analyze, Respond, and Assess – also known as the SARA method (Solomon & Uchida, 2002). This allowed the officer to determine where and what the problems were based on observations and community surveys that included parents, businesses, students, and school faculty. The SRO used these techniques in order to build a successful relationship not just amongst the students, but also with the community giving them the ability to reduce crime in the school system. The SARA method was used with some success in Hollywood, Florida. In Hollywood, it was reported that reducing disciplinary responses for SROs freed up time and manpower for more urgent situations. By simply having more exposure to the SROs, the students reported having a significantly higher change of positive views towards their schools' officer (Zullig, Ghani, Collins, & Matthews, 2016). These results were found across grade level, gender, and race. This exposure technique also helps the

SRO build trust in the schools and communities while building a safer environment for the students (Barnes, 2016; Thomas, Towvim, Rosiak, & Anderson, 2013; Wolf, 2013; Watkins & Mayume, 2012).

Are Schools Actually Safer?

Determining whether or not schools are safer and what is making them safer are difficult questions. When it comes to violent crime at school, Musu-Gillette et. al (2017) report that less than 1% of deaths involving school aged children actually occurred at school during the 2013-2104 school year. On school campuses, there were roughly 15 crimes per 1,000 students. During that same school year, only 13% of schools reported one or more “serious violent incidents.” They also report that between 1992 and 2015, students that reported being victimized in a nonfatal capacity declined, as well as reports of violent crime. They found that students who reported gangs in school between 2001 and 2015 reduced from 20% to 11%. They also reported a decline of illegal drugs, with 10% of students reporting fewer instances of drugs being made available to them (32% in 1995 compared to 22% in 2015). There were slight increases in bullying from 28% to 21% between the 2005 and 2015 school years. Surprisingly, despite the decline in crime, teachers actually reported higher rates of students interfering with their teaching (25% in 1993-1994 school year compared to 35% in the 2011-2012 school year).

In terms of security measures, the use of cameras in public schools increased from 19% to 75% between 2000 and 2014. Around 88% of schools had a plan in place for school shootings with 70% of schools reporting holding an active shooter drill. There is debate on whether or not additional security measures aid in school safety. Security measure (e.g. school badges, security guards, cameras, etc.) showed no impact on peer victimization (Blosnich & Bossarte, 2010).

However, simply having adults in the hallways in school can reduce peer victimization by up to

26%. There was also little difference in truancy rates between students at school with multiple physical security measures (security personnel, cameras, metal detectors, etc.) versus those with few security measures (Tanner-Smith & Fisher, 2016). In interviews conducted by Bracy (2011), students believed that adding more security measures to schools is overwhelming and gives the school a “negative atmosphere.” Other students within the survey mention that adding more security increases their stress of entry into school. In all, very little is understood around whether or not added security measures are contributing to improved school safety. In fact, it seems that some security measures actually make students feel less safe and can create stress around entering school.

The Impact of Increased Police Presence in Schools. Examining the specific impact of the proliferation of police in schools yields surprising results. While having an SRO in the school system tends to be negatively associated with school violence, SRO presence is associated with increased disciplinary action (Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, & Donner, 2011). In one study, schools that employ SROs from law enforcement agencies actually saw a 22% increase in reported student offenses (Torres & Stefkovich, 2009). Having an SRO in the school raised the arrest rate of disorderly conduct by 402%. It follows that having an SRO in school increased the overall likelihood of arrests by almost 200%. In lower income schools, even when controlling for poverty, it is reported that there were an average of 216 more arrests when there was an SRO present on campus when compared to schools without an SRO present. The results of this study suggest that the proliferation of police in schools has had negative unintended consequences in schools, namely, increasing arrests disorderly conduct and placing students at greater risk for entering the STPP.

Additionally, there is concern that police presence on campus may be related to encroachment on students' rights. Bracy (2010), found that SROs were cutting corners to get around students' rights without actually breaking the law. Students were being forced to consent to searches upon returning to school after leaving for lunch. These students had not been found to be breaking any laws but were still forced to be searched (e.g. amendment violation). At another point, the researchers found that instead of reading a student their rights before questioning them, they would have the administrators question them in their presence since administrators were not held to the same standards. While schools may be employing SROs with the intention of increasing safety, placing SROs in the position of disciplinarian seems to have unintended consequences including reducing psychological safety and potentially infringing upon student rights.

Student Perceptions of School Resource Officers. While the stated goal of the SRO program is to be a safer environment, the results are mixed with regards to student perceptions of SROs. In a survey of 230 students, they were asked about a broad view of SROs, students often rated them more favorably than when asked about a specific job role (Brown & Benedict, 2005). For example, students reported positive views towards how SROs treated students, but less favorably rated the SROs overall ability in certain areas of keeping the school safe and/or drug free. Young males tended to view the abilities of SROs less favorably when compared to female students (Brown & Benedict, 2005). This could be due to the fact that they also mentioned males tend to be more involved with disciplinary interactions with the SRO. The participants in their study were predominately Hispanic. Students who witness a crime on campus viewed the SRO as poorly performing in their job, but did not necessarily think poorly of the SRO as a person (Flexon, Lurigio, & Greenleaf, 2009).

Also of note, it has been shown that students whose attitudes tend to be “pro-school” and “pro-teacher” believe that the police care about the community and treat people equally (Flexon, Lurigio, & Greenleaf, 2009). The data for their questionnaire was collected from 891 students throughout public high schools in Chicago. 83% of students in the survey were African American or Latino with 55% of participants being female. These same pro-teacher/school students also found the police officers more dependable and competent. This lends support to the notion that positive school climates can impact student perceptions of school staff including school resource officers. Going by these findings, it can help researchers understand the impact of positive vs. negative school climates on school faculty and SRO’s. Why do pro-school students have more positive views of SRO’s when compared to those students who are not?

It is also possible that student contact with SROs during the day makes a difference in developing their perceptions of SROs. Theriot and Orme (2016) surveyed roughly 2,000 students and found that SRO interaction had no significant relationship with perception of safety. However, it is notable that 79% of students surveyed had reported having 2 or fewer interactions with the SRO throughout the entire school year. As other articles cited within this study have found, the more positive interactions with SRO’s students have daily, the more likely they are to have positive views towards SRO’s.

The Florida Context: School Resource Officers in Schools

The State of SRO Utilization in Florida. As mentioned previously, reporting the number of SROs within each county is optional and up to each individual school district to accurately report. While overall student enrollment and number of SROs in schools fluctuates, the student to SROs ratio remains relatively stable. Please see Table 1 for more information about the historical student to SRO ratios in Florida.

The FDOE also describes how school safety funds were spent as part of the SRO program. According to the 2016-2017 school year report, \$64,456,019 was given to the SRO program. This is a very slight increase when compared to the 2012-2013 school year in which the SRO program was allotted \$63,358,081. However, while the program expenditures only increased by roughly \$1 million, the proportion of these funds spent on SRO salaries increased significantly over that same 5-year period from \$46,111,720 to \$55,810,707. In comparison, only \$204,761 of school safety funds were allocated to behavior driven intervention programs and bullying intervention/prevention programs. There was no description provided on “behavior driven intervention programs.” The lack of bullying prevention instruction was attributed to lack of time (41 counties) or lack of funding (33 counties). There was also a little under \$4,000,000 spent on middle and high school programs related to the correction of specific discipline problems. Unfortunately, it is unclear what discipline programs were being targeted or what the programs were used to address them.

Training for SROs in Florida. Florida Statute 1006.12 states that SROs are to be law enforcement officers and are to be enforced under the laws related to police officers (School Discipline and School Safety, 2016). While it is stated that the SRO will work in conjunction with school administration, there is no mention of specific training courses that the SRO should undergo. This means that SROs are acting as law enforcement officers (LEOs) in the education system. However, it is unclear at this time what if any specialized training SROs receive related to school-based policing, the development of youth, or how to properly intervene with youth behavior.

As of 2013, Florida provides roughly 24 hours of training related to justice-involved youth in the police academy’s which makes up roughly 3% of the 770 hours of total training

given during enrollment in the police academy (Thurau, Buckley, Gann, & Wald, 2013). Additionally, the Officer of the Attorney General Florida Crime Prevention Training Institute (FCPTI) offers a designation of “specialist” for officers that accomplish 88 hours of juvenile training, however, it is not mandatory that SROs complete this training and there is no certification that comes with training completion (Florida Crime Prevention Training Institute, 2018). Specialists must complete a minimum of eight hours of professional development biannually to maintain their designation. The FCPTI mentions the course costs \$299 for enrollment, and that they have trained roughly 12,000 SROs through 260 courses. However, there is no indication of which school districts utilized the training, no course descriptions, or any indication of whether or not the training needs to be maintained through future sessions.

Potential Impact of School Resource Officers in Florida Schools

School Discipline. It seems that, overall, despite stable ratios of SROs to students, contrary to previous research fewer students are being pushed out of Florida’s schools – one metric of the criminalization of student behavior. During the 2012-2013 school year, 388,915 students either faced in-school or out-of-school suspension. Suspensions dropped to 325,751 students during the 2016-2017 representing slight improvements in the number of students being suspended out of school. Another surprising statistic is the drop of expulsions over that same five year period. During the 2012-2013 school year, 1,012 students were expelled. During the 2016-2017 school year, only 523 students were expelled representing a drop of almost 50%. There is clearly a reduction in the number of students being taken out of the schools, however, the direct cause is not clear.

School-Based Arrests. The FDJJ tracks various statistics regarding arrests throughout Florida schools. Data is provided in interactive graphs that displays trends regarding various

crimes related to both misdemeanors and felonies. According to their numbers, school-based arrests dropped roughly 39% between fiscal year (FY) 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2018). Overall, during the 2012-2013 school year, there were 7,767 students arrested for misdemeanors and 4,010 students arrested for felonies. In comparison there was a significant drop during the 2016-2017 school year with 4,126 students arrested for misdemeanors and 3,030 students arrested for felonies. The data also shows the leading misdemeanor arrest (assault and battery) dropped from 2,274 arrests in FY 2012-2013 to 1,397 arrests in FY 2016-2017. The leading felony arrest (aggravated assault/battery) dropped from 1,525 arrests in FY 2012-2013 to 1,060 in FY 2016-2017.

While a majority of counties in Florida appear to be showing a decline in student arrests, Jefferson County saw a significant increase in arrests from 30.5 arrests per 1,000 students to 46.6 arrests per 1,000 students over the same 5-year period. One surprising statistic reported by the FDJJ highlights inconsistencies within the overall goal of zero-tolerance policies. While originally created to eliminate drugs, and weapons from campus, only 8.6% of all arrests during the 2016-2017 school year actually involved felony weapons or drug charges. The majority of arrests were in fact for misdemeanor assault/battery charges. This shows that zero-tolerance policies are potentially being misused, or schools lack the appropriate training on how to use zero-tolerance policies. While it is unclear what is leading to the significant declines in school-based arrests, one possible answer is related to increased utilization of the pre-arrest civil citation program.

At-Risk Populations. Minority students have been more likely to be more severely punished for second offenses of the same nature when compared to their white peers (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). With a sample of 57 female teachers varying by education level

(elementary-12th grade) and age, significant interactions were found between infractions and student race. This means that African American students were more likely to receive a second infraction than their white peers. They also found that teachers were more “troubled” when an African American student was the one to commit a second infraction. It was also reported that teachers felt it that, after the students’ second infraction, African American students should be punished more severely. These findings are supported by a long history of research linking minority students to higher rates of suspension, arrests, and other disciplinarian actions (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Lewis et al., 2010; Townsend, B. L, 2000).

The Civil Citation Program. In an effort to reduce the number of student arrests, the civil citation program (CCP) was created. Civil citations provide a mechanism for SROs to refer youth to outside agencies in an attempt to prevent arrests. The goal is to allow students who are first time offenders committing misdemeanors to enter diversion programs involving committing to community service or entering counseling (Roberts, 2015). Failure to comply with the diversion program could ultimately lead to arrest. Additionally, if a youth who receives a civil citation in Florida moves out of state, the citation is transferable and requires them to continue their diversion program. Civil citations are tracked at the state, circuit, and county levels, however, as with other programs and reporting procedures mentioned, the civil citation program is not mandatory.

According to the FDJJ website, Florida statute 985.12 was amended in 2011 granting districts across the state the option to utilize civil citations. The FDJJ also reports that 60 of 67 counties in the state of Florida have adopted the CCP or similar diversion programs. According to FDJJ (2018), 50,000 juveniles have received civil citations since the programs’ inception with a trend of increasing utilization. When the program was first launched in 2011, only 27% of

eligible youth received civil citations compared to the roughly 60% for the 2017-2018 year. It is possible that as counties engage in greater utilization of the CCP, school-based arrests will drop even further.

Goals of the Present Study

Many factors within the school environment can lead to negative outcomes for the students themselves. More specifically, this study aims to look at factors that impact school-based arrests using (1) number of SRO's employed, (2) OSS, and (3) high minority population status as predictors. It is hypothesized that (1) increased SRO presence on campus will be a predictor of greater school-based arrests, (2) increased rates of OSS will be a predictor of increased rates of school-based arrests, and (3) that high minority schools will predict greater rates of school-based arrests.

Method

Data Collection and Materials.

Quantitative school discipline and SRO employment data was collected from the Florida Department of Education system disaggregated by district from the 2009-2018 school years (FDOE, 2018). Data regarding school-based arrests were collected from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice website (FDJJ, 2018). For this particular study, the following variables were of interest: (1) number of SRO's employed in each district, (2) number of students receiving OSS, (3) percentage of minority students enrolled in districts, and (4) the number of school-based arrests. Data was originally collected and organized using excel and then transferred into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to be analyzed. After the data was collected and transferred, each variable of interest was combined into one total variable (e.g. total number of SRO's employed by the state) to represent statewide data.

Design and Analysis.

As mentioned in data collection and materials, data was collected for the 2009-2018 school years. A descriptive statistics analysis was run on the data in order to search for missing values and/or outliers. It was determined that data for school years prior to 2012-2013 as well as the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years was not complete. Data was considered incomplete if data was either (1) not collected in the same way from year to year or (2) data was omitted throughout an entire column from variables of interest by the original organizations (FDOE and FDJJ; e.g. missing data for arrests and OSS). The most complete set of data using variables of interest were the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2016-2017 school years. In order to assess the impact of an increased SRO presence on school-based arrests, several multiple regression analyses were conducted for each school year of interest. School-based arrests was used as the outcome variable for each year, while number of SRO's employed, number of students receiving an OSS, and minority population data were used as predictors. Results were interpreted within and across school years.

Results

See Table 2 for additional information regarding results. For the 2013-2014 school year, a multiple linear regression model was to predict school-based arrests from OSS, number of school resource officers, and total population. As shown in table 2, a significant regression equation was found $F(3, 63) = 77.40, p < .001$, with an R^2 of .790. The analysis shows that OSS significantly predicted school-based arrest ($\beta = .04, p < .001$), number of employed SRO's predicted school-based arrests ($\beta = 1.69, p < .05$) but population did not predict school-based arrests ($\beta = 39.25, n.s.$).

For the 2014-2015 school year, a multiple linear regression model was used to predict school-based arrests from OSS, number of school resource officers employed, and total population. As shown in table 3, a significant regression equation was found $F(3, 63) = 91.20, p < .001$, with an R^2 of .813. The analysis shows that OSS significantly predicted school-based arrest ($\beta = .04, p < .001$), total number of resource officers employed predicted school-based arrests ($\beta = 1.39, p < .05$), but population was not significant of school-based arrests ($\beta = 36.64, n.s.$).

For the 2016-2017 school year, a multiple linear regression model was used to predict school-based arrests from OSS, number of school resource officers employed, and total population. As shown in table 4, a significant regression equation was found $F(3, 63) = 81.65, p < .001$, with an R^2 of .800. The analysis shows OSS significantly predicted school-based arrests ($\beta = .04, p < .001$), total number of resource officers employed predicted school-based arrests ($\beta = 1.25, p < .001$), but population did not significantly predict school-based arrests ($\beta = 24.17, p > .05$).

Discussion

The first purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between increased presence of SRO's on school campuses and school-based arrests. Additionally, OSS was considered as a precursor to school-based arrests. Finally, in keeping with previous research, we considered whether school-based arrests could be predicted by student population, in particular schools with increased minority student attendance.

In this study, OSS was used as a predictor for increased school-based arrests. This supports past research suggesting that being taken out of school increases a student's risk of being arrested (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Heitzeg, 2009). These findings become more

significant as Losen et al. (2015) have found that districts in Florida have been suspending up to 19% of students at the secondary level. Interestingly, while the data from the FDOE shows OSS numbers dropping by 3% from the 2012-2013 to 2017-2018 school years, there is a continued increase in the number of SRO's employed. It is unclear on the reasoning for the continued increase in SRO presence in schools knowing that OSS rates are going down.

The second purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between SRO employment and school-based arrests. While it was found that total number of SRO's employed were a predictor of school-based arrests, we continue to see an increase in SRO employment as reported through the FDOE. Analyzing data from almost 2,300 schools from the National Center for Education Statistics, Torres and Stefkovich (2009) report that school-based arrests increase significantly with the use of SRO's. Analyzing data from 932 high schools using binomial regression models, Jennings et al. (2011) was able to positively associate an increased SRO presence with higher rates of school violence. Theriot (2009) found that, while controlling for school poverty, having an SRO on campus increased arrest rate for disorderly conduct (labelled as a simple class disruption) by 100 percent. This is especially troubling when considering officers are now being tasked by the schools to handle even minor infractions that pose little to no threat to campus safety (Brown, 2006; Hirschfield, 2008; Lawrence 2007). With the number of studies finding increased presence of SRO's as a negative factor in school discipline and school violence, more research would be needed to understand why there is a continued increase in their presence in schools.

The last purpose of this study was to examine percentage of minority population as a predictor of school-based arrest. The hypothesis that percentage of minority population would be a significant predictor of school-based arrests was based on a significant amount of research

linking minority populations with higher arrest rates (Hirschfield, 2008; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Theriot, 2009). In a review of school discipline documents from elementary and middle schools by Skiba et al. (2012), it was found that African American students were significantly more likely to be sent to the office for “problem behaviors.” African American and Latino students were also more likely to receive OSS. For these reasons, percentage of minority population was included within the analysis of this paper to see if it would be a significant predictor of school-based arrests. It was expected that this study would find significant results on school-based arrests using the minority population variable as a predictor similar to what previous studies have found. The results did not support what has been shown by research in the past. As discussed later in the limitations section, it is possible that the data was not entered into the system correctly or in a similar manner as other data provided.

Limitations. Limitations within the data include inconsistencies in data variables collected by the state each year as well as inconsistencies in districts reporting in from year to year. There are also potentially cases where suspensions are simply going unreported as suspensions. In Miami-Dade county, where OSS has been eliminated, parents are reporting that their children are being sent home from school as a disciplinary action for being disruptive (e.g. fighting, noncompliant) and told not to return for a certain amount of days (Gerety, 2016). As it appears this incident is not an isolated incident (Gerety, 2016; McKiernan, 2016; Sokol, 2016), it is possible that the number of OSS recorded is incorrect. SRO employment data may also not be completely accurate, as it is not mandatory for counties and/or agencies to report the number of SRO’s they employ, or what level of schooling those SRO’s are employed to (elementary, middle, or high school). This could potentially skew the numbers reported by the FDOE. SRO’s are also not always employed at the same schools or grade level (elementary, middle, high

school) from year to year. This could also negatively affect the reliability of numbers reported by the FDOE.

Different districts have different employment and training opportunities within their school systems. As an example, some districts have school police departments while other districts employ SRO's from sheriff's offices or local police departments. Each of the departments could also potentially have different reporting and training procedures. Some schools contract security guards from outside companies which also is not included in the SRO data. Due to the variability of reporting procedures, there currently is no way to fully understand the relationship between increased presence of SROs in school with school-based arrests without set training guidelines and mandatory reporting procedures.

Implications for Schools. One important implication is the need for increased training of SRO's and school administration. With the increased employment of SRO's in schools and underreporting of OSS numbers, it difficult to understand the true nature of the relationship. As many articles cited in this paper have suggested, school administrators are expecting officers to act as the disciplinarians. With this being the case, it would be important for officers to have training in adolescent development as well as an understanding of OSS and its relation to school-based arrests. It would also be important for school administration and police agencies to set guidelines on the appropriate use of SRO's on when and how they should be utilized.

Creating new standards for the SRO program is outlined by a new report through NASRO (2018), which mentions 4 main areas of improvement for the SRO program. Those 4 areas include: administration, selection, training, and collaboration. Training and collaboration are an important theme through this paper. It is mentioned by NASRO that new training standards should include annual training with topics related to adolescent mental health and

crisis planning. For collaboration, Janopaul-Naylor et al. (2017) have linked police-mental health collaboration with increased access to mental health services for at risk students. This allows students access to mental health referrals to get assistance they need in hopes to prevent or reduce school-based arrests. Another important change recommended through NASRO is that the SRO is partnered with an administrator from the school through which they are employed. The school administrator would be expected to complete SRO and school-based policing courses in an effort to strengthen the relationship between the school and SRO.

The Federal Commission on School Safety (FCSS; 2018) report mentions that officers in Illinois, Maryland, and Florida have prevented, or stopped school shootings before anyone was hurt. From these incidents, the FCSS reports that a clear outline of job responsibilities and training requirements should be developed. Having a clear outline of job responsibilities would help to eliminate role ambiguity which has already been shown to increase job dissatisfaction among officers. It is also recommended that agencies outline training requirements to become and maintain SRO certification which would prevent SRO's from having to learn while on the job. A study of this type would require more accurate reporting of SRO's within each school district.

In a report from Governor Rick Scott from 2018, it is mentioned that they were able to secure \$99 million in funding for a school hardening grant based on a security risk assessment. This money would be used in school districts like Broward County to help pay for surveillance cameras and intercom systems (Travis, 2018). The plan for this particular district would require a security camera at every entrance and allow the security cameras to be accessed remotely (from an outside source). While "safety" is the reasoning used by both sources, past research presented has suggested that increased security measures are not effective at increasing security (Musu-

Gillette et al., 2017; Blosnich & Bossarte, 2010; Tanner-Smith & Fisher, 2016). While other studies involving students have shown that increased security measures are often associated with negative atmosphere (Bracy, 2011)

Implications for Future Research. As a continuation of this study, it would be important to gather a more complete dataset over an extended period of time while looking at individual factors of school discipline. In its current state, the data for individual felonies or misdemeanor offenses are not complete for each district throughout the state of Florida. This could be done through cooperation with the FDOE and DJJ in an attempt to access missing data.

In future studies it would be important to examine school safety through the views of SROs and how they experience day to day events. It would be important to understand differences between SROs and how they view the discipline process within the school system compared to how school administration views the same process. Without having set guidelines to the SRO program, it is possible that each individual SRO approaches school discipline in a different way. It is also possible that each individual SRO uses their own individualized experiences to day-to-day activities. These factors are highlighted by Baltes (1987) and could account for differences among SROs. He labeled these differences non-normative influences and age-graded influences. Examples of non-normative influences impacting SROs could include experiences with school shootings or gang violence. Age-graded influences could also be of interest. These influences could be examined through the practices of younger SRO's just out of training when compared to veteran SRO's that have been in the field for multiple years.

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Table 1

Student to SRO Ratio: 2012-2017

School Year	Students	SROs	Ratio
2013-2014	2,720,797	1,443	1,887 to 1
2014-2015	2,756,944	1,430	1,928 to 1
2015-2016	2,792,234	1,517	1,840 to 1
2016-2017	2,817,076	1,466	1,921 to 1

Note. The information from this graph was adapted from data provide through the FDOE 2012-2017 safe schools expenditures report and FDOE Student Enrollment interactive graph.

Table 2

School-bases Arrest Using OSS, Employed Resource Officers, and Percentage of Minority

Population as Predictors

	β	Beta	SE β
2013			
Constant	-6.73		
SRO	.04	.25	.68
OSS	1.66	.69	.01
% Minority	39.25	.04	71.51
2014			
Constant	-10.80		
OSS	.04	.75	.01
SRO	1.39	.20	.64
% Minority	36.64	.04	62.83
2016			
Constant	-6.78		
OSS	.04	.69	.04
SRO	1.25	.28	.37
% Minority	24.17	.04	45.12

Note. Population was calculated into percentage by dividing Caucasian students by the total population.