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Investigating the effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies on school social work practitioners

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Investigating the effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies on school social work practitioners

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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Matthew James Cuellar
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Lauren, and our amazing son, Matthew James Cuellar Jr. Without the two of you I would be nowhere and I would have never been able to complete this project. I also dedicate this project to my father, Richard Ray Robbins, who defeated lung cancer while I worked on this assignment. I am so blessed to have such a loving and supportive family, and I owe 100% of my success to them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

A primary objective of the school social work profession is to maintain equality and empower students while promoting educational achievement for troubled and disadvantaged youth in schools. They are among the leading mental health care providers for youth in United States schools today. As school social workers are increasingly being used in United States schools, many find themselves working within practice contexts with complex security environments. These environments can introduce a number of complexities to their practice as well as the students they serve; however, the relationship between school safety strategies and school social work practice, and the role school social workers play in protecting students' rights in complex security environments has not been adequately researched. This dissertation examines evidence for the validity of an instrument designed to operationalize two distinct types of school safety strategies and various school social work practices as outlined by a widely accepted school social work practice model. Using data collected with this instrument, this dissertation then explores the responses of 229 school social workers across the United States to determine: 1) the extent to which student- and school-level factors predict the implementation of authoritarian and educational/therapeutic safety strategies; and 2) how these types of strategies influence school social workers' engagement in various practices as outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model. Results suggest that authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies both have significant effects on the types of practices in which school social workers engage. Findings have implications for school social work practice and for improving the effectiveness of commonly implemented school safety strategies that will remain fixtures in United States schools. This study serves as a next step in understanding school safety in United States schools by discussing how the school security environment might affect school social workers in practice.

Keywords: school safety, school violence prevention, school social work, students' rights, criminalization

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INTRODUCTION

School social workers are versatile professionals employed in schools to provide educational and mental health services to students and school personnel. While the philosophy of school social work practice has remained largely unchanged since its inception in the early 1900's, the field of school social work has seen tremendous growth over the last few decades due to federal legislation and the push to provide evidence-based mental health services to youth in schools. School social workers provide these services by carrying out a number of practices centered on improving the lives of students and school personnel within their schools. Thus, school social workers have a vested interest in school-level policies and practices that influence student outcomes and effect the school environment, such as those introduced through school safety strategies.

Today, school safety strategies are widely implemented in United States schools due to high-profile incidents of school-based violence, such as the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012. While school safety is absolutely necessary for student success, emerging research suggests many "blanket" preventative strategies might adversely affect students and school personnel. For example, the use of metal detectors or security cameras require structural changes that might promote an institutional effect that compromises students' feelings of safety and connectedness in school. Therefore, as school social workers are increasingly integrated into schools, school safety strategies likely have implications for their service coordination and delivery. However, relationships between commonly implemented school safety strategies and school social work have not been adequately researched.

This dissertation presents a study that examines school-level factors that characterize the school security environment in which school social workers are employed and explores the extent to which characteristics of this environment might affect school social workers in practice. Data were collected from 229 school social workers across the United States using an instrument designed for this study. Results suggest that school size, percent of socioeconomically disadvantaged students enrolled, and school education level (i.e., elementary, middle, secondary) were positively associated with the use of authoritarian safety strategies. School location (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) and education level were also positively associated with the use of educational/therapeutic strategies, while the percentage of socioeconomically disadvataanged youth enrolled was negatively associated with their use. Results also suggest that authoritarian school security environments require school social workers to engage in more practices that promote home-school-community linkages and involve direct service delivery, while environments characterized by educational/therapeutic strategies require school social workers to engage in all practices outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model in use today. Findings serve as a next step in understanding the effects of school safety strategies on students and school personnel in United States schools from the perspective of school social workers. Implications for practice, education and research are discussed.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, or scholarly papers, and a concluding section. The first chapter provides background for the current state of school social work and discusses the current literature surrounding school safety and its implications for school social work practitioners. This chapter also highlights the need to explore school social workers' perceptions of school safety. The second chapter describes the development of an instrument

designed to measure school social workers' reports of school safety strategies and students'

rights and examines validity of this instrument. The third chapter uses data collected from the

instrument discussed in chapter two to explore hypothesized relationships among two distinct

types of commonly implemented school safety strategies and school social work practice. This

dissertation concludes by synthesizing results discussed across chapters and providing

recommendations for social work practice, education, and research.

CHAPTER I

School safety in United States schools: Implications for school social work practice

This manuscript (Scholarly Paper #1) has not been published anywhere, nor will it be published anywhere before I turn in the final version of my ETD, so I didn't include a publication statement. This article was revised a number of times before it was considered a "final" draft. Reviewers included my dissertation committee, Drs. Matthew T. Theriot (Chair), John G. Orme, Mary L. Held, and Lois Presser. I sole-authored this original manuscript. I plan to submit this manuscript for publication in *School Social Work Journal* upon its approval by the aforementioned committee.

Abstract

Despite a decrease in school-based violence over the past decade, recent profiled cases of violence in schools have resulted in administrative efforts to improve school safety. Unfortunately, an emerging body of research suggests that a number of school safety strategies can have detrimental effects on the school environment, adversely affecting students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other school personnel who have a vested interest in school safety. Yet, little is known about how school social workers, a population educated and professionally trained to ameliorate these effects, are affected by school environments that implement various safety strategies. This paper contributes to the school social work literature by presenting a search of relevant literature on school safety and discussing how two different types of school safety strategies might influence school social workers' engagement in professional practices as outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model. Recommendations for school social workers within the context of school safety are provided.

Keywords: school safety, school violence, school social work, social work practice

School social workers are versatile professionals trained to identify and use the resources necessary to maintain a safe educational environment that fosters student success (Franklin, et al. 2009; Frey et al., 2013). However, research concerning school social work and school safety has primarily focused on school social workers' perspectives and practices concerning violence in schools (e.g., Astor et al., 1997; 1998), their practices and involvement in selected school violence prevention practices (Astor et al., 2005), and their role within a particular framework or intervention (e.g., Franklin et al., 2009; Kelly, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2015). School social workers are often left out of the discussion of school safety, with school safety literature commonly overlooking their role within the school or grouping them with services they provide (i.e., social work and counseling; e.g., Ruddy, et al., 2009). Therefore, current research fails to provide a picture of how commonly implemented school safety strategies might affect school social workers in practice.

This paper contributes to current literature by providing a discussion of how certain school safety strategies can potentially affect school social workers in their practice, drawing on evidence from both theoretical and empirical school safety research. First, the history of school social work and the role they play in today's schools is provided. Second, the results of a search for literature on commonly implemented school safety practices is presented. Third, research identified is used to discuss how school social workers might be affected by commonly implemented school safety strategies. This paper then concludes with recommendations for school social work practitioners.

BACKGROUND

The School Social Worker

School social workers can provide a number of student- and system-focused interventions designed to address the needs of their students using a person-in-environment perspective. They are a critical component to the relationship between school, home, and community, often working directly with school personnel, parents and families, and community stakeholders. School social workers play a unique and important role as school personnel in that they can identify elements of the school environment that impede student success, advocate for the disadvantaged, and promote student achievement through their service delivery and coordination.

History of School Social Work. Historically, the role of the school social worker has been to serve as an agent for addressing biopsychosocial factors that influence student well-being (Costin, 1969; Allen-Meares, 1994). School social work was founded on the principle that school-based professionals could engage a student by viewing their behaviors as contextual to their environment at school and at home. This perspective is what distinguished them from other school-based personnel, setting the framework for the school social worker today (Schaffer, 2006). In the 1970's, school social work was expanded by efforts of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the US Department of Education due to legislation that increased the federal government's role in the public school system (e.g., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEA] and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA]). With attention on the diversification of student populations (i.e., improved awareness of intellectual disabilities due to IDEA), school social workers became recognized for their ability to adapt practice models that viewed student problems as a product of their environment

(e.g., Costin, 1973). From the 1980s, school social work researchers and practitioners pushed for consistency in the ecological approach to service delivery (Allen-Meares, 1996; Dupper, 2002).

In the late 1990's and early 2000's the profession shifted after to high-profile incidents of school violence and policy responses at the federal and state level. Incidents such as those seen in West Paducah, Kentucky in 1997 and Columbine, Colorado in 1999 resulted in the increased use of school safety strategies in United States schools (Addington, 2009; Booren & Handy, 2009). This likely shifted the school context in which school social workers are employed. Around the same time, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) was introduced in 2002. This and the subsequent reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004 introduced evidence-based practice as a mandated component to improving student outcomes in school social work practice (Kelly et al., 2008). These policies likely influenced school social work practice in general, introducing the requirement to use evidence-based practices and incorporate family and community resources into the school curriculum. These policies led to nationally recognized multi-tiered evidence-based frameworks for service delivery in school settings, such as response to intervention (RtI) and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). These practices further defined and specialized the school social work profession we know today.

The field of school social work continues to grow as a result of federal legislation and the need to provide mental health care for children in schools. For example, in 1996 there were approximately 9,000 school social workers across the United States (Dupper, 2002), and as of 2008 there were approximately 20,000 to 22,000 (Franklin, Gerlach, & Chanmugam, 2008). The field is projected to grow 19% between 2012 and 2022 due to an increased demand for mental

health services in schools (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Today, the profession is represented by a number of independent national organizations, including the NASW, the SSWAA, and the American Council on School Social Work (ACSSW).

School Safety and the School Social Worker: A Gap in the Literature

Research suggests that school social workers actively participate in school safety programs implemented in their schools (e.g., Astor et al., 2005); Yet, there is very limited research on the role school social workers play in school safety and the extent to which school safety strategies affect school social workers in practice. Research concerning school social work and school safety has primarily focused on their perspectives and practices concerning violence in schools (e.g., Astor et al., 1997; 1998), their practices and involvement in selected school violence prevention practices (Astor et al., 2005), and their role within a particular framework or intervention (e.g., Franklin et al., 2009; Kelly, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2015). School social workers are often left out of the discussion concerning school safety; with school safety literature commonly overlooking their role within the school or grouping them with services they provide (i.e., social work and counseling; e.g., Ruddy, et al., 2009). Therefore, current research fails to provide a picture of how commonly implemented school safety strategies might affect school social workers in their practice. An understanding of how common school safety strategies affect school social workers in practice has implications for school social worker preparedness and the quality of services they provide to their students and schools.

The Present Study

There is a need to understand school social workers' roles in school safety and how their schools' security environment might affect their practice and professional responsibilities. The

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current study sought to address this need by providing a brief review of current school safety literature and identifying trends regarding how various school security environments might affect school social workers directly and indirectly in practice.

This review has three objectives: 1) To explore current literature on school safety strategies used in today's schools; 2) To discuss how the effects of common school safety strategies on students and school personnel demonstrated in current research might extend to school social workers; and 3) To provide recommendations for school social workers in practice today based on the literature reviewed in this study. In order to meet these objectives, literature was searched for and appraised based on established criteria.

METHODS

Literature Search

Literature was identified by searching numerous subject terms via ten databases: Scopus, PubMed, Academic Search Premier, Academic OneFile, PsychINFO, Social Work Abstracts, ERIC, CINAHL, Web of Science, and GoogleScholar. The Cochrane Library and the Campbell Collaboration were also reviewed, though only one article was drawn from both of these resources. Of primary interest were empirically based scholarly articles published in academic, peer-reviewed journals; therefore, filters were set when searching for each combination of subject terms. Furthermore, and with consideration of the evolving field of school safety, search was limited to literature dating back to 1990 (approximately 26 years). To ensure that the most effective search was conducted, librarian consultation was sought prior to conducting the literature search.

Subject terms were assessed in each database used to locate literature, though there was little variation in subject terms across search engines. Search terms to collect literature on school safety strategies included a combination of "school," "school safety," 'student*," "student* right*," "student* arrest*," "student* criminal*," "school personnel" and ("AND") various search terms. To organize the search, search terms were broken up by the type of school safety strategy they were grouped in. For authoritarian strategies, these terms included "metal detectors," "fences," "gates," "surveillance," "camera*," "alert system," "school polic*," "search*," "zero tolerance." For educational/therapeutic strategies, terms included "counsel*," "conflict resolution," "peer mediation," "mentor*," "communication," and "connectedness." In searching for literature on both strategies, the terms "policies," and "practices" were used in conjunction with "school safety." Search terms to collect literature on school safety strategies and school social work included a combination of "school safety" and ("AND") "school social work*," "social work," "counsel*," and "school mental health."

RESULTS

After filtering out irrelevant literature, there were 152 articles that were published in scholarly journals that met criteria for inclusion in this review. Of these, approximately 100 were empirically based and reported original research findings, regardless of the methodology used, since 1990. Seventy-one articles in total were selected for use in this article. The majority of this literature was published in the last fifteen years (after 2000). Leading journals with multiple hits included Journal of School Violence, Journal of Criminal Justice, Criminal Justice Review, Justice Quarterly, Youth and Society, Journal of School Health, Journal of School Psychology,

Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, Social Work, Children and Schools, and Criminal Justice Review.

Summarizing Research on School Safety Practices

School safety is a growing trend in the United States. Schools today use a number of safety policies and practices that aim to maintain and improve safety for students and school personnel. School safety is broadly defined as the security of students within school settings from incidences that can cause harm and impede student success, such as harassment, bullying, violence, and substance use (National Archives and Records Administration, 2011). School safety can take a number of forms, nearly all of which aim to minimize the harmful effects of specific interactions among peers.

Preventative policies and practices designed to improve school safety, herein referred to as school safety strategies, can be classified a number of ways (Nickerson & Spears, 2007; Time & Payne, 2008; Cuellar, *in press*). Nickerson and Spears (2007) provide the most parsimonious framework for classifying school safety practices. Nickerson and Spears assert that school safety strategies can be grouped into two categories: authoritarian and educational/therapeutic . The authoritarian approach assumes the use of authority to prevent school violence, often involving the deployment of police or the application of security hardware in the school setting (e.g., metal detectors, security cameras, school policing, zero-tolerance policies). In contrast, educational and therapeutic approaches aim to improve school climate by increasing communication between students and school personnel while promoting student connectedness (e.g., counseling, conflict resolution training, peer mediation programs, parent-community programs; Nickerson & Spears, 2007).

Authoritarian Strategies. Research on authoritarian strategies is dominated by cross-sectional self-report survey data sources and qualitative data, frequently capturing perceptions of students, school personnel and school administrators as they concern school safety and school connectedness. The most researched of these strategies is metal detectors and school policing. There is virtually no research on the use and effectiveness of the following strategies in reducing school violence: surveillance cameras, locked doors and monitored gates, dress codes, and zero-tolerance policies.

In a systematic literature review, Hankin (2009) identified seven studies focused on effects of metal detectors on students, all of which utilized data from self-report surveys, and found that only one study provided limited support for their use in reducing the number of weapons brought into schools. Moreover, recent research by Gastic (2011) and Gastic and Johnson (2014) suggests that metal detectors compromise students' feelings of safety in United States schools, and that metal detectors are used disproportionally in United States schools characterized by more violence and a large percentage of minority students enrolled.

Research on school policing is more mixed but similar in that primary sources of data are secondary self-report or qualitative. Early research suggests school policing is a promising practice that might decrease arrest rates all together by mitigating student arrests (Johnson, 1999). More recent research suggests that students generally perceive their school police or security officer as an effective tool in preventing school violence and believe that their work is beneficial to maintaining safety (Brown, 2006; Brown & Benedict, 2005). However, research in the last decade paints a different picture. For example, Perumean-Chaney and Sutton (2012) found among a nationally representative sample of United States school-aged youth that the

number of visible security measures used in schools (e.g., metal detectors, security cameras, locked gates) was negatively associated with students' feelings of safety. Moreover, in a recent congressional report by James and McCallion (2013), the authors state that the research on school policing is extremely limited, with empirical research suggesting that the use of school police, in particular school resource officers, might be associated with increased arrest rates for non-serious offenses.

Complementing this body of research is a large body of theoretical literature that argues a number of authoritarian practices can be detrimental to students and school personnel, though these effects have not been tested. This literature provides detailed hypotheses that students' rights can be violated when strategies such as security cameras (Addington, 2009; Braggs, 2004; Warnick, 2007), student searches (Beger, 2003; Essex, 2003; Finley, 2006), and zero-tolerance policies (Skiba & Peterson, 2000) are implemented, particularly when no consideration is given to how these strategies might affect students prior to their implementation (Kim & Geronimo, 2009; Theriot & Cuellar, *in press*). Without evidence as to the effectiveness of these strategies, it is difficult to draw conclusions as to whether they play a role in reducing the occurrence of school violence.

The researcher is unaware of any experimental research on the effects of different types of authoritarian approaches and the occurrence of school-based violence. This lack of experimental and longitudinal research in an area dominated by self-report survey data suggests there is insufficient data on authoritarian strategies to draw conclusions as to their effectiveness in reducing school violence (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009; Greene, 2005). Therefore, results of this review suggest that current literature is skewed towards being critical of the use of

authoritarian strategies; however, it is not possible to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of many of these interventions. Regardless, they remain the centerpiece of school safety at the federal, state, and local levels (James & McCallion, 2013; Roberset al., 2014; White House, 2013).

  Educational/Therapeutic Strategies. Similar to authoritarian strategies, educational/therapeutic strategies have seen widespread implementation in the last decade due to the push by federal legislation and funding initiatives to incorporate evidence-based approaches into mental health care in United States schools. These strategies encourage student-student and staff-student communication and promote students' feelings of school connectedness. It is important to note that many of these strategies vary in their labels, but a common theme across these interventions is that they are preventative (e.g., Tier 1) interventions. Specific educational/therapeutic strategies will be discussed in this section; however, many others exist and can include practices such as conflict resolution, student mentoring, individual and group counseling, encouraging anonymous student reporting, and promoting student connectedness.

  Conflict resolution training and peer mediation is comprised of a series of techniques that promote positive interactions among students in an attempt to informally resolve the effects of student crime or violence (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). The primary objective of conflict resolution training and peer mediation is to provide students with a framework for effectively addressing student conflicts among themselves and their peers (Daunic et. al., 2000). These practices are grounded in developmental and social psychology theory, centered around promoting the significance of peer relationships and their contribution to student well-being (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Research supports the effectiveness of conflict resolution and peer

mediation in schools of different education levels across the world (Bickmore, 2002; Haskvoort, 2010; Latipun, 2012; Sahin, 2011; Turnuklu, 2009). However, many of these programs vary by school, and therefore it can be challenging for school personnel to adapt their fundamental principles. Nonetheless, a number of resources for conflict resolution training are promoted today, and its use continues to grow with empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of its many components (CRU Institute, n. d.).

Educational/therapeutic strategies have seen widespread growth in schools across the United States as a result federal legislation and nationally recognized multi-tiered practice frameworks that aim to incorporate evidence-based practices in schools. Unlike research on authoritarian strategies, interactionist strategies have received rigorous research attention as they apply to United States schools. Perhaps one of the most promising studies was conducted in 1999 in Seattle, Washington. Research conducted by the Conflict Resolution Institute used an experimental pretest-posttest design to investigate the implementation of conflict resolution training among a sample of 149 students enrolled in secondary school. Findings suggest that conflict resolution training had a positive effect on students' perceived ability to communicate, contribute to resolving conflicts, and general knowledge of conflict resolution strategies (CRU Institute, n. d.).

Similar results have been found for peer mediation and student mentoring. For example, in a longitudinal study of youth in sixth through eighth grades, thirty students were trained in peer mediation, which was in turn found to be associated with an increase in student resolution and a decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals resulting in suspensions across a student body of 796 (Bell et al., 2000). The relationship between these types of programs and school-

violence is nothing new. Research on conflict resolution, peer mediation, student mentoring, and counseling programs suggest a positive association between their use and reducing school violence (Benson & Benson, 1993; Bell et al., 2000; Daunic et al., 2000; DuBois et al., 2011; Smith, 2002). This promising effect has resulted in a number of these programs to be implemented in schools today, particularly in schools characterized by older student populations.

Trends in School Safety Research

Literature on school safety in the United States over the last two decades depicts a continuously evolving area with a number of common themes, many of which have emerged over the last fifteen years. Current research suggests a number of associations among commonly implemented authoritarian strategies and students and school personnel. These relationships include the disproportional use of authoritarian safety strategies, the possibility for authoritarian strategies to violate students' rights, and increased arrest rates as a product of authoritarian strategies for school-based offenses that pose no legitimate threat to school safety.

Much of the research concerning the disproportional use of authoritarian approaches was conducted using three large, publically available secondary datasets originating from self-report surveys: 1) Add Health's National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a sample of adolescents in grades 7 – 12 in 1994 – 1995; 2) United States Department of Education's Education Longitudinal Study, a sample of high school adolescents across the United States in 2002; and 3) United States Department of Education's SSCS, a sample of school administrators in United States schools across all education levels (Gastic, 2011; Gastic & Johnson, 2014; Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchex, 2013; Kupchik & Ellis, 2008; Servoss, 2014; Servoss & Finn, 2014). These studies have excellent external validity and suggest the use of authoritarian

strategies in United States schools is disproportional in larger secondary schools characterized by a greater percentage of students who are of low socio-economic status or majority-minority. A common limitation of this literature is the restricted information available from these public-use datasets. This literature is complemented by anecdotal and theoretical literature that attempts to explain these relationships (e.g., Kupchik, 2010).

The hypothesis that students' rights are compromised by various authoritarian strategies has virtually no empirical examination. However, there is an extensive body of literature that uses theoretical research to explore the hypothesis. This research suggests that a number of authoritarian approaches have legal implications and might violate ethical principles and compromise students' rights and feelings of safety in schools (Steketee, 2012; Stefkovich & O'Brien, 1997). For example, Theriot and Cuellar (*in press*) discuss a number of studies and court cases to explain how, without careful consideration, school policing and affiliated practices can compromise students' rights and negatively affect student outcomes. Others suggest that the use of student searches such as those facilitated by metal detectors, security cameras, and school policing are detrimental to students and can adversely affect student outcomes (Finley, 2006; Warnick, 2014; Yell & Rozalski, 2000). The researcher is unaware of any literature that provides empirical reports on how violation of students' rights can be measured or factors that predict the presence and preservation of students' rights within a primary or secondary school setting.

The criminalization hypothesis is supported by anecdotal evidence across the United States (Giroux, 2009; Rimer, 2004), the use of secondary datasets such as the School Survey on Crime and Safety (Na & Gottfredson, 2013), and one study that uses original data collected in a single school district (Theriot, 2009). Stronger support for the criminalization hypothesis exists

in Na and Gottfredson (2013), whose research demonstrates a positive association between the deployment of school police and arrest rates for non-serious student offenses in United States schools; however, due to the research design it is unclear whether school policing actually caused increased arrest rates. Regardless, the research design used in this study does not allow for conclusions to be made regarding whether the arrests were reasonable. Theriot (2009) compared schools with school resource officers with schools that did not use trained school resource officers and found an increased arrest rate for disorderly conduct offenses, though these findings were drawn from a sample of a single East Tennessee school district. While it is unclear if criminalization occurs due to authoritarian practices, current literature suggests associations between the use of certain authoritarian strategies and increased arrest rates for less-serious student misconduct.

United States schools today are generally safe places for students to learn (May, 2014; Robers et al., 2014; Robers, Zhang, Morgan, Musu-Gillette, 2015). Yet, safety strategies that lack individualization to student and school needs, a common element of authoritarian strategies, are increasingly being used in schools. Trends across school safety literature suggest that the use of these approaches, particularly their disproportional use, represents a shift to a criminalistic perspective to addressing student behavior and might have significant effects on the school environment. These effects likely extend to school social workers directly and indirectly through effects on students.

DISCUSSION

School Safety and School Social Work Practice

School social workers play an active role in developing and implementing educational/therapeutic interventions (Astor et al., 2005), particularly those school social workers who adapt the multi-tiered frameworks recognized in schools today (Franklin et al, 2009; Sabatino et al., 2013). However, it is unclear how school social workers might be affected by commonly implemented school safety strategies. The socio-ecological approach to practice emphasized in school social work literature and promoted by nationally recognized practice frameworks can shed light on how the effects of school safety strategies might extend to school social workers in today's schools.

The planning and preparedness domain represents practices such as consultation with peers, review practice outcomes, and develop and maintain school-home-community linkages to promote student success (SSWAA, 2013). These practices help the school social worker meet the goal of maximizing access to school-based and community-based resources, as outlined in The School Social Work Practice Model. School social workers employed in schools that employ a number of authoritarian strategies will likely find themselves engaged in more service delivery and individual work with students, hindering their ability to assess and understand the environmental influence of student presentation.

The school environment domain is comprised of indirect and direct practices that address school-level needs and include practices that aim to improve students' feelings of safety and connectedness in school and identify and challenge practices that impede student success. Within the context of the School Social Work Practice Model (Frey, et al., 2013), these practices help

the school social worker meet the goal of promoting a school environment conducive to student learning. If authoritarian safety strategies negatively affect students' rights and result in increased arrest rates for less serious offenses, school social workers might find themselves engaged in more practices that aim to address the needs of their students at the school level. Moreover, research suggests that school social workers employed in schools that use educational/therapeutic strategies likely play a role in these school safety efforts. For example, Astor et al. (2005) found that approximately half of a convenience sample of 576 school social workers in the United States reported as being involved in school safety programs such as conflict resolution, social skills training, and individual and group counseling. Additionally, research has demonstrated a positive association between the number of mental health providers in school and the use of educational/therapeutic strategies. Therefore, it is likely that school social workers employed in schools that have these educational/therapeutic strategies in place will engage in more practices that involve direct services with students and practices that seek to address school-level needs.

The service delivery domain represents practices that address individual-level needs of students and can include practices such as direct and group counseling and skills training (e.g. conflict resolution, peer mediation, life skills). These practices likely require planning and preparedness and attention to school environment to be effective, particularly when school social workers work with children who have a history of academic or behavioral difficulties. As outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model, these practices can help school social workers meet the goal of to providing evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services in their schools. Research has pushed for school social workers to focus their efforts on

student systems rather than individual clinical practice with students alone (e.g., Allen-Meares, 2000). Therefore, if school social workers are engaging in practices as outlined by the practice model, these practices will be correlated with all others. Both types of school safety strategies likely affect school social social workers in this domain. For example, if authoritarian approaches compromise students'' rights, school social workers likely work with them directly to educate them and provide services as needed. On the other hand, educational/therapeutic strategies such as bullying prevention and conflict resolution programs will likely require school social workers to work directly with their students.

The professional responsibility domain represents practices that involve case management, managing workload, completing paperwork, and attending professional and educational meetings. These practices generally represent the caseworker role in today's schools, as suggested by recent research (Kelly et al., 2010). The administrative nature of these tasks suggests that the more client contact school social workers engage in (i.e. school environment and service delivery practices), the more case management they will be required to engage in. Said differently, a larger case load or meeting clients more frequently will require school social workers to spend more time coordinating and monitoring their service delivery, but not as much time documenting planning and preparedness or school environment practices.

School social workers typically have the training to assess student-environment interactions and determine student- and school-level needs, develop or improve approaches to addressing these needs, and incorporate evidence-based practices in their service delivery to maximize the effectiveness of these approaches. This along with the school-home-community connectedness they aim to improve through their service coordination makes them the ideal

provider of educational and therapeutic school safety strategies. Because the educational and therapeutic approach to preventing school violence is intrinsically systematic (Nickerson & Spears, 2007), the person-in-environment perspective, school social workers use makes them the ideal facilitator of these strategies. School social workers implement a number of these practices in today's schools already (Franklin et al., 2009). Many aim to provide students with a framework for effectively addressing student conflicts among themselves, their peers, and school personnel through communication and training (Daunic et al., 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Based on the professional standards outlined by NASW and SSWAA, school social workers are trained to develop and implement a number of educational and therapeutic strategies in today's schools that have positive effects on students' communication skills, their engagement in conflict resolution, and their general knowledge of these strategies. Many of these programs have resulted in an improvement in student academic and behavioral domains and a decrease in disciplinary actions in schools (Benson & Benson, 1993; Bell et al. 2000; Daunic et al., 2000; DuBois et al., 2011; Smith, 2002). Through the incorporation of these practices in service delivery and coordination, school social workers might play an important role in school safety by improving student outcomes across academic and behavioral domains through addressing students' feelings of safety and connectedness within the school environment.

If school safety strategies are being implemented as suggested in current literature, school social workers will inevitably work alongside numerous authoritarian approaches while developing and implementing educational/therapeutic practices within schools. Many of these practices have the potential to assist school social workers in carrying out their duties (e.g., school police can help school social workers make home visits or carry out student training).

However, current research suggests a number of authoritarian approaches can have adverse effects on the school environment, possibly negating the sense of safety and connectedness educational/therapeutic practices aim to maintain.

School Social Work and Trends in Current School Safety Research

Unfortunately, emerging research suggests many authoritarian strategies are negatively associated with students' feelings of safety within their schools (Bachman, 2011; Gastic, 2011; Mayer & Leone, 1999; Perumean-Chaney, 2013; Schreck & Miller, 2003), and they can be pervasive, violating the fourth amendment rights of both students and school personnel (Braggs, 2004; Essex, 2003; Steketee, 2012; Warnick, 2007). The use of authoritarian practices has also been found to predict student disruption in schools (Mayer & Leone, 1999). These findings suggest the implementation of numerous authoritarian strategies can compromise the school environment by promoting an institutional effect that takes away from its educational nature and is counterproductive to school safety; yet they are perceived as effective by school administrators and continue to see widespread implementation due to school safety efforts at the federal, state, and local level (Connolly & Reeves, 2013; Garcia, 2003; James & McCallion, 2013; May, Fessel, & Means, 2004; Robers et al., 2014; Time & Payne, 2008; White House, 2013).

A foundational practice for school social workers concerns their ability to identify disadvantaged and oppressed students and advocate for changes in policy that promote fair and equal treatment. Schools that disproportionally use authoritarian strategies introduce a complex practice dynamic for school social workers, requiring them to engage in advocacy and possibly go against practices that their superiors might otherwise favor. Therefore, school social workers must strike a balance between working in the best interest of the student and the policies and

practices that shape their school environment. In order to balance the demands of advocacy and equal treatment of students while abiding by the policies and practices put in place by their superiors, school social workers must be prepared to work in complex environments and understand their roles within schools within the context of advocating for changes in policy concerning the disproportional use of certain school safety strategies.

The disproportional use of authoritarian strategies might exacerbate practices that already pose a risk to students' rights. School administrators generally agree with and favor the use of safety practices that arguably violate student rights, and believe the threat or fear of a search is essential to keeping schools safe (National School Safety Center, 2001; Nickerson & Spears, 2007; Time & Payne, 2008). However, this "threat of a search" can serve as a detriment to school social workers in their efforts to preserve students' feelings of school connectedness. This is problematic, as the purpose of the school environment is to promote youth development and learning, not to instill fear and promote an institutional culture within the school (Warnick, 2007).

As school social workers strive to preserve the rights of their students and promote a school environment that condones fair and equal treatment, their efforts might be hindered by the need to develop more pragmatic approaches to school safety that consider students' rights. Said differently, school social workers who spend a great deal of their time advocating for changes in policies and practices to protect the rights of their students might be less engaged in direct practice with students and more engaged in administrative tasks. Moreover, they are ethically responsible for identifying elements that contribute to the violation of student rights, and advocating for their improvement if needed. Thus, if school administrators favor practices that

school social workers identify as potential detriments to their students (e.g., violating students' rights), they are placed in a position where they must decide whether or not to "go against the grain" in regards to the best interest of their students.

Reliance on authoritarian strategies represents a philosophy that condones the processing of student behaviors that pose no legitimate threat to school safety. Criminalization of student behavior is particularly problematic for school social workers, as arrest and removal of students from schools has been found to predict future behavioral problems and decrease the chances for student success (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Therefore, as school discipline is increasingly handled by authoritarian approaches that might result in student criminalization (Dorhn, 2001; Hirschfield, 2008), the role school social workers play in reducing student offending through the promotion of student communication and connectedness might be negatively affected.

As previously discussed, high rates of ethnic minority enrollment predict a disproportional use of authoritarian practices in schools. This along with evidence to suggest that the use of these practices can result in criminalization implies that students who are already at a disadvantage within the school context might be targeted as offenders. Consequently, school social workers employed in these schools might be faced with drastic challenges that require them to address the needs of these students within the context of their service delivery. Therefore, as school social workers continue to work alongside and in collaboration with authoritarian strategies, their practice dynamic might be influenced, depending on the prevalence of authoritarian strategies and criminalizing elements within the school environment. While research is clearly limited in the area of students' rights and student criminalization, evidence

exists to support the criminalization hypothesis, and it is clear that authoritarian practices might affect school social workers through the impact they have on students.

This body of research suggests a need for careful consideration of the effects associated with authoritarian strategies when developing and implementing educational/therapeutic programs. In order for educational/therapeutic practices to be effective, they must be implemented with an understanding of the effects authoritarian practices might have on the school environment. Therefore, there is a need for the facilitators of educational and therapeutic practices, such as school mental health providers and school social workers, to understand how other approaches to school safety can affect their work. Assuming school social workers meet regulatory training expectations as set forth by governing bodies, they likely can design and implement school safety practices with consideration of the influence authoritarian practices might have on their efforts (NASW, 2012). In order to do so, school social workers must maintain awareness of the trends in current research on the use of different types of school safety strategies and how these trends might affect them in practice.

School Social Workers on School Safety: Why Their Input Matters

School social workers are in a position in which they can share a unique perspective concerning school safety strategies employed in their schools. Likely experiencing the effects of school safety strategies first hand through school environment practices and direct practice with their students, they can contribute to the growing knowledge of school safety in a way much different than the students they serve and other school personnel. However, school social workers are often overlooked in the academic literature regarding school safety strategies. Thus, an approach to better understanding how school safety strategies might affect school context is to

consider the input of school social workers, a population that likely views effects of school safety initiatives much differently than students and other school personnel.

Typically trained in violence prevention (Astor et al., 1998) and in the ability to use research to inform their practice (NASW, 2012), school social workers have the tools to develop and implement school safety strategies that have minimal harmful effects on students and the school environment (e.g., Franklin et al., 2009). Their professional preparedness contributes to their ability to identify school safety strategies that impede student success and advocate for change in policies and practices that potentially harm students and school personnel. They work in collaboration with a number of school personnel and view their students' issues as contextual to their environment. They also can view the school environment and the factors that influence it much differently than other school personnel. Therefore, it is likely that school social workers can provide insight as to the effects certain safety strategies have on the school environment which will advance the field of school safety.

School Social Work and School Safety: Considerations for Practice

Trends in the current research suggest that school social workers employed in large, urban schools characterized by minority or low-socioeconomic status student populations might be faced with a number of challenges in their direct practice with students. This effect likely extends to all school social workers, as the implementation of numerous school safety strategies will inadvertently alter the school climate, affecting the school culture and subsequently the students and school personnel therein. Trends also suggest that school social workers might be faced with unique challenges that result from the association between authoritarian strategies and their effect on students and school personnel. The literature reviewed in this paper highlights

several important considerations that school social workers should make when developing and implementing programs in their schools:

- Advocate for the integration of educational and therapeutic practices when developing and implementing programs designed to improve school safety and preserve students' rights

- Maintain awareness of what school safety strategies are implemented in a given school setting and how these strategies might influence student and school personnel outcomes

- Improve awareness of the challenges commonly implemented authoritarian strategies pose within the context of service delivery and coordination (e.g., students' rights)

- Consider preexisting school safety approaches that can influence intervention effectiveness directly and indirectly through their impact on the school environment

- Assess and incorporate individual student- and school-level needs when developing and implementing school safety programs

When applied in practice, these recommendations can help school social workers maximize their effectiveness while minimizing the potentially consequential effects of commonly implemented authoritarian practices. School social workers should consider themselves as facilitators of school safety strategies as they hold the professional capacities necessary to identify elements within the school context that impede student success and advocate for the fair and equal treatment of their students. This person-in-environment perspective sets school social work practitioners apart from other mental health professional, making them the ideal facilitator of educational and therapeutic school safety strategies in today's schools.

School social workers might also consider how they can use authoritarian strategies to facilitate their practice within schools. Authoritarian strategies might assist school social workers in carrying out specific tasks. For example, school police can help school social workers conduct home visits and maintain community partnerships through service collaboration. However, careful consideration of their potential effects on students and the school environment is needed for these relationships to be effective. As suggested by the literature, disproportional use of authoritarian strategies might negate the promising effects of educational/therapeutic strategies in schools with disadvantaged or underrepresented populations. Therefore, as school social workers facilitate school safety efforts and develop programs and interventions accordingly, they must give careful consideration to already implemented school safety strategies and understand their effects on the school environment. Such consideration will likely assist them in maximizing the effectiveness of the programs they develop and implement while minimizing elements of the school security environment that might negatively affect student success.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the Indicators of School Crime and Safety Reports, released by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2012 and 2015, schools in the United States are generally safe places for students and school personnel (Robers et al., 2014; Robers, Zhang, Morgan, & Musu-Gillette, 2015). Yet, authoritarian strategies are increasingly used in United States schools due to high-profile incidents of school-based violence. Current research suggests the use of these strategies will continue to grow and they will likely remain fixtures in United States schools. This growth will likely be accompanied by the continued integration of school social workers in schools. Thus, the relationships among school safety strategies and the

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practices in which school social workers engage must be understood. Identifying these

relationships might contribute to a better understanding of how certain safety strategies might

influence the school environment from a unique and unstudied perspective.

School social workers can provide invaluable information as to the relationship between

school safety and the school environment, which can assist them in remedying any negative

effects they might have on the school context. This perspective can help researchers and

practitioners better understand how school safety strategies are perceived by and affect school

social workers, as this effect likely has implications for the role they play in improving the safety

and well-being of students they serve. Therefore, understanding how authoritarian practices

influence school social workers' level of engagement in social work practices that can improve

student outcomes and address the consequential effects of authoritarian practices is the next

logical step in advancing the field of school safety. Such understanding can also help school

social workers make more informed decisions on the role their interventions play in schools with

complex security environments.

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CHAPTER II

Developing a comprehensive survey to measure the effects of school contextual factors on school social workers

This manuscript (Scholarly Paper #2) has not been published anywhere, nor will it be published anywhere before I turn in the final version of my ETD, so I didn't include a publication statement. This article was revised a number of times before it was considered a "final" draft. Reviewers included my dissertation committee, Drs. Matthew T. Theriot (Chair), John G. Orme, Mary L. Held, and Lois Presser. I sole-authored this original manuscript. I plan to submit this manuscript for publication in *Educational and Psychological Measurement* upon its approval by the aforementioned committee.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to design a psychometrically sound instrument to measure school social workers' attitudes towards student- and school-level contextual factors, their level of engagement in various types of professional practices, and their perceptions of students' rights and criminalization of student behavior. The final School Social Workers and School Safety Strategies Survey consisted of ninety-nine items, seventy-six designed as indicators of eight distinct factors. Results of a confirmatory factor analysis provides mixed support for the factorial structure of this instrument. Findings suggest that The School Social Workers and School Safety Strategies Survey could be used to understand how school contextual factors, in particular student- and school-level characteristics and school safety strategies, affect school social work practitioners. However, further attempts must be made to operationalize school social workers' perceptions of students' rights and criminalization of student behavior. Limitations of this instrument are discussed and recommendations for future research efforts provided.

Keywords: school social work, school safety, instrument validation, confirmatory factor analysis

School social workers serve a variety of roles and carry out a number of practices centered on improving the lives of their students and fellow school personnel (Constable, McDonald, & Flynn, 1999; Dupper, 2002; Kelly et al., 2010). They are central to the relationship between school, home, and community, often seeking to identify and use resources necessary to maintain a safe and healthy educational environment through service delivery, service coordination, and student advocacy (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009; NASW, 2012). Today, the field of school social work is growing in light of recent federal legislation to provide evidence-based mental health services to youth in schools. In fact, this subspecialty is projected to grow 19% between 2012 and 2022 due to an increased demand for mental health services in schools (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Another growing trend in United States school is the use of school safety policies and practices. Unfortunately, a growing body of school safety research suggests detrimental associations among commonly implemented school safety strategies and feelings of safety and connectedness among students and school personnel. These relationships include the potential for certain types of safety strategies to violate students' rights (Steketee, 2012; Stefkovich & O'Brien, 1997; Theriot & Cuellar, *in press*; Warnick, 2007; Yell & Rozalski, 2000) and increased arrest rates for offenses that pose no legitimate threat to school safety (Giroux, 2009; Na & Gottfredson, 2013; Rimer, 2004; Theriot, 2009). These relationships suggest that commonly implemented authoritarian safety strategies might have significant detrimental effects on the school environment that likely have implications for school social workers; yet these relationships have not been studied.

There is limited research on the role school social workers play in school safety and the extent to which school safety strategies affect school social workers in practice. Research concerning school social work and school safety has primarily focused on their perspectives and practices concerning violence in schools (e.g., Astor et al., 1997; 1998), their practices and involvement in selected school violence prevention practices (Astor et al., 2005), and their role within a particular framework or intervention (e.g., Franklin et al., 2009; Kelly, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2015). School social workers are often left out of the discussion concerning school safety, with school safety literature commonly overlooking their role within the school or grouping them with services they provide (i.e., social work and counseling; e.g., Ruddy, et al., 2009). Therefore, current research fails to provide a picture of how commonly implemented school safety strategies might affect school social workers in their practice. Moreover, the researcher is aware of no previous attempts to measure school social work practices for the purpose of investigating how they are affected by commonly implemented school safety strategies, and how these effects extend to student arrests and students' rights.

The purpose of this study is to design a psychometrically sound instrument to measure the degree to which: 1) authoritarian school safety strategies are present; 2) educational/therapeutic school safety strategies are present; 3) school social workers engage in planning and preparedness practices; 4) school social workers engage in school environment practices; 5) school social workers engage in service delivery practices; 6) school social workers engage in professional responsibility practices; 7) school social workers perceive school personnel prioritize students' rights; and 8) school social workers perceive arrest rates for various student offenses. In doing so, it is the researcher's goal to examine validity of scores

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from the designed instrument for the purpose of exploring relationships among commonly implemented school safety strategies and school social work practices from an understudied perspective.

<div align="center">**BACKGROUND**</div>

School Safety in United States Schools

School safety is defined as the security of school settings from incidents such as harassment, bullying, violence, and substance use, as supported by relevant research and an assessment of validity (National Archives and Records Administration, 2011). School safety is a priority for the people of the United States. Resultantly, a growing trend in today's schools is the implementation of strategies and policies designed to prevent school-based violence. Research suggests preventative strategies can be dichotomized into two categories based on their philosophical approach to preventing school violence: authoritarian and educational/therapeutic (Nickerson & Spears, 2007).

Authoritarian approaches use security personnel and hardware within the school context to restrict student autonomy. Commonly implemented authoritarian approaches to school safety might include metal detectors, surveillance cameras, zero-tolerance policies, student searches, and school policing (Addington, 2009; Hankin, Hertz, & Simon, 2009; Warnick, 2007). In fact, school policing, which often facilitates the enforcement of zero-tolerance policies and student searches (Essex, 2003; Stader, 2002), has become a central element in President Obama's plan to address school safety in United States schools (White House, 2013).

In contrast, educational/therapeutic approaches attempt to prevent school-based violence by focusing on behavior management, conflict resolution, and school environment (Nickerson &

Spears, 2007; Noguera, 1995; Pagliocca & Nickerson, 2001). The use of educational/therapeutic approaches to preventing school violence has also become a growing trend in United States schools with the integration of mental health professionals in the school setting. This movement is endorsed by federal initiatives to incorporate evidenced-based mental health practices in schools (e.g., Intellectuals with Disabilities Education Act and No Child Left Behind Act; Kelly et al., 2010).

Research suggests that as schools increase their use of authoritarian strategies, schools also increase their use of educational/therapeutic strategies (Addington, 2009; Cuellar & Theriot, *under review*; Nickerson & Spears, 2007). Despite increased use of school safety strategies in United States schools, there is some evidence that the use of certain types of school safety strategies are associated with the violation of students' rights and increased arrest rates for non-serious student behaviors.

Students' Rights

Students' rights are broadly defined as civil and constitutional rights that regulate student freedoms within the school context. From a practical standpoint, these rights often include mechanisms in place for students' protection from unwarranted search and seizure, discrimination, and undue process (ACLU, 2015). As outlined in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District,* 393 U.S. 503, 511 (1969), "School officials do not possess absolute authority over students. Students in and out of school are 'persons' under the [United States] Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights, which the State must respect…" All students possess fundamental rights according to the United States Constitution, and it is critical that school-based professionals and other school personnel preserve these rights

through their practices. However, schools have long struggled to strike a balance between students' constitutional rights and the use of school safety strategies to maintain safe and nurturing educational environment.

Students' rights are important for several reasons. Respect for students' rights is believed to be central to improving students' feelings of respect, dignity, and safety within their educational environment (Theriot & Cuellar, *in press*). This is critical to maintaining a healthy school environment. Research suggests students' feelings of safety and respect are positively associated with outcomes such as stronger school connectedness, better academic performance, and more respectful relationships between students and school personnel (Bucher & Manning 2005). Moreover, student connectedness is positively associated with academic and behavioral performance and negatively associated with student engagement in at-risk behaviors (Lonczak, et al., 2002; Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998; Stracuzzi & Mills, 2010). Thus, ensuring students' rights are understood and protected by students and school personnel is critical to improving school connectedness and maintaining a safe and nurturing school environment.

Factors Associated with Violation of Students' Rights

Researchers have attempted to isolate factors associated with the violation of students' rights with limited success. This is likely due to the challenge of defining students' rights within the context of today's schools. For example, the United States Supreme Court and various legal preceedings have defined students' rights differently than the rights of adults or other youth outside of schools (e.g., *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*). Further, courts have determined that students' rights do not take precedence over the safety of the student body (e.g., *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*). The variability of how students' rights are defined in today's schools

makes this construct difficult to define and measure, and might be the reason the knowledgebase around students' rights in today's schools is dominated by theoretical and anecdotal research. Nonetheless, the use of authoritarian strategies is a common characteristic of school environments in which students' rights are hypothesized to be compromised. Research suggests this hypothesis is particularly applicable to schools that rely heavily on strategies that enforce searches and constant surveillance of students (Finley, 2006; Nance, 2014; Theriot & Cuellar, *in press*; Warnick, 2007).

Within the context of school safety, the violation of students' rights refers to the notion that certain safety practices may infringe on the rights of students and school personnel. This is particularly relevant to the use of authoritarian strategies, which may condone unwarranted search and seizure of students. For example, School Resource Officers (SROs) are defined as "quasi" professionals in their law enforcement role (Bailey, 2006), often receiving limited or inconsistent training and taking on a variety of roles within the school that differ from officers outside the school. In conjunction with schools' rights to search students at their discretion as defined in *New Jersey vs. T.L.O.* (469 U.S. 325, 1985), SROs follow less stringent criteria for searching students and thus might overlook students' rights as determined by "probable cause" (Weiler & Cray, 2011). Another example is the use of security hardware installed in schools (e.g., metal detectors or surveillance cameras). These hardware devices constantly supervise students and school personnel when it might not be warranted, thus promoting an "institutional" feeling among students and school personnel, compromising students' feelings of safety and being counterproductive to school safety efforts (Easterbrook, 1999; Thompkins, 2000).

Juveniles are a vulnerable population that can lack the cognitive ability to understand their rights if they are even aware of them, and they often do not have the power to demand respect for their rights (Mhaka-Mutepfa, Maree, & Chiganga, 2014; Theriot & Cuellar, *in press*; Theron, Liebenberg, & Malindi, 2014). Therefore, students are particularly vulnerable to certain authoritarian practices as they often have no available legal recourse or lack the knowledge necessary to respond in the best interest of their legal rights (Nance, 2014). This subjects students to the violation of due process which they are entitled to under the fourteenth amendment of the United States Constitution. While this issue was addressed in a number of court cases (e.g., *Goss v. Lopez* [419 U.S. 565, 1975]), which resulted in the requirement for schools to hold proceedings prior to administering disciplinary actions for student misbehavior, any disciplinary action brought within the school can result in violation of due process, particularly when school safety practices overlook conditions of the student behavior (e.g., zero-tolerance policies).

Research has shown that school administrators generally agree with the use of authoritarian safety practices and find them effective (Garcia, 2003; Time & Payne, 2008). While an overall reduction in school violence and student misbehavior has occurred over the last fifteen years in United States schools (James & McCallion, 2013; Robers et al., 2014), it is not clear whether this is attributable to the increasing use of school safety strategies. This is potentially problematic, as the use of "blanket" approaches to preventing school violence might unnecessarily compromise students' feelings of safety and connectedness to the school. Since low violence schools have been characterized by student populations that report feeling safe and connected to their school and personnel therein (Johnson, 2009), this suggests that using certain

strategies without thorough assessment of school security needs might be detrimental to students and school personnel.

Criminalization of Student Behavior

According to Hirschfield (2008), criminalization of student behavior refers to "the shift toward a crime control paradigm in the definition and management of the problem of student deviance" (p. 80). Within this approach, many youth behaviors considered deviant in the school setting will result in referrals to law enforcement and might involve the juvenile justice system. For example, a legal approach to addressing school misbehavior might result in an offense such as fighting to become assault or a severe classroom disturbance to become disorderly conduct. Emerging research suggests law enforcement in schools condones this approach and school police are trained to address student behaviors historically addressed by principals and school staff within the school setting (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998), fueling the school-to-prison pipeline.

Criminalization often occurs without consideration of the circumstances of the specific behavior exhibited by the student, and can have detrimental effects for the student in the long-term (Dorhn, 2001). When disciplinary offenses that can be corrected within the school are criminalized, there are consequences that negatively affect students and burden families. For example, if a student is charged with disorderly conduct for disruptive classroom behavior, they might be remanded to juvenile court, fined, and cited for their behavior which in some cases remains on their record. This record can follow them for the rest of their life, making it challenging for them to get accepted into an institution of higher education, secure funding for such an education, or land a job. Therefore, reducing criminalization and addressing student

behavior within the school where applicable can reduce student involvement in juvenile courts and potentially improve chances for long-term student success.

Factors Associated with Criminalization of Student Behavior

Criminalization of student behavior in United States schools is not new. An emerging body of theoretical and empirical research has begun supporting the criminalization hypothesis. Moreover, the nature of criminalization suggests that it might be negatively associated with students' rights. If student behavior is being addressed through a criminalistic perspective, the constitutional rights of students may be potentially violated. For example, search and seizure of a student's possessions after the law enforcement officer has determined probable cause might alienate a student from his educational environment and place him in a defensive and vulnerable situation (Hirschfield, 2008). Therefore, the relationship between criminalization of student behavior and the violation of student rights is likely positively correlated.

Two recently published empirical studies support the criminalization hypothesis. First, Theriot (2009) investigated the extent to which school behaviors are being criminalized by comparing arrest rates across thirteen schools with SROs to fifteen schools without SROs located within the same district. Results of the study indicated that the presence of SROs was positively associated with arrest rates for disorderly conduct. Second, and referenced in a publicly accessible United States congressional report (James & McCallion, 2013), Na and Gottfredson (2013) investigated the relationship between the use of school police and arrest rates in schools by analyzing School Survey on Crime and Safety data as collected from approximately three thousand school administrators. Across the weighted sample, which was representative of United

States schools, the researchers found schools that added SROs were more likely to report non-serious crimes compared to schools that did not add SROs.

An increase in school-based arrests in school districts across the country might validate the notion that school policing contributes to criminalizing student behavior. It is documented that between the years 2000 and 2004, the Denver public school system saw an increase of 71% in law enforcement referrals, and in Chicago there were nearly 8000 school arrests made in a single year, many for non-violent crimes after formal school policing was introduced (Giroux, 2009). Rimer (2004) also reported that the number of school-based arrests in one Ohio County increased from 1,237 in the year 2000 to 1,727 in 2002, of which most were for minor offenses or unruly student behavior while only a very small percentage was for serious threats to school safety.

Research suggests criminalization is most prevalent in schools with disadvantaged populations, specifically among schools serving a high percentage of minority students in large urban school districts (Wacquant, 2001; James & McCallion, 2013). While research is limited in the area of student criminalization, emerging evidence supports the notion of criminalization, and the use of authoritarian strategies, particularly school policing, might contribute to criminalization of student behavior.

School Social Work

School social work is a specialized area of practice within the field of social work (SSWAA, n. d.). It began in the early 1900s, at which time school social workers focused on the influence of societal factors on student well-being to improve student outcomes (Allen-Meares, 1996; Dupper, 2002). School social work practitioners went back and forth from following a

clinical model of social casework to using societal factors that influenced behaviors to inform

practice until the 1970s (Costin, 1969). In the early 1970s, research pushed the importance of

understanding the interactions between school and community as well as student interactions

within school and community (e.g., Alderson, 1972 and Costin, 1973). These models emphasized

the importance of understanding student presentation as a product of their interactions within

school, home, and community environments. Since the 1980s, there has been a push to integrate

an ecological approach to service delivery in school social work practice models (Frey &

Dupper, 2005); however, many school social workers still engage in practices that reflect clinical

social casework (Kelly et al., 2010).

Recent legislation has shifted the landscape of school social work practice over the last

fifteen years. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-110) and Individuals with

Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-446) have resulted in schools

incorporating evidence-based mental health services and increasing efforts to improve family

and community engagement in schools. As a result, a number of practice models that emphasize

multi-tiered approaches to service delivery have become nationally recognized by school mental

health professionals (e.g., positive behavior supports and response to intervention).

One model that is endorsed by school across the country and has significant implications

for school social work practice is response to intervention (RtI). This framework has received

increasing attention from school social work researchers and practitioners (Kelly et al., 2010;

Kelly, Berzin, et al., 2010; Sabatino et al., 2013). Sabatino and colleagues (2013) define RtI as

"…an array of procedures meant to support accountability and best practices by providing a

structure and process for the early identification and systematic response to students with

educational challenges" (p. 213). This model emphasizes the importance of evidence-based practice and early intervention, which enables school social workers to take an ecological approach to service coordination and delivery by identifying environmental factors that hinder student success and developing more appropriate and effective student- and school-level interventions.

RtI is a three-tiered practice framework that encourages school social workers to continuously examine behavior and academic domains of their students to identify and improve school factors that are not effective. The practice of RtI has been defined as regularly monitoring student progress to guide decisions about school-level practices with the objective of providing the most effective, evidence-based interventions for students (Batsche et al., 2005). Tier 1 practices apply to all students and are implemented by all adults in the school setting (Kelly et al., 2010). Tier 2 and Tier 3 practices require school social workers to develop and implement specialized interventions to address student responses (or lack thereof) to preventative Tier 1 services. Tier 2 practices seek to prevent recurring problem behaviors and focus on the individual students who need additional support than that offered by Tier 1 practices. Finally, Tier 3 practices focus on students with chronic issues who are unresponsive to Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices (Kelly, et al., 2010). Recent efforts to survey school social workers suggest that school social workers perceive systems perspective as important but their engagement in practices within the RtI framework is inconsistent (Kelly et al., 2010).

The school social work practice model. The school social worker today is trained to provide holistic, evidence-based services to address student and school needs using an ecological approach to service delivery; however, this role varies dramatically across schools depending on

student- and school-level needs and school contextual factors (Dupper, 2002). To promote

consistency in school social work education, credentialing, and professional practice with the

goal of improving student academic and behavioral outcomes, Frey et al. (2013) presents a

comprehensive practice model for school social work practitioners in the United States. This

model is known as the School Social Work Practice Model. It is SSWAA's official policy for the

delivery of school social work services, as it describes the skills needed for school social workers

to deliver high quality services to their students and schools (SSWAA, 2013). The School Social

Work Practice Model has three overarching goals: 1) to provide evidence-based education,

behavior, and mental health services; 2) to promote a school environment conducive to student

learning; and 3) to maximize access to school-based and community-based resources (Frey et al.,

2013).

Evaluating school social work practice. The National Evaluative Framework for School

Social Work Practice (NEFSSWP) is an evaluative tool cross-walked with the School Social

Work Practice Model (Frey et al., 2013) and the NASW Standards for School Social Work

Practice (2012). According to this framework, school social workers employed in today's

schools can be evaluated across four practice domains: 1) Planning and preparedness; 2) School

environment; 3) Service delivery; and 4) Professional responsibilities practices (SSWAA, 2013).

Three of these domains help school social workers achieve the objectives of The School Social

Work Practice Model. Planning and preparedness practices help the school social worker meet

the goal of maximizing access to school-based and community-based resources. School

environment practices help school social workers meet the goal of promoting a school

environment conducive to student learning. Finally, service delivery practices assist school social

workers in meeting the goal of providing evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services in their schools. The fourth construct, professional responsibility practices, are more similar to the clinical social casework role in that they require the worker to primarily engage in case management activities.

Current practice models and frameworks for intervention promote diverse school social work practice in which practitioners engage in a number of practice areas simultaneously. Therefore, it is expected that if school social work practitioners are following The School Social Work Practice Model promoted by the SSWAA today, then their engagement in these four practice domains will be correlated. More specifically, if the socio-ecological framework for service delivery is followed in schools today as outlined by the SSWA (2013), school social workers might report stronger correlations among planning and preparedness practices, school environment practices, and service delivery practices than the correlations for these practices with professional responsibility practices.

School social work, students' rights, and criminalization. Evidence-based models to service delivery, such as RtI, are nationally recognized and can be a useful framework for understanding the role school social workers might play in preserving students' rights and reducing criminalization; particularly if these issues are the result of school-level or primary interventions applied to all students. A fundamental component of RtI and other evidence-based frameworks for service delivery in schools is to provide individualized services to students who show no response or are adversely affected by school-level and primary (Tier 1) interventions (Sabatino et al., 2013). This is done by assessing student interactions within school and community and developing a more effective approach to addressing student needs. With an

increased emphasis in the use of models such as RtI, school social workers are in a unique position where they can identify school-level practices that negatively affect student outcomes and advocate for change and refocus in their delivery. For example, if authoritarian school safety strategies result in increased arrest rates or compromised student rights, school social workers practicing in a multi-tiered framework might be able to identify these effects and use current evidence to support altering the intervention, possibly reducing the negative effects of such strategies. Practitioners in today's schools can formally address issues that arise from the use of school-wide violence prevention strategies, such as issues concerning students' rights using applicable evidence and research. Therefore, it is likely that school social workers might play a mediating role in the negative effects of school safety on students, thought this relationship has not been researched.

The Present Study

School social workers can share a unique perspective as to the effects of school safety strategies employed in their schools. Likely experiencing the effects of school safety strategies first hand through practice engagement in their schools, they can contribute to the growing knowledge of school safety in a way much different from students and other school personnel. Efforts have been made to survey school social workers over the past two decades (Allen-Meares, 1994; Kelly et al., 2008, 2010; Kelly et al., 2015); however, no survey has been developed specifically to measure the following constructs and explore the relationships among commonly implemented school safety strategies, school social work practices, students' rights, and the criminalization of student behavior.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the validity of scores from an instrument designed to measure eight distinct constructs from the perspective of school social workers: 1) Authoritarian school safety strategies; 2) Educational school safety strategies; 3) Planning and preparedness school social work practices; 4) School environment school social work practices; 5) Service delivery school social work practices; 6) Professional responsibility school social work practices; 7) Protection of students' rights; and 8) Student criminalization.

METHODS

Sample

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used to collect information from school social workers across the United States. Participants were recruited through the SSWAA, the largest professional school social work organization in the United States. The SSWAA is comprised of over one thousand members, represented by 31 state-level school social work associations across the United States. Participants were recruited from the SSWAA because this was the most feasible method of collecting data from school social workers across the country given the resources of this study.

Data Collection

Cross-sectional data were collected via an anonymous electronic survey questionnaire that was initially distributed via the SSWAA eBell newsletter, a bi-weekly electronic bulletin distributed to all active members of SSWAA. One month after the survey was initially distributed via the eBell, a direct email was sent to all active members of the SSWAA containing the survey description and link. The survey remained open to participant responses until one month after the final survey link was distributed.

Two incentives were used to increase study participation. First, a drawing was used by which each participant included his or her email address in a separate survey that was unlinked to the first. Participants who entered their email were then selected at random to receive one of twenty Amazon electronic gift cards. Second, the researcher informed each participant that a five-dollar donation would be provided to the SSWAA for each informed consent signed and completed, regardless of the participant's engagement in the study.

Participants were asked to think of only one school in which they were employed during the 2014 – 2015 school year by the following prompt: "Thinking ONLY of the school in which you spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2014 – 2015 school year, please answer the following questions." The purpose of asking participants to focus on the previous school year was two-fold. First, this approach was recommended by survey reviewers as a method of capturing information from only one school social worker per school, thus attempting to maintain independence of observations. Second, this approach asks participants to recall on a full academic school year as opposed to the few weeks of school that had begun at the time the survey was initially distributed (the 2015 – 2016 academic school year).

Survey Development

The survey was primarily adapted from the 2008 National School Social Work Survey (Kelly, Berzin, et al., 2010) and the United State Department of Education's School Survey on Crime and Safety (Ruddy, et al., 2010). It was designed to identify (a) demographic information of school social workers (gender, race, state of practice, education, licensure, etc.) and characteristics of the student body for which they work, (b) school social workers perceptions of specific school safety strategies, (c) extent to which school social workers engage in specific

professional practices as outlined by the School Social Work Association of America's National Evaluative Framework for School Social Work Practice, and (d) school social workers perceptions of the protection of students' rights and arrest rates in their school.

Because the survey was adapted from previous instruments, it was reviewed through a three-stage process that allowed a number of practicing school social workers to provide feedback on its content. Reviewers were accessed through the University of Tennessee's College of Social Work field education coordinators, who distributed a call for reviewers before the survey was finalized. After identifying a number of willing reviewers, the initial survey was sent to two practicing and licensed school social workers for review. Revisions were then made to incorporate feedback, after which the survey was redistributed to another two practicing and licensed school social workers. During this phase of feedback, the researcher engaged in discussion with the reviewers to further refine the interpretability and applicability of survey items. After the survey was modified through this review, two school social work researchers (one a licensed school social worker) reviewed the revised survey and provided final recommendations. The final survey instrument contained ninety-nine questions and took approximately twenty minutes for participants to complete. The survey was created and administered using Qualtrics survey software.

Measurement

The authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies included in the survey were based on previous research and previous methods of operationalizing school safety strategies (Cuellar, *in press*; Ruddy et al., 2012; Nickerson & Spears, 2007; Time & Payne, 2008). The school social work practices included in the survey were adapted from the NEFSSWP (SSWAA,

2013). Three students' rights were selected as overarching themes of students' rights as outlined by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU, 2015) and student offenses used to operationalize criminalization were selected from past research (Na & Gottfredson, 2013; Theriot, 2009). This yielded the final instrument, which contained ninety-nine items with seventy-six items developed to measure eight constructs. The final survey can be found in the appendices section of this dissertation.

Variables

    Individual Demographic Variables. Demographic data were collected from participants to describe the sample and the extent to which it compared to samples in previous surveys of school social workers in the United States. Demographic indicators were measured as follows: (1) gender (0 = Female; 1 = Male); (2) race (White = 0; Black/African American = 1; Asian = 3; Other = 4), Hispanic status (No = 0; 1 = Yes); (3) education (BSW = 0; MSW = 1; DSW = 2; PhD = 3); (4) and professional licensure (State-issued School Social Work Certificate = 0; Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) = 1; NASW Academy of Clinical Social Workers = 2; NASW School Social Work Specialist = 3; Other = 4). Demographic variables are in *Table 1*.

    School-Level Demographic Variables. School level variables include five ordinal indicators and one nominal indicator representing the student population the school social worker serves. These include the school setting (i.e., urbanicity; 0 = Rural; 1 = Suburban; 2 = Urban), school size (i.e., student enrollment; 0 = 0 – 249; 1 = 250 – 499; 2 = 500 – 749; 3 = 750 – 999; 4 = 1000+), percentage of minority students enrolled in the school (0 = 0% - 24%; 1 = 25% - 49%; 2 = 50% - 74%; 3 = 75% - 100%), percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students enrolled in the school (0 = 0% - 24%; 1 = 25% - 49%; 2 = 50% - 74%; 3 = 75% - 100%), and

school education level (0 = Elementary; 1 = Middle; 2 = Secondary; 3 = Other) of the school in which the school social worker spent most of their time during the 2014 – 2015 school year. For the school education variable, all "other" responses were recoded to classify the school's education level within the first three categories. For participants who reported working in schools that range across multiple education levels, the response was recoded to the highest possible educational category (e.g., if a participant reported K – 8, their response was recoded to "middle"). Finally, the organization for which the school social worker was employed was recorded (1 = public school; 2 = private school; 3 = other). School level variables are in *Table 2*.

School Safety Strategies. Sixteen dichotomous (0 = No, 1 = Yes) indicators were hypothesized to operationalize two distinct school safety constructs: Authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies. Indicators for these two constructs are listed in *Table 3*.

School Social Work Practice. Twenty-seven indicators represented school social workers' engagement in four domains of practice: 1) Planning and preparedness practices; 2) School environment practices; 3) Service delivery and resourcefulness practices; and 4) Professional responsibility practices. All twenty-seven indicators were measured as follows: 0 = None of my time, 1 = Some of my time, 2 = Most of my time; 3 = All of my time. Indicators of these four domains of school social work practice are in *Table 4*.

Perceptions of Students' Rights and Criminalization. A total of twenty-eight dichotomous (0 = No, 1 = Yes) indicators were hypothesized to operationalize two latent constructs representing school social workers' perceptions of school climate: Students' Rights and Criminalization. Twenty-one items represented school social workers' perceptions of school

personnel in their school and how they prioritize students' rights. All "N/A" responses were recoded as missing.

All seven indicators of student criminalization were measured on a binary scale (0 = Reasonable number of arrests for offense, 1 = Excessive number of arrests for offense). All "N/A" responses were recoded as missing. Students' rights and criminalization indicators are listed in *Tables 5* and *6*.

Data Analysis

RStudio, a freely accessible computer programing language for statistical analyses and graphics, was used to produce descriptive and frequency statistics (The *R* Project for Statistical Computing, n.d.). M*plus*7, a program designed for the analyses of latent variables (Muthén & Muthén, 2012), was used to estimate two confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) models and explore the hypothesized factorial structure of data from The School Social Workers and School Safety Strategies Survey.

Missing Data Analysis. Before reporting sample statistics and estimating the CFA models, missing data patterns were explored. These results revealed thirty cases with missing data on all variables. These cases were deleted, leaving 232 cases with information from initiated surveys. Of these, three cases were deleted because participants worked outside of the United States during the 2014 – 2015 school year (i.e., Puerto Rico, Nigeria, and Canada).

Analysis of missing data patterns of the resulting 229 cases revealed that 94.72% of values across seventy-six items of interest were present. To determine whether there were statistically significant differences between primary variables of interest and missing and non-missing values, factor scores were compared using *t*-tests to determine if participants who did

not complete the survey (indicated by whether the participant completed the closing section of the survey) provided significantly different responses to school safety strategies in their schools or practices in which they engage. These analyses revealed cases with missing data did not differ from those cases with full data on school safety or school social work practices information (i.e., participants who did not complete the entire survey did not work in schools with significantly different school security contexts and did not report differences in the practices they engaged in). Therefore, it was assumed data were missing at random (Little, 1988; Little & Rubin, 1989) and estimates reported for the CFAs were generated using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation on missing values (Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

CFA Models. After assessing missing data patterns and describing the present sample, the researcher estimated two confirmatory factor analysis models to test the hypothesized factorial structure. All models were estimated using delta parameterization and weighted least square mean variance estimation because the hypothesized constructs were measured using binary and ordinal indicators. Unstandardized and STDYX (standardized) estimates were estimated and 95% confidence intervals for each estimate were reported. The STDYX output option in M*plus*7 was used to produce standardized coefficients, with the objective of standardizing the parameter estimates within the model and their standard errors. This option uses the variances of the continuous latent variables and the variances of the background and outcome variables for standardization (Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

RESULTS

Data from 229 school social workers were included in analyses. As shown in Table 1, the majority of participants were female and Caucasian. A large majority reported having a Master

of Social Work degree and held a professional social work license. Demographic information drawn from these data is consistent with that of previous surveys of school social workers in the United States over the past twenty years (Allen-Meares, 1994; Astor, Behre, Fravil, & Wallace, 1997; Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly, et al., 2015; Kelly, Berzin, et al., 2010). Over 91% of participants reported working in public school systems, and all states were represented except Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Nebraska, South Dakota, New Mexico, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Students' Rights. The students' rights construct could not be analyzed because there was a large percentage of missing data after recoding "not applicable" responses as missing, as shown in *Table 5*. However, frequencies of the subset of participants who endorsed students' right items suggest a considerable percentage of school social workers perceived students' rights as not a priority for various school personnel. The highest percentage of "no" responses were from teachers and sworn law enforcement officers other than school resource officers (other sworn law enforcement). Over a quarter of participants who endorsed items reported they perceived student protection from unwarranted search and seizure as not a priority for teachers (36.8%) and other sworn law enforcement (35%). Over a quarter of participants who endorsed these items also reported that student protection from undue process was not a priority for teachers (27.9%) and other sworn law enforcement (35.8%). Almost all school social workers perceived themselves as prioritizing students' rights in all three domains.

Criminalization. The construct representing student criminalization could not be analyzed for two reasons: 1) a high percentage of "not applicable" responses were received; and 2) there was a small amount of variation in responses, as indicated by the low percent of

67

responses to "yes" for these items as shown in *Table 6*. Few participants perceived too many arrests were made for student offenses. For example, among participants who endorsed these items (i.e., participants that did not report "N/A" or have missing data), only 9% perceived too many arrests for disorderly conduct, 10% perceived too many arrests for alcohol offenses, and 14% perceived too many arrests for drug offenses. Only 3%, 1%, and 6% perceived too many arrests for vandalism, theft, and weapons possession, while 15% of participants perceived too many arrests for violence in general.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To address concerns of sample size, two CFA models were estimated. The first was a two-factor model for authoritarian strategies and educational/therapeutic strategies. The second was a four-factor model for school social work practices: 1) Planning and preparedness; 2) School environment; 3) Service delivery; and 4) Professional responsibility. Only items with standardized factor loadings > .40 were retained in the final models.

School Safety Strategies CFA Model. Results of the *a priori* CFA model with 33 parameters (16 items) could not be estimated due to an issue with the variable "counseling." Output indicated that the bivariate table with this variable and other indicators of educational/therapeutic strategies had an empty cell; therefore, counseling was removed from the model and another model was estimated.

Results of the model excluding counseling with 31 parameters (15 items) exhibited inadequate fit ($X^2(93) = 176.38$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .063; RMSEA 90% CI [.048, .077]; CFI = .837; TLI = .816; WRMR = 1.284). Four items were then removed from the authoritarian construct because they were < .40 and another model was estimated.

Results of the CFA model with 23 parameters (11 items) exhibited inadequate model fit ($X^2(43) = 92.38$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .071; RMSEA 90% CI [.051, .091]; CFI = .901; TLI = .874; WRMR = 1.180), although all standardized factor loadings were > .40. The chi-square difference test for weighted least square mean variance estimation revealed that removing the four items from the model significantly improved model fit ($X^2(4) = 27.99$, $p < .05$). Modification indices were then examined to determine which if any parameters should be estimated instead of being constrained to zero. These results indicated a single correlated error (MI = 18.79) between two indicators of educational/therapeutic strategies; programs that promote student-student communication and programs that promote staff-student communication ($r = .48$; 95% CI [.30, .67]; $p < .001$). Results of the chi-square difference test for weighted least square mean variance estimation suggest adding the single correlated error term significantly improved model fit ($X^2(1) = 17.19$, $p < .05$). These error terms were allowed to correlate and this resulted in the the final model.

The final model with 24 parameters (11 items) fit the data relatively well ($X^2(42) = 70.54$, $p = .003$; RMSEA = .054; RMSEA 90% CI [.031, .076]; CFI = .943; TLI = .925; WRMR = 1.006). Results of this model are in *Table 7*.

Authoritarian strategies. Six of ten hypothesized indicators of authoritarian strategies were retained in the final model. Four hypothesized authoritarian strategies, "locked, controlled, or monitored gates," "zero-tolerance policies," "other non-sworn law enforcement officer," and "dress code" were removed from the model because they had low standardized factor loadings.

Educational/therapeutic strategies. Five of six hypothesized educational/therapeutic indicators were retained. The observed indicator that did not meet factor loading criteria was

"counseling." Only 2.2% of participants reported not having counseling in their school. Contrary to expectations, there was not a statistically significant correlation between authoritarian and educational/therapeutic constructs ($r = .07$; 95% CI [-.01, .15]; $p = .068$).

School Social Work Practices CFA Model. Results of the *a priori* CFA model with 113 parameters (26 items) exhibited inadequate fit ($X^2(318) = 771.97$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .081; RMSEA 90% CI [.074, .088]; CFI = .893; TLI = .882; WRMR = 1.486). Three items with standardized factor loadings < .40 were removed. Modification indices we examined to further explore model fit. Four items loaded on constructs other than hypothesized. Additionally, four errors were correlated. A refined model was then estimated.

Results of the refined CFA model with 105 parameters (23 items) exhibited acceptable fit ($X^2(242) = 472.51$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .066; RMSEA 90% CI [.057, .075]; CFI = .947; TLI = .940; WRMR = 1.48). All standardized loadings were > .40. The chi-square difference test for weighted least square mean variance estimation revealed that alterations to the model significantly improved model fit ($X^2(4) = 34.06$, $p < .05$). Results of this model are in *Table 8*. Correlations and variances among constructs are in *Table 9*.

Planning and preparedness practices. The planning and preparedness strategies construct was estimated using six of ten hypothesized practices. The practice of "conducting needs assessments" was removed due to low standardized loadings in unrefined model while "reviewing practice outcomes," "reviewing research relevant to practice," and "familiarizing myself with school policies" loaded on different factors than hypothesized. Additionally, modification indices of 49.95 in the unrefined model indicated "making home visits" loaded as a planning and preparedness practice (hypothesized service delivery practice). Modification

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indices of 27.74 suggested correlated errors for two practices within this construct: Developing school community partnerships and developing relationships with community organizations (r = .20; 95% CI [.12, .28]; p < .001).

School environment practices. All five school environment practices met factor loading criteria. Modification indices greater than 30.09 indicated correlated error terms among two practices: identifying practices that impede student success and challenging practices that impede student success (r = .31; 95% CI [.19, .43]; p < .001).

Service delivery practices. Four out of five service delivery practices met factor loading criteria. The practice that was removed (making home visits) loaded on planning and preparedness practices. Two additional items loaded on this construct. Modification indices of 22.62 and 14.91 in the unrefined model indicated "reviewing research relevant to practice" and "reviewing practice outcomes" loaded as a service delivery practice (both hypothesized as planning and preparedness practices). There were no correlated error terms for practices of this construct.

Professional responsibility practices. Five of six hypothesized indicators met factor loading criteria. The indicator removed was "administrative tasks." Modification indices greater than 25.22 and 10.67 suggested two significant correlations among error terms for professional responsibility practices: case management and managing workload (r =.24; 95% CI [.11, .36]; p < .001); managing workload and completing paperwork (r = .32; 95% CI [.22, .42]; p < .001). Finally, modification indices of 20.26 indicated "familiarizing myself with school policies" (hypothesized as planning and preparedness practice) loaded as a professional responsibility practice.

DISCUSSION

Although a number of indicators behaved differently than hypothesized *a priori*, results of the confirmatory factor analyses suggest scores from The School Safety Strategies and School Social Workers Survey appear to demonstrate evidence of relatively good construct validity for six of the eight constructs it was designed to operationalize. After removing items that did not meet factor loading criteria in *a priori* model estimation, 31 of 42 indicators hypothesized to operationalize constructs of interest did work, with 4 of the remaining 11 loading on constructs other than hypothesized. Additionally, 5 unexpected correlations among error terms were identified by modification indices greater than 10.00 after *a priori* models were estimated. Criminalization and students' rights constructs could not be estimated.

All items in the final models had relatively high loadings on hypothesized constructs and not on unrelated constructs, except for four indicators that loaded on different constructs than expected. This suggests there is acceptable convergent validity among constructs presented. As evidenced by the CFA, no upper bound 95% confidence interval for correlations among latent constructs in the confirmatory factor model approached .85. This suggests acceptable discriminant validity across constructs within the model (Kenny, 2015). Said differently, the results of this study suggest acceptable construct validity for the types of school safety strategies discussed by Nickerson and Spears (2007) and school social work practices as outlined in the NEFSSWP and presented by the SSWAA (2013).

In the School Safety Strategies CFA Model, one pair of error terms was correlated: programs that promote student-student communication and programs that promote staff-student communication. This correlation might be theoretically sound as a fundamental component of

these programs is to improve communicative techniques to prevent school violence. However, it might also be likely that correlated errors for these practices are the result of similar wording and proximity of items on the survey (i.e., these similarly worded items were next to each other on the survey).

In the School Social Work Practices CFA Model, four error terms were correlated. First was the positive correlation between error terms representing two planning and preparedness practices: developing school community partnerships and developing relationships with community organizations. This correlated error might support the idea that developing school community partnerships is a necessary antecedent to developing relationships with community organizations, though this relationship was not tested in the model. Second is the positive correlation between errors representing two school environment practices: identifying practices that impede student success and challenging practices that impede student success. Identifying such practices would certainly have to come before challenging such practices, though this relationship was not examined in the model. However, it cannot be ruled out that similar wording on these two items and their proximity to one another on the survey accounts for the shared variance of these indicators not accounted for by the school environment construct. The final two correlated error terms concern professional responsibility practices. These include the positive correlation among errors of the professional responsibilities practices: managing workload and case management and completing paperwork and managing workload. Based on the nature of these practices, these correlations suggest that managing workload, completing paperwork, and case management might represent a separate construct than professional responsibilities. These practices are apparently different from other professional responsibility practices, such as

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attending professional meetings and continuing education programs. While these items might represent an additional type of school social work practice, a fifth construct was not tested in this model.

The construct planning and preparedness practices is represented by practices that foster home-school-community relationships. This construct represents the third overarching goal of The School Social Work Practice Model: maximizing access to school-based and community-based resources. Making home visits enables practitioners to develop and monitor the role family and home play in student learning, and can help schools increase family involvement and improve communication and coordination between home and school (Dupper, 2002). Therefore, it is understandable making home visits would load on this construct as opposed to service delivery practices.

The school environment practice construct was estimated as hypothesized and includes practices such as identifying and challenging practices that impede student success, developing interventions, and promoting students' feelings of safety and connectedness. This construct represents the second overarching goal of promoting a school environment conducive to student learning, as outlined in The School Social Work Practice Model. As expected, the strongest correlation among practices is between school environment and service delivery practices. This is likely because both of these practices can promote a school climate and culture conducive to student well-being, a critical component to the School Social Work Practice Model (Frey et al., 2013).

Service delivery practices include conducting risk assessments, direct practice with students, and consulting with other staff to address student needs. While unexpected, it is not

surprising that "reviewing practice outcomes" and "reviewing research relevant to practice" both loaded on this construct. Professional social workers have an ethical obligation to use evidence to inform their decision making, particularly when designing and implementing intervention service sand working directly with students facing adversity (Frey et al., 2013; NASW, 2012; SSWAA, 2013). This construct represents the third overarching goal of The School Social Work Practice Model: providing evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services. As school social workers engage in direct practice with students, they should be using current research and practice outcomes simultaneously to provide effective and current services for their students. Therefore, it makes sense that reviewing research to inform practice would load on the service delivery factor.

The construct representing professional responsibility was characterized by practices such as case management, managing workload, attending professional meetings, and completing paperwork. These indirect practices typically require school social workers to understand the school context and coordinate services for their students. Therefore, "familiarizing myself with school policies" as a practice might load on this construct over planning and preparedness practices since this practice might assist school social workers in coordinating direct services as opposed to improving home-school-community linkages.

A number of correlations among constructs support the hypothesized factorial structure of the data. Overall, results do support the hypothesized correlations among school social work practice constructs. As hypothesized, school social work practice constructs were all significantly correlated. This suggests that as school social workers engage in direct practice with their students, they also engage in other practices that might help them provide holistic services

to address student needs. As expected, the strongest correlation among practice constructs was between school environment and service delivery practices. To address school-level needs practitioners likely engage in school environment practices simultaneously with service delivery practices and vice versa. This might be supported by the types of practices within each of these constructs. For example, school environment practices require school social workers develop intervention strategies and promote student connectedness while service delivery practices require the practitioner to conduct needs assessments, consult with peers, and provide direct services to students. Said differently, school social workers must understand their school environment in order to effectively address the individual needs of their students. Contrary to hypotheses, the correlation between authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies was non-significant.

One of the major findings concerns the large percentage of reported "not applicable" responses to the students' rights variables. The ratio of "no" to "yes" responses among participants that endorsed these items suggest that a considerable percentage of school social workers perceive students' rights as not a priority for teachers, sworn law enforcement other than school resource officers, and school administrators. School social workers might find themselves in conflict with their fellow professionals when working in schools where they perceive their students' rights aren't prioritized. This is problematic because it might complicate their ability to collaborate with school personnel and effectively work with students. Therefore school social workers should examine the extent to which school personnel understand students' rights and use collaborative meetings such as in service dates to familiarize school personnel on the benefits of mutual respect for students and their rights.

Interestingly, school social workers generally perceive school resource officers to prioritize students' rights compared to other sworn law enforcement. This partially supports theoretical research that argues without careful and thorough training of school police (e.g., thoughtful and organized school resource officer training programs), school law enforcement can potentially violate students' rights (Kim & Geronimo, 2009; Theriot & Cuellar, *in press*). This is particularly relevant for rights concerning search and seizure, as these practices are often carried out by school police or law enforcement. School social workers in these schools must be aware of the way students are treated by school security personnel and work with them to ensure that students are treated fairly and with respect. Such collaboration can assist school social workers and school security personnel in maintaining a safe and nurturing school environment without compromising students' feelings of safety or connectedness within the school.

The emerging body of research suggesting commonly implemented authoritarian strategies might compromise students' rights warrants further exploration on how students' rights can be measured. Operationalizing students' rights can help researchers test hypotheses concerning authoritarian strategies (i.e., school policing practices) and students' rights and take next steps in determining if these relationships are empirically supported. Researchers might consider adapting the items used to measure students' rights in this study and forcing participant responses (i.e., don't include a "not applicable" response option or provide an option that allows the researcher to determine what is meant by the "not applicable" response). Additional consideration should also be given to the length of the survey when operationalizing such a construct. For example, it cannot be ruled out that the large percentage of responses were recorded due to the length of this subsection (i.e., 21 items on one page of the survey). This

could be done by engaging in student driven focus groups to identify students' rights indicators and factors associated with these rights. Mixed method approaches to understanding how school safety strategies affect students' rights might also be considered, as these methods will allow researchers to qualitatively assess students' rights while quantitatively assessing the presence of various school contextual factors.

While criminalization could not be modeled with these data, the low percentages among endorsed responses for items of this construct suggest that, among this sample, very few school social workers perceive student behavior as being criminalized in their schools. However, it is unclear why so many participants reported that arrest rates were "not applicable" to them in their schools, particularly because 42.4% of school social workers reported working with secondary school aged youth. This type of response could be for several reasons. School social workers in todays schools might not work with students who are arrested or they might not be aware of arrest rates. It is more likely, however, they are unable to answer the question due to their school's education level. For example, school social workers employed in elementary or middle schools (combined 56.8% of this sample) might report "N/A" simply because student arrests for misconduct are rare for their student population. If "N/A" is applicable to certain sampling frames in future research, researchers might consider items that can shed light on what "N/A" might mean within the participant's practice context. An example of this could be as simple as a contingency question asking the participant to explain what is meant by their "N/A" response.

Researchers attempting to measure criminalization might also consider capturing more objective quantitative information to operationalize this construct (e.g., federal, state, and local arrest rate statistics) using a research design where confidential participant information is

collected. Such a design would enable the researcher to link arrest statistics to participant responses and allow for relationships between school safety, school social work, and student criminalization to be explored. Future research efforts should be made to measure these constructs objectively and with consideration of school contextual factors such as neighborhood crime rate, school setting, and school education level. With information to link participants to specific schools, this information can be easily accessed via federal and state data sources.

Despite issues with measuring students' rights and criminalization, using The School Safety Strategies and School Social Workers Survey seems justifiable for the purposes of exploring relationships between school safety strategies and school social work practices. Using data collected with this instrument, next steps should aim to: 1) determine the extent to which school characteristics influence the implementation of school safety strategies; and 2) explore associations between different types of school safety strategies and school social workers' engagement in professional practices. Exploring these areas might help school social work practitioners better understand how factors within their school influence their practice. Such understanding can help school social workers maximize their effectiveness when working with students in complex school security environments.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that must be reported. First and foremost, the study design makes it difficult for inferences to be made because of the convenience sampling technique. Moreover, data were collected from only one source, which might introduce measurement bias in that participants share a common trait of active membership in the SSWAA. The self-report nature of data collection assumes that participants can accurately report

information asked of them. This method of data collection presents a number of challenges concerning school social workers' ability to accurately report information. For example, it is unclear whether school social workers accurately provided information on school safety strategies and information concerning student- and school-level characteristics (e.g., student population characteristics and indicators of both students' rights and criminalization). School social work practices might also be inaccurate and response options to practice engagement might be interpreted differently for different school social workers (e.g., what classifies as "some of my time" might be interpreted as "most of my time" to another practitioner). While it is assumed that participants interpreted response options similarly in this study, future research attempts should be made to more accurately operationalize practice constructs.

It is also unclear whether respondents' responses were independent, which might be problematic due to the nature of data analysis. While attempts were made to make sure only one response per school was obtained, the anonymous nature of data collection prevents the researcher from knowing this for certain. An additional sampling limitation concerns the coverage of participants across the United States. Not every state within the United States was represented in the sample, with some states were represented more than others. This compromises the already unknown representativeness of the sample.

A number of statistical limitations must be noted as well. First, the sample size for the number of parameters estimated in the School Social Work Practices CFA Model is less than desirable (Bentler & Chou, 1987). These analyses must be replicated using a larger sample with which representativeness can be determined. Researchers should also consider probability sampling techniques from a national-level sampling frame to improve sample representativeness.

If probability sampling techniques are not an option, researchers might consider following sampling procedures outlined in Kelly et al. (2015) to collect information from as many school social workers as possible.

Another limitation is that seven indicators were removed from the *a priori* models based on the factor loading criteria set by the researcher. Moreover, four indicators had higher standardized loadings on constructs other than hypothesized *a priori* and five error terms were correlated. These adjustments were made to improve model fit and are argued to be theoretically sound; however, practitioners need to determine if these domains make sense from a practical standpoint.

Finally, and as noted throughout this paper, there were a number of issues with measurement of two constructs: students' rights and criminalization. Because these were critical constructs to this study, future attempts must be made to operationalize these constructs and determine their relationships with school safety practices and school social work practice. Any instrument that can help school social workers understand how school contextual practices influence student outcomes merits further exploration and development, particularly in a time where the use of school safety strategies is commonplace in United States schools.

CONCLUSION

Despite the above limitations, this research fills a gap in the school social work and school safety literature by demonstrating that school safety strategies and school social work practices can be operationalized using The School Safety Strategies and School Social Workers Survey. Results of the present study provide relatively good support for six of the eight constructs the instrument set out to measure. A next step is to explore the relationships between

school-level indicators and constructs operationalizing school safety strategies and school social work practices using data collected with the present instrument. More research is needed in this area to advance school social work practice and maximize school social workers' capabilities in school contexts with complex school security environments. Such research has the potential to advance the field of school social work and help practitioners improve academic performance and behavioral presentation of the students they serve.

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CHAPTER III

Investigating the effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies on school social work practitioners

Abstract

The use of school safety strategies and initiatives is a growing trend in United States schools; however, relationships between the use of preventative school violence practices and school social work have not been adequately researched. Using data from 229 school social workers across the United States, this study employs structural equation modeling to explore the extent to which school-level variables predict the implementation of school safety strategies and how two distinct types of school safety strategies affect school social workers in practice. Results confirm a number of associations between school-level variables and the implementation of certain types of safety strategies and suggest that school social workers are affected in their practice by the types of school safety strategies their school choose to implement. Limitations of the present study are discussed and implications for school social work practice are provided.

Keywords: school social work, school safety, survey research, structural equation modeling

School social workers are versatile and resourceful professionals that aim to maintain a safe and healthy school environment through service delivery, service coordination, and student advocacy (Constable, McDonald, & Flynn, 1999; Dupper, 2002; Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009; Kelly, 2010). They are a critical component to the school-home-community relationship, as they are trained in identifying and using resources across multiple levels to address the needs of their students and schools (NASW, 2012; Frey et al., 2013). The field of school social work has seen tremendous growth over the last decade (Franklin et al., 2009), and school social work practitioners are increasingly being integrated in United States schools due to recent federal legislation that requires the incorporation of evidence-based mental health practice within school contexts (Kelly et al., 2010).

Another growing trend in United States schools is the implementation of school safety policies and practices. Research concerning school social work and school safety has primarily focused on their perspectives and practices concerning violence in schools, their involvement in selected school violence prevention practices, or their role within a particular framework or intervention (e.g., Astor et al., 1997; 1998; 2005; Franklin et al., 2009; Kelly, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2015). School social workers are often left out of the discussion concerning school safety; with school safety literature commonly overlooking their role within the school or grouping them with services they provide (i.e., social work and counseling; e.g., Ruddy, et al., 2009). Therefore, current research fails to provide a picture of how commonly implemented school safety strategies might affect school social workers in their practice.

This is potentially problematic, as school social workers are the primary mental health care providers for many students in United States schools (Kelly et al., 2010). Understanding

school-level factors that drive the use of school safety strategies and how these strategies affect

school social workers has implications for the quality and types of services these professionals

provide. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by using data collected from school

social workers in the United States to explore the relationships between: 1) school-level factors

and the use of school safety strategies; and 2) commonly implemented school safety strategies

and school social work practice as outline by current practice models. This research contributes

to school safety and school social work literature by examining how the school security

environment influences school social workers in practice.

<p style="text-align:center">**BACKGROUND**</p>

School Social Work Practice

School social work is a specialized area of practice within the field of social work

(SSWAA, 2013). It began in the early 1900s and was influenced by the passing of compulsory

school attendance laws for children (Allen-Meares, 1996; Dupper, 2002). School social workers

at this time focused on the influence of societal factors on student well-being to improve student

outcomes. School social work practitioners moved back and forth from following a clinical

model of social casework to following societal factors that influenced behaviors until the 1970s

(Costin, 1969). In the early 1970s, researchers began emphasizing the importance of

understanding the interaction between school and community as well as student interactions

within school and community (e.g., see Alderson, 1972 and Costin, 1973). These models

highlighted the importance of understanding student presentation as a product of their

interactions within school, home, and community. Since the 1980s, there has been a call by

researchers and practitioners alike to integrate an ecological approach to service delivery in

school social work practice models (Dupper, 2002; Frey & Dupper, 2005); however, many school social workers still engage in practices that reflect clinical social casework today (Kelly et al., 2010).

Recent legislation has shifted the already inconsistent identity of school social work practice over the last fifteen years. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-110) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-446) have resulted in schools incorporating evidence-based mental health services and increasing efforts to improve family and community engagement in schools. As a result, a number of practice models that emphasize multi-tiered approaches to service delivery have become nationally recognized by school mental health professionals.

One model that is endorsed by schools across the country and likely has significant implications for school social work practice is Response to Intervention (RtI). This framework has received increasing attention from school social work researchers and practitioners (Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly, Berzin, et al., 2010; Sabatino et al., 2013). Sabatino and colleagues (2013) define RtI as "…an array of procedures meant to support accountability and best practices by providing a structure and process for the early identification and systematic response to students with educational challenges" (p. 213). This model emphasizes the importance of evidence-based practice and early intervention, which enables school social workers to take an ecological approach to service coordination and delivery by identifying contextual factors that hinder student success and developing more appropriate and effective student- and school-level interventions.

RtI is a three-tiered practice framework that encourages school social workers to continuously examine behavior and academic domains of their students to identify and improve school factors that are not effective. The practice of RtI has been demonstrated as regularly monitoring student progress to guide decisions about school-level practices with the objective of providing the most effective, evidence-based interventions for students (Batsche et al., 2005). Tier 1 practices apply to all students and are implemented by all adults in the school setting. Tier 2 and Tier 3 practices require school social workers to develop and implement specialized interventions to address student responses (or lack thereof) to preventative Tier 1 services. Tier 2 practices seek to prevent recurring problem behaviors and focus on the individual students who need additional support than that offered by Tier 1 practices. Finally, Tier 3 practices focus on students with chronic issues who are unresponsive to Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices (Kelly, et al., 2010). Recent efforts to survey school social workers suggest that school social workers perceive systems perspective as important but their engagement in practices within the RtI framework is inconsistent and limited (Kelly et al., 2010).

The School Social Work Practice Model. The school social worker today is trained to provide holistic, evidence-based services to address student and school needs using an ecological approach to service delivery; however, this role varies dramatically across schools depending on student- and school-level needs and school contextual factors (Dupper, 2002). To promote consistency in school social work education, credentialing, and professional practice with the goal of improving student academic and behavioral outcomes, Frey et al. (2013) presents a comprehensive practice model for school social work practitioners in the United States. This model is known as the School Social Work Practice Model. It is SSWAA's official policy for the

delivery of school social work services, as it describes the skills needed for school social workers to deliver high quality services to their students and schools (SSWAA, 2013). The School Social Work Practice Model has three overarching goals: 1) to provide evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services; 2) to promote a school environment conducive to student learning; and 3) to maximize access to school-based and community-based resources (Frey et al., 2013).

      Evaluating School Social Work Practice. The National Evaluative Framework for School Social Work Practice (NEFSSWP) is an evaluative tool cross-walked with The School Social Work Practice Model (Frey et al., 2013) and the NASW Standards for School Social Work Practice (NASW, 2012). According to this framework, school social workers employed in today's schools can be evaluated across four practice domains: 1) Planning and preparedness; 2) School environment; 3) Service delivery; and 4) Professional responsibilities practices (SSWAA, 2013). The socio-ecological approach to practice emphasized in school social work literature can shed light on how these practices are related, and how they assist school social workers in taking a person-in-environment perspective when addressing the needs to their students.

      A strength of the ecological approach to service delivery is that it shifts attention to the community systems in which individuals operate (Allen-Meares, 1996). The planning and preparedness domain represents indirect practices that require school social workers to attend to these systems while developing services for their students. These practices include consultation with peers, review practice outcomes, and develop and maintain school-home-community linkages to promote student success (SSWAA, 2013). These practices help the school social worker meet the goal of maximizing access to school-based and community-based resources, as

outlined in The School Social Work Practice Model. Because this domain assists school social workers in understanding how various school and community environments affect student presentation to develop effective interventions, it is likely more engagement in planning and preparedness practices will be accompanied by more time spent working directly with students and addressing their schools' needs.

Another strength of the ecological approach to service delivery is that it focuses efforts on addressing the needs of school environment as well as the individual student (Dupper, 2002). The school environment domain is comprised of direct and indirect practices that address school-level needs and aim to improve students' feelings of safety and connectedness in school. According to the RtI framework for service delivery, understanding how school contextual factors influence the implementation and fidelity of preventative services is critical to their effectiveness. These practices are therefore critical to developing effective approaches to service delivery. These practices help the school social worker meet the goal of promoting a school environment conducive to student learning, as outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model (Frey, et al., 2013). They require an understanding of the resources available to the school and how these resources can address school needs based on student- and school-level assessment. To address school-level needs, practitioners likely engage in these practices simultaneously with service delivery practices, followed by planning and preparedness and professional responsibility practices.

The service delivery domain represents practices that address individual-level needs of students and can include practices such as direct and group counseling and skills training (e.g. conflict resolution, peer mediation, life skills). These practices likely require planning and

preparedness and attention to school environment to be effective, particularly when school social workers work with children who have a history of academic or behavioral difficulties. As outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model, these practices can help school social workers meet the goal of to providing evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services in their schools. Research has pushed for school social workers to focus their efforts on student systems rather than individual clinical practice with students alone (e.g., Allen-Meares, 2000). Therefore, if school social workers are engaging in practices as outlined by the practice model, these practices will be correlated with all others.

The professional responsibility domain represents practices that involve case management, managing workload, completing paperwork, and attending professional and educational meetings. These practices generally represent the caseworker role in today's schools, as suggested by recent research (Kelly et al., 2010). The administrative nature of these tasks suggests that the more client contact school social workers engage in (i.e. school environment and service delivery practices), the more case management they will be required to engage in. Said differently, a larger case load or meeting clients more frequently will require school social workers to spend more time coordinating and monitoring their service delivery, but not as much time documenting planning and preparedness or school environment practices.

The Future of School Social Work. School social workers are versatile professionals in a growing subspecialty of the social work profession. This subspecialty has seen tremendous growth over the last few decades due to federal legislation and the need to provide mental health care for children in schools. For example, in 1996 there were approximately 9,000 school social workers across the United States (Dupper, 2002), and as of 2008 there were approximately

20,000 to 22,000 (Franklin, Gerlach, & Chanmugam, 2008). The field is projected to grow 19% between 2012 and 2022 due to an increased demand for mental health services in schools (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). School social workers are the primary mental health care providers for many students in United States schools today (Kelly et al., 2010); thus, with their increased use in schools they will likely continue to play this role in the lives of our future generations.

School Safety in the United States

Another growing trend in United States schools is the use of school violence prevention programs and practices. School safety is defined as the security of school settings from incidences such as harassment, bullying, violence, and substance use, as supported by relevant research and an assessment of validity (National Archives and Records Administration, 2011). Without a doubt, school safety is a priority for the United States people. Despite a decrease in school violence over the past two decades, implementation of school safety programs and practices, herein referred to as school safety strategies, is at an all-time high due to recent high-profile incidents of school violence, technological advances, and federal, state, and local initiatives to keep schools safe (Addington, 2009; Robers et al., 2014; Servoss, 2014). These strategies can be dichotomized into two categories based on their philosophical approach to preventing school violence: authoritarian and educational/therapeutic (Nickerson & Spears, 2007).

Authoritarian approaches use security personnel and hardware within the school to restrict student autonomy. Commonly implemented authoritarian approaches to school safety include metal detectors, surveillance cameras, zero-tolerance policies, student searches, and

school policing (Addington, 2009; Hankin, Hertz, & Simon, 2009; Warnick, 2007). In fact, school policing, a practice that often facilitates the enforcement of zero-tolerance and disciplinary policies and student searches (Essex, 2003; Stader, 2002), has become a central element in President Obama's plan to address school safety in United States schools (White House, 2013).

In contrast, educational/therapeutic approaches attempt to prevent school-based violence by focusing on behavior management, conflict resolution, and school climate (Nickerson & Spears, 2007; Noguera, 1995; Pagliocca & Nickerson, 2001). These strategies can include a number of practices with the objective of improving student connectedness by promoting student-student and staff-student communication through conflict resolution, peer mediation, counseling, and student mentoring. Similar to authoritarian strategies, the use of educational/therapeutic strategies is also a growing trend in United States schools due to recent federal legislation that mandates the use of evidence-based practices and family integration in schools, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act. These practices are often developed and administered by school mental health professionals and are foundational to the School Social Work Practice Model in use today (Frey et al., 2013; SSWAA, 2013).

The Disproportional Use of School Safety Strategies. Research suggests a number of factors predict school environments that disproportionally employ authoritarian safety strategies over educational/therapeutic strategies. These schools are termed "high-security schools" (Servoss, 2014) and are often characterized by a large percentage of students who are of low socio-economic status (Kupchick, 2010; Nickerson & Spears, 2007). Research has also found

that high-security schools are often characterized by majority-minority student populations where racial and ethnic minority students make up the largest percentage of the student body (Gastic & Johnson, 2014; Servoss & Finn, 2014). This was complimented by the findings of Kupchik & Ward (2014) that suggest the majority of "exclusionary" safety strategies (i.e., authoritarian strategies) in elementary, middle, and secondary schools were present in schools with large proportions of non-white and low socio-economic status students. In addition, Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchez (2013) found that middle and secondary public schools in the United States with large percentages of minority students were heavily reliant on the use of authoritarian strategies, such as the use of law enforcement in schools. While not enough research is available to generalize findings regarding the disproportionate use of authoritarian school safety strategies, current research suggests an association exists between their use and schools that serve a large percentage of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged or individuals who are of minority classification in larger middle or secondary schools.

School Social Work and School Safety Research

Research concerning school safety strategies and school social work has primarily focused on school social workers' perspectives and practices concerning violence in schools (e.g., Astor et al., 1997; 1998), their practices concerning school violence prevention (Astor et al., 2005), and their role within a particular framework or intervention (e.g., Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009; Kelly et al., 2008; 2010; 2015). Therefore, current research fails to provide a picture of how commonly implemented school safety strategies might affect school social work practitioners.

School social workers can provide a unique and informative report on school safety strategies that can address this gap in the literature, as they likely experience their effects on school context through their direct practice and service delivery with students and schools they serve. However, school safety research is dominated by subjective information collected from students, school administrators, teachers and the general public. Thus, studying school social workers' reports of school safety can advance this knowledgebase by providing an understudied perspective on how commonly implemented school safety strategies affect school personnel.

The Present Study

As school social workers are continuously integrated in United States school systems, there is a need to understand how commonly implemented school safety strategies influence their practice. The present study was designed to meet this need with the following objectives:

- To identify school-level characteristics (e.g., school size, school educational level, etc.) that influence the implementation of school safety strategies

- To determine the extent to which different types of school safety strategies (authoritarian and educational/therapeutic) are associated with school social workers' engagement in professional practices

Hypothesized relationships between school-level characteristics and school safety strategies are illustrated in *Figure 1*. Hypothesized relationships between different types of school safety strategies and school social work practices are illustrated in *Figure 2*. With consideration of current practice models for school social work and the influence of federal legislation on the role of school social work today, it is hypothesized that as school social workers engage in one

practice they engage in all practices and therefore all constructs representing practices will be significantly positively correlated.

Findings potentially will be useful for social work educators, practitioners, and researchers. Additionally, findings will contribute to the school safety literature by providing an unstudied perspective towards school safety practices and their potential ramifications. Such findings can help school social workers better understand how school contextual factors affect their practice, particularly in schools characterized by certain populations.

METHODS

Sample

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used to collect information from school social workers across the United States. Participants were recruited through the SSWAA, the largest professional school social work organization in the United States. The SSWAA has over one thousand members, represented by 31 state-level school social work associations across the United States. Participants were recruited from the SSWAA because this was the most feasible method of collecting data from school social workers across the country given the resources of this study.

Data Collection

Cross-sectional data were collected via an anonymous electronic survey questionnaire that was initially distributed via the SSWAA eBell newsletter, a bi-weekly electronic bulletin distributed to all active members of SSWAA. One month after the survey was initially distributed via the eBell, a direct email was sent to all active members of the SSWAA containing

the survey description and link. The survey remained open to participant responses until one month after the final survey link was distributed.

Two incentives were used to increase study participation. First, a drawing was used by which each participant included his or her email address in a separate survey that was unlinked to the first. Participants who entered their email were then selected at random to receive one of twenty Amazon electronic gift cards. Second, the researcher informed each participant that a five-dollar donation would be provided to the SSWAA for each informed consent signed and completed, regardless of the participant's engagement in the study.

Instrumentation

The survey was developed by Cuellar (*in preparation*) to explore the extent to which school contextual factors influence school social workers in their practice. More specifically, the survey requests information about: (a) demographic information of school social workers across the United States (gender, race, state of practice, education, licensure, etc.) and characteristics of the student body for which they work (school size, education level, etc.); (b) the school security environment (e.g., school safety strategies implemented within the school) and school social workers' perceptions of specific school safety strategies; and (c) the extent to which school social workers engage in specific professional practices as outlined by the School Social Work Association of America's National Evaluative Framework for School Social Work Practice.

The survey was examined specifically for the purposes of exploring relationships among school safety strategies and school social work practice (Cuellar, *in preparation*). The school safety strategies in the survey were based on previous research and methods of operationalizing school safety strategies (Cuellar, *in press*; Ruddy et al., 2012; Nickerson & Spears, 2007; Time

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& Payne, 2008). The school social work practices included in the survey were adapted from the NEFSSWP (SSWAA, 2013).

Variables

The final instrument contained ninety-nine items, forty-eight measuring six latent constructs (see Cuellar, *in preparation*; the final survey can be found in the appendix section of this dissertation). All participants were asked to think of only one school in which they were employed during the 2014 – 2015 school year by the following prompt: "Thinking ONLY of the school in which you spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2014 – 2015 school year, please answer the following questions." The purpose of asking participants to focus on the previous school year was two-fold. First, this approach was recommended by survey reviewers as a method of capturing information from only one school social worker per school, thus attempting to obtain independent observations. Second, this approach asks participants to report on a full academic school year as opposed to the few weeks of school that had begun at the time the survey was initially distributed (the 2015 – 2016 academic school year).

Demographic Variables. Demographic data were collected from participants to describe the sample and the extent to which it compared to previous surveys of school social workers in the United States. Demographic indicators were measured at the nominal level and include gender (0 = Female; 1 = Male), race (White = 0; Black/African American = 1; Asian = 3; Other = 4), Hispanic status (No = 0; 1 = Yes), education (BSW = 0; MSW = 1; DSW = 2; PhD = 3), and professional licensure (State-issued School Social Work Certificate = 0; Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) = 1; NASW Academy of Clinical Social Workers = 2; NASW School Social Work Specialist = 3; Other = 4). Demographic information for the sample are in *Table 1*.

School-Level Demographic Variables. Variables include five ordinal indicators and one nominal indicator representing the student population and school in which the practitioner worked. This includes the school setting (i.e., urbanicity; 0 = Rural; 1 = Suburban; 2 = Urban), school size (i.e., student enrollment; 0 = 0 – 249; 1 = 250 – 499; 2 = 500 – 749; 3 = 750 – 999; 4 = 1000+), percentage of minority students enrolled in the school (0 = 0% - 24%; 1 = 25% - 49%; 2 = 50% - 74%; 3 = 75% - 100%), percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students enrolled in the school (0 = 0% - 24%; 1 = 25% - 49%; 2 = 50% - 74%; 3 = 75% - 100%), and school education level (0 = Elementary; 1 = Middle; 2 = Secondary; 3 = Other) of the school in which the school social worker spent most of their time during the 2014 – 2015 school year. For the educational variable, the researcher went through all "other" responses and recoded the response as appropriate to classify the school's education level within the first three categories. For participants who reported working in schools that range across multiple education levels, the response was recoded to the highest possible educational category (e.g., if a participant reported K-8, their response was recoded to "middle"). Finally, the organization for which the school social worker was employed was also recorded (1 = Public school; 2 = Private school; 3 = Other). School-level variables are in *Table 2*.

School Safety Strategies. Authoritarian strategies and educational/therapeutic strategies were operationalized by a total of sixteen binary indicators representing the implementation of their respective type of school safety strategies (0 = No, 1 = Yes). Frequencies and descriptive statistics for all hypothesized indicators of school safety strategies implemented in schools are in *Table 3*.

School Social Work Practices. School Social Work Practices were operationalized by twenty-two ordinal indicators of participants' engagement in four domains of school social work practice as outlined by the National Evaluative Framework for School Social Work Practice (SSWAA, 2013; 0 = None of the time; 1 = Some of the time; 2 = Most of the time; 3 = All of the time). Practice domains included planning and preparedness, school environment, service delivery, and professional responsibility. A list of all hypothesized indicators of this construct and frequencies and descriptive statistics are in *Table 4*.

Data Analysis

RStudio, a freely accessible programming language for statistical analyses and graphics (The R Project for Statistical Computing, n.d.), was used to produce descriptive and frequency statistics. M*plus*7, a program designed for analyses of latent variables (Muthén & Muthén, 2012), was used to estimate two structural models to determine: 1) predictors of the school security environment in which school social workers are employed; and 2) the extent to which two distinct types of school safety strategies affect school social workers' engagement in practices.

Missing Data Analysis. Results revealed thirty cases with missing data on all variables. These cases were deleted, leaving 232 cases with information from initiated surveys. Of these, three cases were deleted because participants worked outside of the United States during the 2014 – 2015 school year.

Analysis of missing data patterns of the 229 cases with data revealed that 94.72% of values across all variables used in analysis were present. To determine whether there were statistically significant differences between primary variables of interest and missing and non-

missing values, factor scores were compared using *t*-tests to determine if participants who did not complete the survey (indicated by whether the participant reviewed the closing section of the survey) provided significantly different responses to school safety strategies in their schools or practices in which they engage. These analyses revealed cases with missing data did not differ from those cases with full data on school safety or school social work practices information (i.e., participants who did not complete the entire survey did not work in schools with significantly different school security contexts and did not report differences in the practices they engaged in). Therefore, it was assumed data were missing at random (Little, 1988; Little & Rubin, 1989) and estimates reported for the structural models were generated using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation on missing values (Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

      Analytic Models. All models were estimated using delta parameterization and weighted least square mean variance estimation because the models tested included as continuous latent variables with a mixture of binary, ordinal, and continuous indicators. Unstandardized and standardized (STDYX) estimates were estimated and unstandardized and STDYX 95% confidence intervals were reported for all estimates. The STDYX output option in M*plus*7 was used to produce standardized coefficients, with the objective of standardizing the parameter estimates within the model and their standard errors. This option uses the variances of the continuous latent variables and the variances of the background and outcome variables for standardization (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Factor loadings for all indicators in the structural model are in *Table 7* and *Table 8* and correlations among latent constructs reported in these tables can be found in *Table 9* and are as reported in Cuellar (*in preparation*).

RESULTS

Data from 229 school social workers in the United States were useable for analyses. This sample size is from a sampling frame of approximately 1,000 school social workers who were active members of the SSWAA at the time the survey was distributed. The majority of the sample was female and Caucasian. Moreover, a large majority of the participants reported having a Master of Social Work degree and a professional social work license. Demographic information drawn from these data is consistent with previous research with school social workers in the United States over the past twenty years (Allen-Meares, 1994; Astor, Behre, Fravil, & Wallace, 1997; Cuellar, *in preparation*; Kelly et al., 2015; Kelly, Berzin, et al., 2010).

The majority of school social workers in this sample reported working in secondary, followed by elementary level schools. There was a fairly even distribution of school social workers by school size and school setting. Over half of participants in this study reported working in schools in which over 50% of the student population was characterized by minority students. Over half reported working in schools where less than 50% of the student populations was characterized by socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The majority of the sample (91.8%) reported working in a public school system. All states were represented across the sample (including Alaska and Hawaii) except for Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Nebraska, South Dakota, New Mexico, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

The most widely implemented authoritarian strategies were surveillance cameras (85.6%), zero-tolerance policies (61.5%), and the use of school resource officers (57.5%). The least used authoritarian strategy was metal detectors (4.8%), followed by drug screens (12.2%) and the use of non-sworn police officers (27.9%). The most commonly used

educational/therapeutic strategies were counseling (97.8%), programs that promote student

connectedness (74.0%), and student mentoring (55.9%). The least used educational/therapeutic

strategy was peer-mediation practices (32.3%), followed by conflict resolution programs

(41.0%).

Most school social workers reported spending none of their time reviewing practice

outcomes (41.7%), making home visits (31.2%), and conducting specialized risk assessments

(25.6%). The largest percentage of school social workers reported spending some of their time

attending continuing education programs (83.7%), attending professional meetings (82.3%), and

assisting staff with students (71.0%). School social workers reported spending most of their time

in direct practice with students (70.6%), developing intervention strategies (41.7%), and

managing their workload (35.8%). Similarly, the largest percentage of school social workers

reported spending all their time in direct practice with students (15.1%), developing intervention

strategies (9.2%), and managing workload (8.4%).

Structural Equation Models

Structural models estimated predictors of the implementation of school safety strategies

and the influence of these strategies on school social workers' engagement in professional

practices. Two structural models were estimated to avoid issues with statistical power and

precision with sample size.

School Safety Strategies Regressed on School-Level Demographic Variables. The

first model regressed the two factors representing school safety strategies on school-level

demographic variables. Correlations among school-level demographic variables are in *Table 9*.

There was an almost perfect positive correlation between percentage of minority students and

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percentage of socioeconomically students enrolled (r = .98; 95% CI [.53, 1.43]; p < .001); therefore, of these two only percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students enrolled was entered into the regression. Constructs representing authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies were modeled exactly as presented in Cuellar (*in preparation*).

The model with 48 parameters exhibited relatively good fit ($X^2(76)$ = 138.03, p < .05; RMSEA = .060 (90% CI .044, .075); CFI = .914; TLI = .881; WRMR = 1.055). Results of the model revealed no values of Cook's D above .41 and no modification indices greater than 10.00. Results of this model are in *Table 11* and statistically significant paths are illustrated in *Figure 3*. There was a non-significant correlation between authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies (r = .03; 95% CI [-.00, .07]; p < .099).

School Social Work Practices Regressed on School Safety Strategies. The second model regressed four factors representing school social work practices on two factors representing school safety strategies. All constructs were modeled exactly as presented in Cuellar (*in preparation*). Results of the model estimating 131 parameters exhibited relatively good fit ($X^2(540)$ = 821.74, p < .001; RMSEA = .048; RMSEA 90% CI [.041, .054]; CFI = .931; TLI = .924; WRMR = 1.150). Results of the model revealed no values of Cook's D above .49 and no modification indices greater than 10.00. Contrary to the previous model, authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies were significantly correlated (r = .12; 95% CI [.00, .23]; p = .038). Results of this model are in *Table 12* and statistically significant paths are illustrated in *Figure 4*.

DISCUSSION

School size and school education level were positively associated with the use of authoritarian strategies. School location and school education level were positively associated with the use of educational/therapeutic strategies, while percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students was negatively associated with educational/therapeutic strategies. Contrary to findings in Cuellar (*in preparation*), there was a significant positive correlation between authoritarian and educational/therapeutic strategies in the model. These findings are consistent with previous literature and research (Gastic & Johnson, 2014; Irwin, 2013; Kupchick, 2010; Kupchik & Ward, 2014; Larsen, 2003; Nickerson & Spears, 2007; Servoss, 2014; Servoss & Finn, 2014; Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999).

School social workers are often tasked with developing intervention practices that take a person-in-environment perspective to help students and improve school context (Dupper, 2002; Frey & Dupper, 2005; Kelly et al., 2015). Past research suggests that a considerable percentage of school social workers engage in the development and implementation of educational/therapeutics strategies discussed in this paper (Astor et al., 2005). Therefore, it makes sense that the presence of educational/therapeutic strategies would predict school social workers' engagement in practices designed to address the needs of their students and school environment; particularly Tier 1 needs within the RtI framework (Kelly et al., 2010). These relationships might be complimented by the strong correlation between school social workers' engagement in school environment practices and service delivery practices, as these constructs as operationalized in this paper represent the first two goals of The School Social Work Practice Model (e.g., see Cuellar, *in preparation*).

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From an RtI framework, nearly all of the educational/therapeutic strategies facilitated by school social workers require they engage in preventive practices that address all students equally before implementing more individualized services. This finding might be explained by collaborative relationships with family and community developed by school social workers simultaneously with direct services to provide holistic services to their students. A goal of such collaboration is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the student condition by familiarizing school personnel with psychosocial factors that might be influencing student behavior. The drive to use a socio-ecological approach to service delivery requires school social workers to take a systems perspective in direct practice with students beyond individual casework. In other words, school social workers ideally will engage in practices that address the needs of the school environment and the student home-community relationships at the same time as providing direct service to students (Frey & Dupper, 2005). In conjunction with recent surveys that have determined school social workers still follow a clinical social casework model, it is not surprising that all practices within this model were correlated.

The RtI framework and current practice models for service delivery both can help shed light the association between authoritarian security environments and school social workers engagement in direct practice with students. If schools that employ more authoritarian strategies are larger and characterized by older students, it is not unlikely that students will need more individualized interventions to address their needs. School social workers might respond to the needs of these schools by engaging in more Tier 1 interventions and practices that aim to promote school-home-community linkages to coordinate and deliver services to their students. From an ecological perspective, school social workers can view themselves as a product of their

interactions within school and community to better understand this relationship. If authoritarian security environments have any effect on the students or schools in which they work, this effect will likely extend to school social workers through their environmental interactions.

Another interesting finding is the positive association between planning and preparedness practices and authoritarian strategies. If schools that use these strategies are characterized by school-level factors examined and confirmed in this study, school social workers will engage in more practices that aim to improve school-home-community linkags when working in larger schools that serve older youth. As suggested by Frey and Dupper (2005), school social workers ideally engage in these practices alongside school environment and service delivery practices. Therefore, this relationship complements the significant relationship between authoritarian strategies and direct practices with students. However, it is likely that these types of strategies might affect students in a way that requires increased engagement in these two domains as opposed to school environment practices. Further research is need to determine the relationships between authoritarian strategies and school social work practices, particularly when controlling for effects of these strategies on students.

Limitations

The cross-sectional method of data collection also presents limitations in this study. This design makes it difficult to determine temporal relationships between variables, which is important based on the theoretical foundation of this research. For example, in the discussion of the effects of school safety on school social work practice, a number of school-level variables could predict school social workers' engagement in these practices. While these were tested in separate models to address concerns with sample size, it cannot be ruled out that certain school-

level statistics might influence these relationships. This study supported existing research on predictors of schools that use authoritarian strategies disproportionally; therefore, school social workers working in these schools are likely influenced by other school-level factors than school safety strategies alone. Regardless, there appears to be an effect of commonly implemented school safety strategies on school social work practices to some extent and this relationship must be further explored.

The constructs operationalized do generally reflect the overarching goals of The School Social Work Practice Model, particularly planning and preparedness practices, school environment practices, and service delivery practices (Frey et al, 2013; for a detailed discussion regarding validity of constructs estimated see Cuellar, *in preparation*). However, there are a number of measurement issues that should be considered before interpretations can be made. The self-report nature of data collection presents a number of challenges concerning the school social workers' ability to report reliable information. This method of data collection assumes that participants are: 1) Honest in their responses; 2) Have sufficient introspective ability (i.e. can they provide accurate information); and 3) Understanding the survey content. Within this sample, and due to the anonymous nature of data collection, it is unclear whether school social workers accurately provided information on school safety strategies and information concerning the student- and school-level characteristics requested. Nonetheless, it is assumed that participants accurately provided information and analyses were conducted under this assumption. This method of data collection might also reduce validity of the data collection instrument. For example, school social work practices might be biased and response options to practice

engagement might be interpreted different for different school social workers. Additionally, there is a need to explore variation in these effects across different education levels.

It is unclear to what extent the study sample is representative of all school social workers in the United States given the convenience sample used in this study; therefore, statistical inference cannot be made. While the sample was representative of other attempts to survey United States school social workers over the last two decades, there is no way to know how representative this sample is of all school social workers in the United States. SSWAA is the largest national organization for school social workers and a major outlet for the school social work profession in the United States, providing research publications, practice models and policy updates to practitioners across the country. Data were collected from members of this organization for this reason, as it is likely this organization is the most representative of school social work practice in today's schools. These individuals might be different than other school social workers in the United States (e.g., members who can afford annual dues to and active membership in such an organization might have higher salaries and more resources as practitioners than those not sampled). Moreover, with the exception of organization type (i.e., the overrepresentation of public schools in the sample), school-level frequency distributions in this sample suggest that school were represented fairly equally. In this sample participants came from a wide range of primarily public schools. However, relationships identified might be different for school social workers employed in public versus private organizations (i.e., private or charter schools). This is potentially problematic and might introduce omitted variable bias because the type of school in which school social work practitioners work likely has an influence on the type of school security environment they work in and the type of practices in which they engage.

Another limitation is the presented structural model estimated over 130 parameters, which would roughly require a sample of eight hundred ninety independently reporting school social workers (Bentler & Chou, 1987). While this model yields significant information that has direct implications for school social work practice, it should be replicated with a larger sample size so that statistical power and precision are not issues.

Implications for School Social Work Practice

Despite the limitations of this study, two findings have major implications for school social work practice in today's schools. First is the negative association between socioeconmically disadvantaged youth served and the use of educational/therapeutic (Tier 1) interventions. Fewer educational/therapeutic interventions were reported in schools with more socioeconomically disadvantaged students. If this is the case, school social workers in these schools might be facing barriers in implementing Tier 1 interventions. For example, schools that serve a larger percentage of disadvantaged youth might not have the resources necessary to provide school social workers with what they need to develop and implement these interventions. This lack of resourcefulness might make it challenging for practitioners to promote a school context in which students feel connected and are able to communicate with school personnel. School social workers employed in schools that serve more socioeconomically disadvantaged youth should evaluate their school security environment regularly and be sure that appropriate Tier 1 interventions are implemented. If they are not being implemented, particularly in schools where youth are already facing adversity in family and community life, school social workers should consult with administration to determine why and educate school personnel on how these

interventions might help improve student performance. This could help them maintain a nurturing school environment that fosters student success and connectedness.

The second implication concerns the positive association between authoritarian school security environments and school social workers engagement in planning and preparedness and service delivery practices. School social workers employed in schools that utilize more authoritarian school safety strategies will engage in more practices that aim to improve school-home-community linkages and spend more time working directly with students. This could be for several reasons. If authoritarian strategies compromise students' feelings of safety and connectedness within the school, school social workers might spend more time working directly with students and their families/communities to identify barriers to success and address their needs. In authoritarian school security environments, practitioners might also take on a more authoritarian role, requiring them to work closely with school police to carry out tasks such as home visits or follow up on truancy issues. School social workers employed in authoritarian school environments should consistently survey the needs of their students and schools through the RtI framework. If authoritarian strategies have a negative effect on students, school social workers should intervene and apply more targeted (Tier 2 or Tier 3) interventions as necessary.

School social workers can use information from this study to better understand their schools' security environments and how they influence their practice. However, further research is needed to determine the practical significance of the relationships identified.

Recommendations for Future Research

With a growing trend in the use of school safety strategies and increased employment rates for school social work in the United States, research efforts must be made to better

understand the effects of the school security environment on school social workers and the students they serve. This study should be viewed as a pilot and replicated with a larger probability sample. Researchers studying school social workers might increase their sample size by collaborating with other national and state-level school social work organizations to increase survey exposure and maximize response rate (e.g., Kelly et al., 2015). A larger sample size might yield more accurate information as to the relationships revealed in this study.

Efforts must also be made to understand how the school security environment affects student academic and behavioral domains and the role school social workers play in improving these domains. One way to explore this affect is through a multilevel approach to data collection. For example, data could be collected from three sources within a given school: 1) school administrators for the purposes of operationalizing the school security environment; 2) school social workers for the purpose of self-reporting practices; and 3) two groups of students for the purpose of monitoring student outcomes: those who receive direct services from the school social workers and those who do not. By sampling within multiple school districts within a single district (or state) to identify districts with more vs. less school social work presence, researchers can examine the effects of the school security environment on students and determine the extent to which school social workers influence these effects. This type of research is ideal but would require resources and be community-based, making it necessary for researchers to be involved and understand the schools in which they collect data.

Finally, researchers should consider investigating school social workers' interactions with school security personnel given high percentage of school social workers working in schools with these professionals. This research is warranted also by the increased push for school

security personnel in schools as a recent of recent federal legislation (White House, 2013). With both of these areas of professional practice expected to grow over the next decade, understanding school social workers' interactions with school security personnel is critical for training and increasing professional preparedness of the next generation of school social work practitioners.

CONCLUSION

School social workers provide various mental health services and advocate for students who sometimes cannot do so for themselves; thus they play a critical role in the lives of students and school personnel. They will continue to find themselves working within complex school security environments, side-by-side with authoritarian and educational/therapeutic school safety strategies. Results also suggest that authoritarian strategies require school social workers to engage in more practices that promote home-school-community linkages and involve direct service delivery, while educational/therapeutic strategies required school social workers to engage in practices outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model in use today. Findings from this study serve as a next step in understanding the effects of school safety strategies in United States schools from an unstudied perspective. Future attempts must be made to better understand how school safety efforts influence school social workers in practice and the role school social workers play in school safety. With a stronger understanding of these relationships, school social workers will be better prepared to work in school contexts with complex security environments.

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CONCLUSION

Findings from this dissertation serve as a next step in understanding the effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies in United States schools by investigating their potential effects on an unstudied population. As discussed in *Chapter 1*, this dissertation begins by providing a rationale for why this research is needed and its potential to benefit school safety and school social work literature. Recommendations initially made in this chapter, based off of the literature alone, are partially supported by the findings referred to in *Chapters 2* and *3*.

As stated in *Chapter 2*, one of the main objectives of this study was to design a psychometrically sound instrument to determine the extent to which school social work practices were influenced by school contextual factors. After exploring the literature on school contextual factors that were selected to develop this instrument, this chapter examined validity for the factorial structure of data collected with the instrument. Six of eight hypothesized constructs were operationalized, including two constructs representing different types of school safety strategies and four constructs representing various school social work practice domains as outlined by The School Social Work Practice Model used in schools today. Two constructs, students' rights and criminalization, were not successfully measured; however, the descriptive and frequency statistics of these items revealed interesting information concerning students' rights and the criminalization of student behavior (see *Chapter 2* for further discussion). It is important to note that this attempt is among the first to operationalize students' rights and criminalization constructs, both of which have been primarily explored in past research using anecdotal reports or qualitative and descriptive research methods. *Chapter 2* also reported a number of correlations and correlated errors among indicators that were of practical significance

to school social work practice, many of which were suggestive of the relationships uncovered in the subsequent chapter. In sum, findings from *Chapter 2* support the construct validity of the data collection instrument for the purpose of identifying predictors of school safety strategies in schools that their effects on school social work practice.

As explained in *Chapter 3*, a number of findings are of significant importance to school safety and school social work literature. First, this research confirms positive associations between various school-level factors (e.g., school size and education level) and the implementation of authoritarian strategies from the unstudied perspective of school social workers. Second, this research contributed to school safety literature by identifying a number of relationships between school-level characteristics and the use of educational/therapeutic strategies (e.g., school setting and socioeconomically disadvantaged youth served). Future researchers can use these findings to support further exploration of these factors and their influence on the school security environment and school context. *Chapter 3* also builds on school social work literature by highlighting the significant associations between a number of commonly implemented school safety strategies and school social workers' engagement in practices. This knowledge can help future school social workers better understand how school contextual factors influence their practice and shape their role within their school environment. This is particularly useful information for school social workers following nationally recognized practice models like RtI. Findings from this dissertation have significant implications for social work practice, education, and research.

Recommendations for Practice

As suggested in *Chapter 3*, school social workers, particularly those employed in larger schools that serve older or socioeconomically disadvantaged youth, must be aware of the influence the school security environment can have on their practice. This awareness can help school social workers maximize their effectiveness by accounting for potential barriers to their service delivery and coordination when working in larger middle and secondary schools characterized by a higher percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. School social workers and other school mental health professionals also should be aware of the role they play in developing and implementing educational/therapeutic strategies, particularly those practitioners working with a greater number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. As evidenced in the findings discussed in *Chapter 2*, a considerable percentage of school social workers consistently rated teachers or other sworn law enforcement as not prioritizing students' rights. School social workers must make attempts to maintain the prioritization of students' rights in their schools. Such efforts can be facilitated by peer consultation and training and might increase school personnel awareness of students' rights.

Despite current literature, univariate statistics from the sample studied suggest that arrest rates are not a concern for the majority of school social workers. However, with emerging literature on the topic school social workers must remain educated on the possibility for criminalization of student behavior in schools with hightly authoritarian school security environments. Continued professional education and awareness of current research on potential effects of the school security environment on students might help school social workers stay familiar with issues that arise within their schools. This awareness can help school social

workers familiarize school personnel and other school-based professionals of students' rights, which likely has the potential to improve student connectedness, student-staff communication and students' feelings of trust towards school personnel. This is critical to promoting a positive school climate where students feel safe and secure, and also has the potential to promote school safety through increased student openness and connectedness.

Despite the recoding method of non-applicable responses for items representing school social workers' perceptions of students' rights (reported in *Chapter 2*), students' rights must be considered by school personnel to increase student connectedness and promote a healthy learning environment. School social workers must provide a welcoming environment for students to discuss challenges experienced in the school context as they concern their rights and welcome feedback on their feelings towards school safety practices employed in their schools, particularly in schools that use sworn law enforcement that might not receive relevant training to work with students in schools. School social workers should consider having available literature on students' rights so that when students' feel their rights are violated, or if they are interested in learning their rights, they can do so in a safe environment. This can help students become familiar with their rights and possibly reduce their violation within the school context. Making this information available to students might also have an effect on the criminalization of student behaviors in schools where arrest rates are problematic. Similarly, school social workers should consider incorporating current research on students' rights in peer consultation and peer training to improve awareness of issues that might arise as a result of the school security environment. Regardless, efforts must be made to maintain a school environment where students' rights are

prioritized and considered when disciplinary actions are executed, particularly if they are the result of school safety initiatives.

Recommendations for Education

A number of states provide state-issued licensure based on the completion of a graduate course with a focus on school social work; therefore, awareness of complexities in practice as introduced by commonly implemented school safety strategies must begin in the training of professional school social workers. First, an emphasis should continue to be made on identifying practices within the school context that impede student success. An ability to identify these practices should be complemented by an understanding of how to peacefully and professionally advocate for change in student- and school-level policies that impede student success. As suggested in *Chapter 3*, an ability to do this peacefully and effectively might allow school social workers to advocate for the rights for their students while engaging in practices that could be effective in preserving these rights and improving student outcomes.

During the training stage, school social workers should also be made aware of the benefits their practices might have in preserving students' rights. While this study was unable to test the association between authoritarian strategies and students' rights or the criminalization of student behavior, it would be beneficial for school social work educators to incorporate awareness of the potential effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies when training school social workers. Introductory school social work or social justice courses at the graduate level would be great opportunities to provide this information to social workers in training. School social work preparedness might be improved if school social work education incorporated lessons on the effects of school contextual factors on students and school personnel

while introducing primary, secondary, and tertiary intervention practices. Lastly, and based on the findings discussed in *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3,* training of school social work practitioners should incorporate the importance of continued education and professional responsibility to increase familiarity of how common school level policies influence their practice and the lives of their students and fellow school personnel.

Recommendations for Research

In a time where school safety strategies are often promoted in response to high-profile incidents of youth violence with little evidence as to their effectiveness, empirical research is needed to further explore the role school social workers play in school safety and also in preserving students' rights and reducing the criminalization of student behavior. *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3* of this dissertation outline recommendations for future research based on findings.

It is critical that researchers take next steps toward reliably measuring these constructs and exploring their relationships with school personnel and student academic and behavioral outcomes. Such research has that potential to help improve the effectiveness of elements within the school context and generate an understanding as to what factors within schools impede students' rights. Moreover, empirically identifying factors associated with criminalization using mixed research methods might yield further insight as to why emerging research suggests increased arrest rates are associated with the use of certain safety strategies. This type of research can help school administrators understand the influence of school safety initiatives on students and can ultimately help reduce unnecessary involvement of youth in juvenile court. While experimental research might not be feasible as it concerns school safety strategies, school social work researchers should use quasi-experimental matching methods to compare the role school

social workers play in students' rights and student criminalization in schools with vastly different types of school safety strategies with similar student populations. This type of research will help generate answers to research questions developed from the present study.

Regardless of the research approach, further investigation and evaluation is needed to ensure school social work practitioners, educators, and researchers are taking the appropriate steps to maintain healthy and secure learning environments for youth in a time where school safety strategies will remain fixtures in United States school systems.

APPENDICES

Table 1   Demographic Information for School Social Workers Sample ($N = 229$)

	Percent[1]	N
Gender	83.4	191
Male	6.3	12
Female	93.7	179
Race	83.8	192
White	88.5	170
Black/African-American	8.3	16
Asian	1.0	2
Other	2.1	4
Hispanic/Latino	7.9	15
Education	84.3	193
Bachelor of Social Work	5.2	10
Master of Social Work	90.7	175
Doctor of Social Work (DSW)	0.5	1
Doctor of Social Work (PhD)	1.0	2
Other	2.6	5
Professional Licensure	83.8	192
State-issued School Social Work Certificate	61.1	140
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	36.2	83
NASW Academy of Clinical Social Workers	2.2	5
NASW School Social Work Specialist	2.2	5
Other	17.0	39

[1]Valid percentages reported

Table 2   School-Level Characteristics of Sample ($N = 229$)

	Percent[1]	N
Education Level	98.3	225
Elementary	36.4	82
Middle	20.4	46
Secondary	42.2	95
Other	0.9	2
School Setting	98.3	225
Rural	30.7	69
Suburban	37.3	84
Urban	32.0	72
School Size	98.7	226
0 – 249	16.4	37
250 – 499	26.1	59
500 – 749	21.2	48
750 – 999	12.8	29
1000+	23.5	53
Percent Students Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	98.7	226
0% - 24%	20.8	47
25% - 49%	20.8	47
50% - 74%	24.3	55
75% - 100%	34.1	77
Percent Students Ethnic Minority	96.9	222
0% - 24%	40.5	90
25% - 49%	15.3	34
50% - 74%	16.7	37
75% - 100%	27.5	61
Type of Organization	84.7	194
Public School	91.8	178
Private School	1.5	3
Other	6.7	13

[1]Valid percentages reported

Table 3   Frequencies and Percentages[1] for School Safety Strategies ($N = 229$)

	Responses N (%)	Yes N (%)	No N (%)
Authoritarian Strategies			
Metal Detectors	229(100.0)	11(4.8)	218(95.2)
Locked, controlled or monitored gates	229(100.0)	98(42.8)	131(57.2)
Surveillance cameras	229(100.0)	196(85.6)	33(14.4)
Dress code	227(99.1)	118(52.0)	109(48.0)
School Resource Officers	226(98.7)	130(57.5)	96(42.5)
Non-sworn police officers	226(98.7)	63(27.9)	163(72.1)
Student property searches by law	227(99.1)	97(42.7)	130(57.3)
Other student property searches	226(98.7)	126(55.8)	100(44.2)
Drug screenings	229(100.0)	28(12.2)	201(87.8)
Zero-tolerance policies	226(98.7)	139(61.5)	87(38.5)
Educational Strategies			
Counseling	228(99.6)	223(97.8)	5(2.2)
Student mentoring programs	229(100.0)	128(55.9)	101(44.1)
Conflict resolution training	227(99.1)	93(41.0)	134(59.0)
Peer-mediation practices	226(98.7)	73(32.3)	153(67.7)
Programs that promote communication	229(100.0)	126(55.0)	103(45.0)
Programs that promote connectedness	227(99.1)	168(74.0)	59(26.0)

[1]Valid percentages reported

Table 4   Frequencies and Percentages[1] for Indicators of School Social Work Practice ($N = 229$)

	N (%)	None	Some	Most	All
Planning and Preparedness					
Conducting Needs Assessments	217(94.7)	36(16.6)	147(67.7)	33(15.2)	1(0.5)
Reviewing Practice Outcomes	216(94.3)	90(41.7)	120(55.6)	6(2.8)	0(0)
Monitoring Service Linkages	218(95.2)	26(11.9)	113(51.8)	70(32.1)	9(4.1)
Reviewing Research Relevant to Practice	218(95.2)	54(24.8)	158(72.5)	5(2.3)	1(0.5)
Establishing Relationships with Colleagues	218(95.2)	4(1.8)	138(63.3)	65(29.8)	11(5.0)
Promoting Family Engagement	218(95.2)	21(9.6)	144(66.1)	47(21.6)	6(2.8)
Familiarizing Myself with School Policies	218(95.2)	36(16.5)	153(70.2)	20(9.2)	9(4.1)
Developing School Community Partnerships	217(94.7)	46(21.2)	121(55.8)	43(19.8)	7(3.2)
Developing Relationships with Community Orgs	215(93.9)	39(18.1)	150(69.8)	20(9.3)	6(2.8)
Developing Home School Community Linkages	215(93.9)	23(10.7)	134(62.3)	51(23.7)	7(3.3)
School Environment					
Increasing Students' Feelings of Safety	217(94.7)	35(16.1)	132(60.8)	40(18.4)	10(4.6)
Promoting Student Connectedness	218(95.2)	18(8.3)	111(50.9)	74(33.9)	15(6.9)
Developing Intervention Strategies	218(95.2)	11(5.0)	96(44.0)	91(41.7)	20(9.2)
Identify Practices that Impede Student Success	218(95.2)	29(13.3)	137(62.8)	47(21.6)	5(2.3)
Challenge Practices that Interfere with Student Success	217(94.7)	30(13.8)	150(69.1)	32(14.7)	5(2.3)
Service Delivery					
Direct Practice with Students	218(95.2)	5(2.3)	26(11.9)	154(70.6)	33(15.1)
Conducting Specialized Risk Assessments	215(93.9)	55(25.6)	139(64.7)	18(8.4)	3(1.4)
Making Home Visits	215(93.9)	67(31.2)	122(56.7)	23(10.7)	3(1.4)
Engaging in Peer Consultation	215(93.9)	29(13.5)	150(69.8)	30(14.0)	6(2.8)
Assisting Staff with Students	214(93.4)	26(12.1)	152(71.0)	33(15.4)	3(1.4)
Professional Responsibility					
Administrative Tasks	215(93.9)	25(11.6)	140(65.1)	45(20.9)	5(2.3)
Completing Paperwork	215(93.9)	2(0.9)	129(60.0)	69(32.1)	15(7.0)
Attending CE Programs	215(93.9)	21(9.8)	180(83.7)	13(6.0)	1(0.5)
Attending Professional Meetings	215(93.9)	8(3.7)	177(82.3)	27(12.6)	3(1.4)
Managing Workload	215(93.9)	7(3.3)	113(52.6)	77(35.8)	18(8.4)
Practicing Self-Care	214(93.4)	49(22.9)	140(65.4)	18(8.4)	7(3.3)
Case Management	215(93.9)	20(9.3)	115(53.5)	65(30.2)	15(7.0)

[1]Valid percentages reported

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Table 5   Frequencies and Percentages[1] for Indicators of Students' Rights Variables ($N = 229$)

	Responses N (%)	No N (%)	Yes N (%)	N/A N (%)	No[2]
Protection from unwarranted search and seizure is a priority for…					
School Administrators	181(79.0)	32(17.7)	118(65.2)	31(17.1)	150(21.3)
Teachers	180(78.6)	52(28.9)	89(49.4)	39(21.7)	128(36.8)
School Health Care Professionals	179(78.2)	29(16.2)	92(51.4)	58(32.4)	121(23.9)
School Social Workers	182(79.5)	9(4.9)	143(78.6)	30(16.5)	152(5.9)
Other Mental Health Care Professionals	181(79.0)	18(9.9)	93(51.4)	70(38.7)	111(16.2)
School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement	181(79.0)	21(11.6)	96(53.0)	64(35.4)	117(17.9)
Other Non-Sworn Law Enforcement	181(79.0)	28(15.5)	52(28.7)	101(55.8)	80(35.0)
Protection from discrimination is a priority for…					
School Administrators	183(79.9)	19(10.4)	158(86.3)	6(3.3)	177(10.7)
Teachers	179(78.2)	25(14.0)	146(81.6)	8(4.5)	171(14.6)
School Health Care Professionals	178(77.7)	15(8.4)	137(77.0)	26(14.6)	152(9.8)
School Social Workers	182(79.5)	2(1.1)	176(96.7)	4(2.2)	178(1.1)
Other Mental Health Care Professionals	181(79.0)	6(3.3)	121(66.9)	54(29.8)	127(4.7)
School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement	176(76.9)	21(11.9)	97(55.1)	58(33.0)	118(17.7)
Other Non-Sworn Law Enforcement	180(78.6)	20(11.1)	67(37.2)	93(51.7)	87(22.9)
Protection from undue process is a priority for…					
School Administrators	182(79.5)	23(12.6)	144(79.1)	15(8.2)	167(13.7)
Teachers	181(79.0)	43(23.8)	111(61.3)	27(14.9)	154(27.9)
School Health Care Professionals	180(78.6)	25(13.9)	109(60.6)	46(25.6)	134(18.6)
School Social Workers	182(79.5)	5(2.7)	161(88.5)	16(8.8)	166(3.0)
Other Mental Health Care Professionals	180(78.6)	11(6.1)	108(60.0)	61(33.9)	119(9.2)
School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement	181(79.0)	23(12.7)	92(50.8)	66(36.5)	115(2.0)
Other Non-Sworn Law Enforcement	181(79.0)	29(16.0)	52(28.7)	100(55.2)	81(35.8)

[1]Valid percentages reported before "N/A" was recoded as missing
[2]Total number of participants who responded "Yes" or "No" (percentage of participants who reported "No" among this subset)

Table 6   Frequencies and Percentages[1] for Indicators of Student Criminalization ($N = 229$)

	N (%)	Reasonable # of Arrests N (%)	Too Many Arrests N (%)	N/A N (%)
Criminalization				
Disorderly Conduct	205(89.5)	67(32.7)	7(3.4)	131(63.9)
Alcohol Offenses	207(90.4)	55(26.6)	6(2.9)	146(70.5)
Drug Offenses	206(89.9)	73(35.4)	11(5.3)	122(59.2)
Vandalism	203(88.6)	60(29.6)	2(1.0)	141(69.5)
Theft	205(89.5)	71(34.6)	1(0.5)	133(64.9)
Weapons Possession	207(90.4)	54(26.1)	4(1.9)	149(72.0)
Violence	207(90.4)	82(39.6)	15(7.2)	110(53.1)

[1]Valid percentages reported before "N/A" was recoded as missing

Table 7   School Safety Strategies Confirmatory Factor Analytic Model[1] ($N = 229$)

	Estimate[2]	95% CI	*STDYX*[1]	*STDYX* 95% CI
Authoritarian Strategies				
Metal Detectors	1.00	1.00, 1.00	.44	.31, 1.11
Surveillance Cameras	.98	.39, 1.57	.44	.09, .79
Student Drug Screens	1.48	.53, 2.43	.66	.24, .74
Student Property Searches by School Personnel	1.52	.47, 2.58	.68	.42, .84
School Resource Officers/Sworn Law Enforcement	1.13	.29, 1.96	.50	.33, .79
Student Property Searches by Law Enforcement	1.76	.54, 2.98	.79	.38, .76
Educational/Therapeutic Strategies				
Student Mentoring	1.00	1.00, 1.00	.60	.44, .76
Conflict Resolution	1.37	.96, 1.78	.83	.70, .97
Peer Mediation	1.36	.91, 1.82	.83	.67, .99
Programs Promoting Staff-Student Communication	.91	.53, 1.28	.55	.38, .72
Programs Promoting Student Connectedness	.96	.58, 1.34	.58	.41, .75

$X^2(42) = 70.54$, $p < .05$; RMSEA = .054 (90% CI .031, .076); CFI = .943; TLI = .925; WRMR = 1.006
[1]Model excludes indicators with factor loadings < .40; Error terms discussed in the text are correlated in this model
[2]All coefficients significant at $p < .01$.

Table 8   School Social Work Practices Confirmatory Factor Analytic Model[1] ($N = 218$)

	Estimate[2]	95% CI	STDYX	STDYX 95% CI
Planning and Preparedness				
Making Home Visits	1.00	1.00, 1.00	.46	.35, .57
Monitoring Service Linkages	1.82	1.40, 2.23	.84	.77, .90
Establishing Relationships with Colleagues	1.43	1.04, 1.82	.66	.55, .76
Developing School Community Partnerships	1.74	1.32, 2.17	.80	.74, .87
Developing Home-School-Community Linkages	1.78	1.34, 2.23	.82	.77, .88
Promoting Family Engagement	1.79	1.37, 2.22	.83	.77, .88
Developing Relationships with Community	1.73	1.30, 2.17	.80	.73, .86
School Environment				
Increasing Students' Feelings of Safety	1.00	1.00, 1.00	.71	.61, .80
Promoting Student Connectedness	1.14	.98, 1.30	.81	.72, .89
Developing Intervention Strategies	.99	.83, 1.16	.71	.62, .79
Identify Practices that Impede Student Success	1.01	.81, 1.21	.72	.61, .82
Challenge Practices that Interfere with Student Success	.76	.54, .99	.54	.41, .67
Service Delivery				
Reviewing Research Relevant to Practice	1.00	1.00, 1.00	.53	.41, .65
Reviewing Practice Outcomes	1.14	.84, 1.44	.61	.49, .72
Assisting Staff with Students	1.42	1.05, 1.78	.75	.67, .84
Direct Practice with Students	1.03	.69, 1.38	.55	.43, .67
Conducting Specialized Risk Assessments	1.17	.82, 1.52	.62	.51, .73
Engaging in Peer Consultation	1.31	.96, 1.67	.70	.61, .79
Professional Responsibility				
Familiarizing Self with School Policies	1.00	1.00, 1.00	.64	.52, .76
Completing Paperwork	.75	.55, .96	.48	.38, .59
Attending CE Programs	1.31	1.02, 1.60	.84	.74, .94
Attending Professional Meetings	.97	.72, 1.22	.62	.51, .73
Managing Workload	.88	.62, 1.14	.56	.46, .67
Case Management	1.08	.81, 1.35	.70	.60, .79

$X^2(242) = 472.51$, $p < .05$; RMSEA = .066 (90% CI .057, .075); CFI = .947; TLI = .940; WRMR = 1.165
[1]Refined model excludes indicators with standardized factor loadings < .40; Error terms discussed in the text are correlated in this model
[2]All coefficients significant at $p < .01$.

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Table 9   Correlations[1] Among Latent Constructs with 95% Confidence Intervals and Variances on Diagonal ($N = 218$)

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Planning and Preparedness Practices	.21			
2. School Environment Practices	.15 .08, .22	.50		
3. Service Delivery Practices	.13 .11, .23	.28 .32, .50	.28	
4. Professional Responsibility Practices	.18 .09, .20	.23 .11, .24	.20 .15, .29	.41

[1]All correlations significant at $p < .001$

Table 10　　　Correlations Among School-Level Indicators with Means on Diagonal (*N* = 229)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
1. School Location	2.01				
2. School Size	-.04 -.19, .10	3.00			
3. Percentage Minority Students	.56*** .29, .82	-.06 -.29, .18	2.31		
4. Percentage Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	.24** .10, .38	-.37** -.62, -.12	.98*** .53, 1.43	2.71	
5. School Education Level	-.10 -.23, .02	.40*** .23, .57	-.01 -.19, .16	-.02 -.17, .16	2.12

Note: * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001

Table 11   School Safety Strategies Regressed on School-Level Indicators ($N = 229$)

	Estimate	95% CI	*STDYX*	*STDYX* 95% CI
Authoritarian Strategies *ON*				
School Location	-.03	-.09, .02	-.08	-.17, .08
School Size	.06**	.02, .11	.30***	.14, .39
Percent Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	.02	-.01, .06	.10	-.02, .24
Education Level	.14**	.04, .24	.53***	.41, .65
Educational Strategies *ON*				
School Location	.13	-.00, .26	.18*	.01, .35
School Size	-.05	-.12, .01	-.13	-.30, .03
Percent Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	-.11**	-.20, -.03	-.22**	-.38, -.07
Education Level	.10*	.02, .18	.19*	.04, .34

$X^2(76) = 138.03$, $p < .05$; RMSEA = .060 (90% CI .044, .075); CFI = .914; TLI = .881; WRMR = 1.055
Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 12   School Social Work Practices Regressed on School Safety Strategies ($N = 229$)

	Estimate	95% CI	STDYX	STDYX 95% CI
Planning and Preparedness Practices *ON*				
Authoritarian Strategies	.14*	.00, .28	.22*	.03, .40
Educational/Therapeutic Strategies	.24**	.08, .40	.33***	.16, .50
School Environment Practices *ON*				
Authoritarian Strategies	.06	-.13, .27	.06	-.14, .28
Educational/Therapeutic Strategies	.35**	.10, .61	.31**	.12, .51
Service Delivery Practices *ON*				
Authoritarian Strategies	.19*	.02, .36	.24*	.03, .44
Educational/Therapeutic Strategies	.34**	.13, .55	.39***	.20, .58
Professional Responsibility Practices *ON*				
Authoritarian Strategies	.06	-.13, .25	.06	-.15, .29
Educational/Therapeutic Strategies	.20	-.03, .43	.19	-.00, .39

$X^2(540) = 821.74$, *p* < .001; RMSEA = .048; RMSEA 90% CI [.041, .054]; CFI = .931; TLI = .924; WRMR = 1.150
Significance Codes: **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001

School Location

School Size

Percentage Minority

Percentage SES Disadvantaged

Education Level

Authoritarian Strategies

Educational/Therapeutic Strategies

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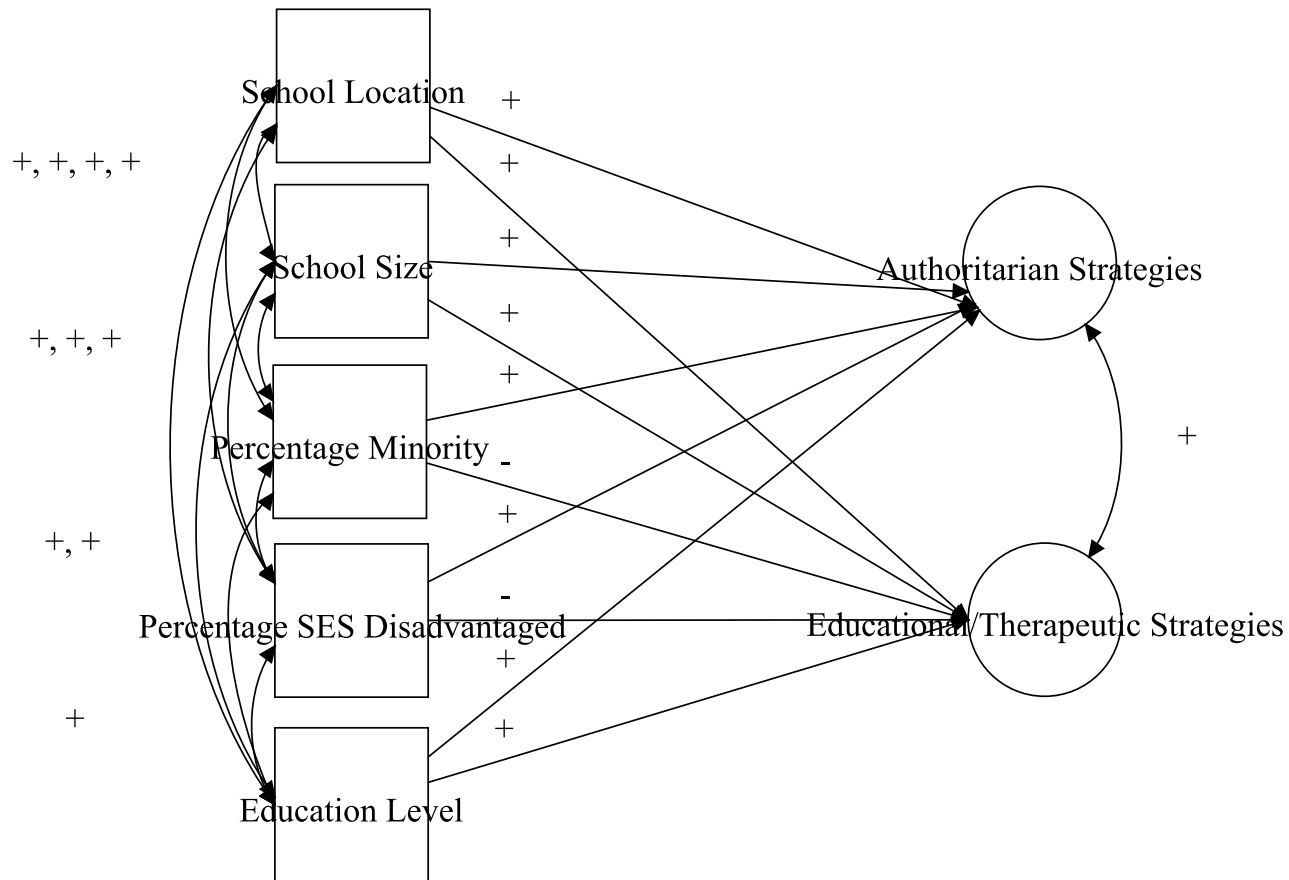Figure 1   Hypothesized Relationships Between School-Level Indicators and School Safety Strategies
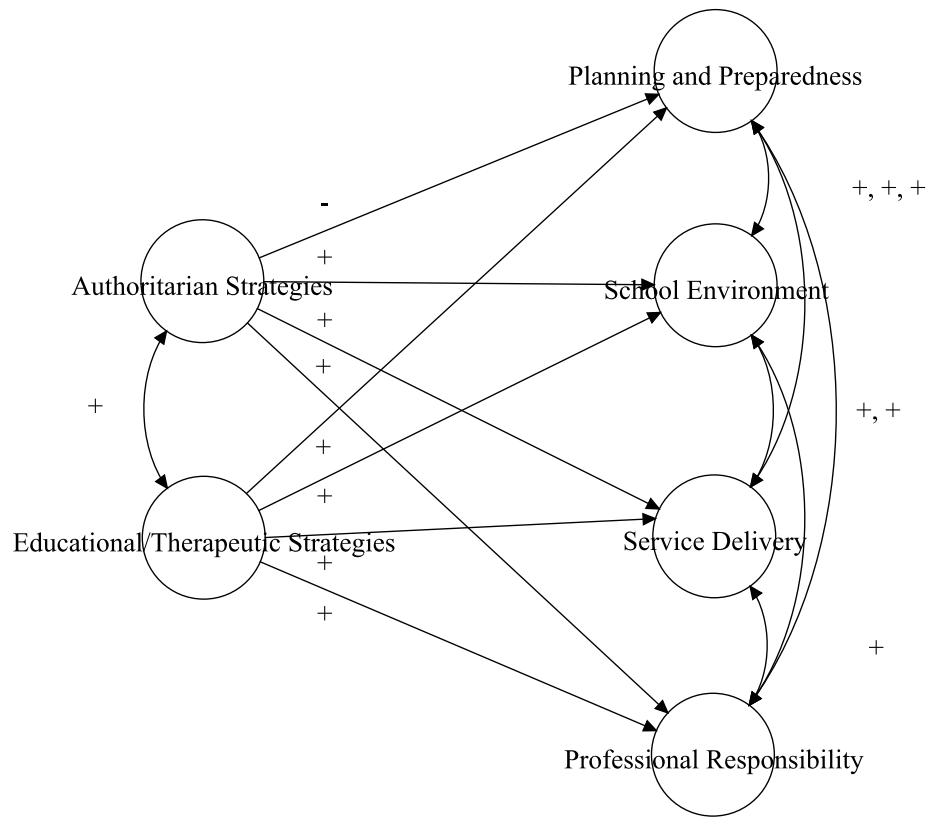
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Figure 2   Hypothesized Relationships Between School Safety Strategies and School Social Work Practices
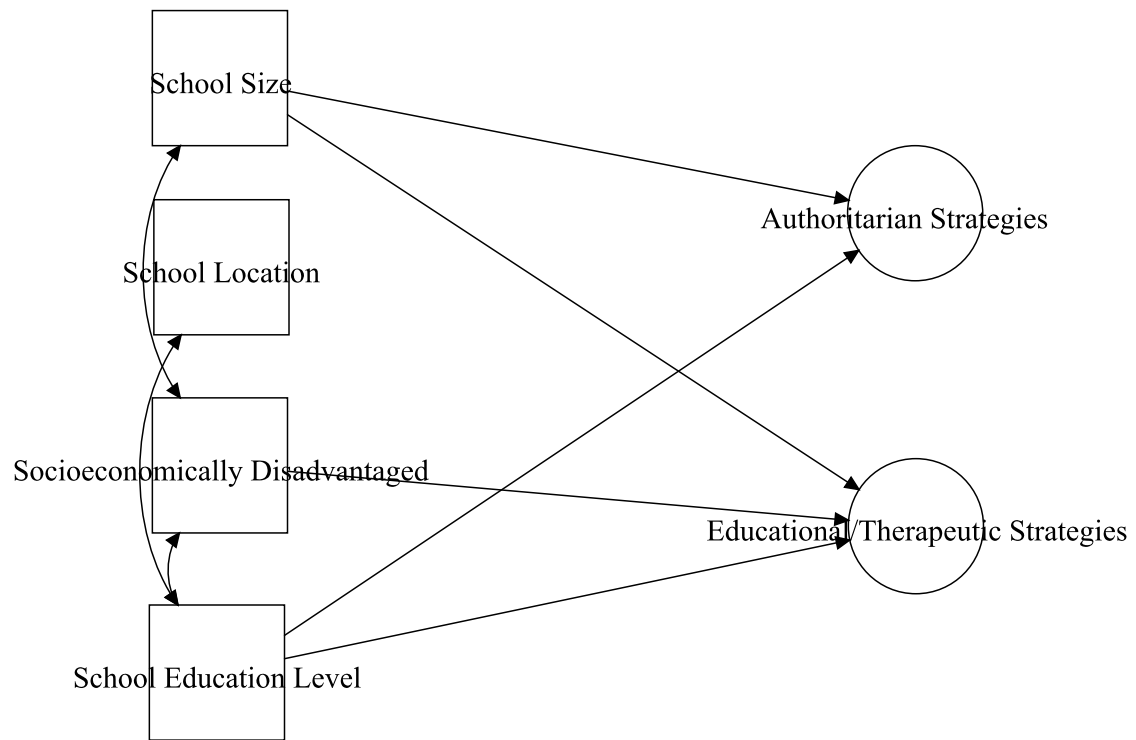
Figure 3   Significant Paths for School Safety Strategies Regressed on School-Level Indicators (*N* = 229)
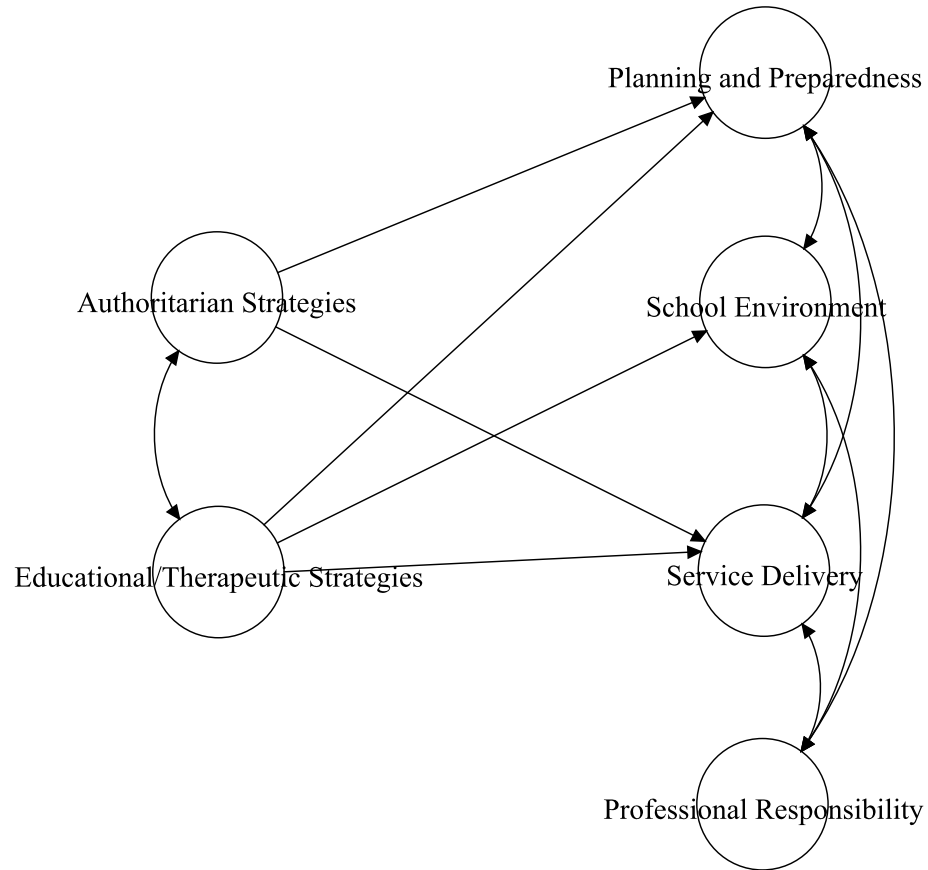
Figure 4   School Social Work Practices Regressed on School Safety Strategies (*N* = 229)

School Social Work
Association of America

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am happy to provide this letter of support for Mr. Matthew J. Cuellar's research study, titled *Investigating the effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies on school social work practitioners*. As the executive director of the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), I grant approval for his study to be conducted in coordination with our membership. Further, SSWAA is willing to advertise and distribute the link for his anonymous survey to our members via our bi-weekly email newsletter.

All research conducted by Mr. Cuellar involving our association's members is to remain strictly anonymous, and approval for this study is based upon the agreement that Mr. Cuellar will collect no potentially identifying information from our members. Further, Mr. Cuellar is to provide any document or educational materials produced by this study to SSWAA upon request.

Please contact me if I can provide any further assistance in regards to this research project or the research policies and procedures of SSWAA. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Kunkel, LMSW
Executive Director - SSWAA
School Social Work Association of America
P.O. Box 203844
Austin, TX 78720
800-588-4149
rkunkel@sswaa.org

THE UNIVERSITY *of* TENNESSEE UT
KNOXVILLE

Office of Research & Engagement
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1534 White Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697
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June 23, 2015

Matthew James Cuellar
UTK - College of Social Work

Re: UTK IRB-15-02319-XM
Study Title: Investigating the effects of commonly implemented school safety strategies on school social
            work practitioners

Dear Mr. Cuellar:

The Administrative Section of the UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the
above referenced project. The IRB determined that your application is eligible for **exempt** review under 45
CFR 46.101(b)(2). In accord with 45 CFR 46.116(d), informed consent may be altered, with the cover
statement used in lieu of an informed consent interview. The requirement to secure a signed consent form is
waived under 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2). Willingness of the subject to participate will constitute adequate
documentation of consent. Your application has been determined to comply with proper consideration for the
rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.
This letter constitutes full approval of your application version 1.5, including cover statement stamped and
approved and survey version 1.3 for the above referenced study.

In the event that volunteers are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-
based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB.

Any alterations (revisions) in the protocol and/or consent statement must be promptly submitted to and
approved by the UTK Institutional Review Board prior to implementation of these revisions. You have
individual responsibility for reporting to the Board in the event of unanticipated or serious adverse events and
subject deaths.

Sincerely,

Colleen P. Gilrane

Colleen P. Gilrane, PhD
Chair
UTK Institutional Review Board

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School Social Workers and School Safety Strategies Survey
Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION
As a school social worker, you are invited to complete a survey regarding your attitudes and beliefs towards school safety strategies. The purpose of this study is to generate a better understanding as to how school safety and violence prevention strategies implemented in today's schools are perceived by and are impacting your practices as a school social worker. Therefore as a member of the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), you have been selected for inclusion in this study.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your participation in this study will require the one-time completion of an anonymous survey on your attitudes and beliefs towards specific school safety strategies as well as your practices as a school social worker. The survey is expected to take approximately twenty minutes to complete and all responses are anonymous. That is, you will not be asked to provide any potentially identifying information and your responses cannot be linked back to you. At the end of the survey, you will submit your survey to the researcher and will then be provided the study incentive.

RISKS
We know of no risks to you for participating in this study, as all information provided will remain strictly anonymous. You may choose not to participate in this study prior to or any time during your participation, you can skip any questions that you wish not to answer, and you may end the survey at any time by simply exiting the web link.

BENEFITS
The responses from this study will be used to explore the impact of school safety strategies on the role school social workers play in their schools. This understanding has significant potential for influencing the development and modification of policy and practice surrounding school safety programs used in United States schools.

PROTECTIONS
All information and data collected from you through your participation in this study will remain strictly anonymous. No potentially identifying information will be collected from you. The researchers will keep all study materials (e.g. collected data) on the principal investigator's password-protected computer or on a password-protected computer owned by the researcher's dissertation chair. No one other than the principal investigator and his dissertation chair will be able to access the data collected from this study. For analyzing and reporting the findings of this study, all demographic information will be summarized to further protect the human subjects in this study.

COMPENSATION

All participants will have the option to enter their email address into a drawing for a chance to win one of twenty $50.00 Amazon electronic gift cards. In no way can individual survey responses be linked to your email address. Winners of the gift card drawing will be provided their gift card via the email address provided within eight weeks. You have the option to enter this drawing regardless of whether or not you choose to participate in this study. Your email address will not be used for any other purpose. Your email address will be kept on a password protected computer and will be deleted after all gift cards are distributed. Additionally, for each informed consent signed, the researcher will provide SSWAA with a

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five dollar ($5.00) donation. This donation will be made to the organization regardless of whether you agree or disagree to this informed consent document. You do not have to participate in this study in any way to be entered in the drawing or to be counted in the donation to the SSWAA.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the study or its procedures, you may contact the principal investigator for this study:

Matthew J. Cuellar, MSW
(865) 313 - 7982
mcuellar@utk.edu

You may also contact the principal investigator's dissertation chair:

Matthew T. Theriot, PhD
(865) 974 - 6481
mtheriot@utk.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Tennessee Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation is completely voluntary and will not in any way impact your membership in the SSWAA or your professional standing as a school social worker. By reading this document and completing this survey, you are agreeing to partake in a research study that is being conducted by investigators from the University of Tennessee College of Social Work. Your answers are very important, and your time is greatly appreciated. If you have further questions, or have chosen to withdraw your participation in this study, please exit this page now. If you are willing to participate in this study and you are prepared to proceed, please sign the informed consent by clicking on the "I agree to participate in this study" button below. Have a great day!
   • I agree to participate in this study.
   • I do not agree to participate in this study.

School Social Workers and School Safety Survey Instructions
Thank you for choosing to participate in this study. Your time is greatly appreciated. Please answer each question as accurately as you can, according to your own knowledge or perceptions. You are allowed to move forward and backward or skip any question you would like. However, please do not use your browser's back button until you have completed the survey. You are welcome to terminate your participation in this study at any time by simply closing your browser or skipping to the end of the survey. Thank you for your time.

Q01 Below is a list of common school-safety strategies used in United States school systems. Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker over the 2014-2015 school year, please click the button that best indicates your response. If a school safety strategy used in your school is not listed, you may enter it in the blank fields below.

	My school uses this school safety strategy.		This school safety strategy is an effective method for keeping my school safe.		
	No (1)	Yes (2)	Disagree (1)	Agree (2)	N/A (3)
Students pass through metal detectors (1)	•	•	•	•	•
Random metal detector searches on students (2)	•	•	•	•	•
Surveillance cameras (4)	•	•	•	•	•
Locked, controlled, or monitored gates (9)	•	•	•	•	•
Fencing around the school (56)	•	•	•	•	•
School restricts entry or requires visitor check-in (41)	•	•	•	•	•
Emergency alert systems (3)	•	•	•	•	•
System for anonymous student reporting (27)	•	•	•	•	•
Counseling services (15)	•	•	•	•	•
Student mentoring programs (16)	•	•	•	•	•
Conflict resolution training for students (17)	•	•	•	•	•
Peer-mediation	•	•	•	•	•

practices for students (18)					
Programs that promote communication between staff and students (26)	•	•	•	•	•
Programs that promote student connectedness (42)	•	•	•	•	•
Require students to wear clear backpacks (31)	•	•	•	•	•
Require dress code for students (39)	•	•	•	•	•
School resource officers or sworn law enforcement in school setting (28)	•	•	•	•	•
Other non-sworn law enforcement or security personnel in school setting (29)	•	•	•	•	•
Student property searches conducted by law enforcement (e.g. use of school police, drug-sniffing dogs) (35)	•	•	•	•	•
Student	•	•	•	•	•

property searches conducted by school personnel other than law enforcement (25)					
Drug screens for students (24)	•	•	•	•	•
Zero tolerance policies (33)	•	•	•	•	•
Other (79)	•	•	•	•	•
Other (80)	•	•	•	•	•
Other (81)	•	•	•	•	•
Other (82)	•	•	•	•	•
Other (83)	•	•	•	•	•

Inst4 Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2014-2015 school year, please answer the following questions:

Q06 What choice best describes your school's education level?
- Elementary (1)
- Middle (2)
- Secondary (3)
- Other (9) _____

Q07 What choice best describes your school's setting?
- Rural (1)
- Suburban (4)
- Urban (5)

Q08 What option best describes the neighborhood crime rate where your school is located?
- Low (1)
- Moderate (2)
- High (3)

Q09 Approximately how many students were enrolled?
- 0 - 249 (1)
- 250 - 499 (2)
- 500 - 749 (3)
- 750 - 999 (4)
- 1000+ (5)

Q10 Approximately what percentage of the students were of a racial or ethnic minority group?
- 0% - 24% (1)
- 25% - 49% (2)
- 50% - 74% (3)
- 75% - 100% (4)

Q11 Approximately what percentage of the students were socioeconomically disadvantaged (i.e. low socioeconomic status)?
- 0% - 24% (1)
- 25% - 49% (2)
- 50% - 74% (3)
- 75% - 100% (4)

Q12 How many other school social workers do you work with?
- I am the only school social worker in my school (1)
- 1 (2)
- 2 (3)
- 3 (4)
- 4 (5)
- 5+ (6)

Q13 Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2014-2015 school year, please indicate how much time you spent on the following practices.

	None of my time (1)	Some of my time (3)	Most of my time (4)	All of my time (5)
Conducting needs assessments (2)	•	•	•	•
Reviewing research relevant to practice (9)	•	•	•	•
Reviewing practice outcomes from previous school years (6)	•	•	•	•
Direct practice with students (10)	•	•	•	•
Establishing relationships with colleagues (11)	•	•	•	•
Promoting family engagement in schools (13)	•	•	•	•
Monitoring service linkages between students and families (8)	•	•	•	•
Familiarizing myself with school policies (15)	•	•	•	•
Developing school-community partnerships (16)	•	•	•	•
Increasing students' feelings of physical safety in school (17)	•	•	•	•
Promoting students' feelings of connectedness to their school (18)	•	•	•	•
Developing intervention strategies to deal with specific behaviors (e.g. anti-bullying programs) (19)	•	•	•	•

Identifying school practices that hinder student success (20)	•	•	•	•
Challenging school practices that interfere with student success (22)	•	•	•	•

Q14 Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2014-2015 school year, please indicate how much time you spent on the following practices.

	None of my time (1)	Some of my time (3)	Most of my time (4)	All of my time (5)
Developing relationships with community organizations (24)	•	•	•	•
Developing home-school-community linkages (25)	•	•	•	•
Conducting specialized risk assessments (10)	•	•	•	•
Assisting staff in effects associated with specific events (e.g. trauma) on student performance (21)	•	•	•	•
Engaging in peer consultation (20)	•	•	•	•
Making home visits (13)	•	•	•	•
Administrative tasks (33)	•	•	•	•
Case management (40)	•	•	•	•
Managing workload (38)	•	•	•	•
Completing paperwork (34)	•	•	•	•
Attending continuing education programs (36)	•	•	•	•
Attending professional meetings (37)	•	•	•	•
Practicing self-care (39)	•	•	•	•

Inst2 Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker over the 2014-2015 school year, please answer the following questions:

Q02 How would you rate the overall number of arrests for student misconduct at your school?
- Low (1)
- Moderate (2)
- High (3)

Q03 Please indicate the most appropriate response to the following student offenses in your school.

	A reasonable number of students are arrested for this type of offense (4)	Too many students are arrested for this type of offense (6)
Disorderly conduct (25)	•	•
Alcohol related offenses (22)	•	•
Drug related offenses (18)	•	•
Vandalism (19)	•	•
Theft (24)	•	•
Weapons possession (26)	•	•
Violence (e.g. physical attacks or fights) (10)	•	•

Inst3 Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker over the 2014-2015 school year, please respond to the following prompts:

Q04 Please indicate the most appropriate response to the following school-based professionals and their protection of students' rights.

	Students' protection from unwarranted search and seizure is a priority for these school-based professionals		Students' protection from discrimination is a priority for these school-based professionals		Students' protection from the violation of due process is a priority for these school-based professionals.	
	No (1)	Yes (2)	No (1)	Yes (2)	No (1)	Yes (2)
School administrators (26)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Teachers (31)	•	•	•	•	•	•
School health care professional (e.g. school nurse) (33)	•	•	•	•	•	•
School social workers (13)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other mental health care professionals (32)	•	•	•	•	•	•
School resource officers or other sworn law enforcement (24)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other non-sworn law enforcement or security personnel (30)	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q05 Please indicate the most appropriate response to the following school safety strategies and their protection of students' rights.

	This practice almost never results in the violation of student rights (5)	This practice rarely results in the violation of student rights (4)	This practice frequently results in the violation of student rights (3)	This practice almost always results in the violation of student rights (1)
Metal detectors (26)	•	•	•	•
Security cameras (22)	•	•	•	•
Counseling (13)	•	•	•	•
School resource officers or sworn law enforcement in school setting (24)	•	•	•	•
Other non-sworn law enforcement or security personnel in school setting (31)	•	•	•	•
Student searches (30)	•	•	•	•

Q15 What is your age in years?

Q16 What is your gender?
- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3)

Q17 Which racial category best describes you?
- American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
- Asian (4)
- Black or African American (2)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (6)
- White (7)
- Other (5) _____

Q18 Are you of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity?
- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Q19 What is your highest completed level of social work education?
- Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) (1)
- Master of Social Work (MSW) (2)
- Doctorate of Social Work (DSW) (3)
- Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work (PhD) (4)
- Other (5) _____

Q20 Please indicate the professional certifications and/or licenses you have that are active to date. (Click all that apply.)
- State-issued school social work certificate/license (1)
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) (2)
- NASW Academy of Clinical Social Workers (3)
- NASW School Social Work Specialist (4)
- Other (5) _____
- None (6)

Q21 Please indicate the number of years in total you have been practicing as a social worker.

Q22 Please indicate the number of years in total you have been practicing as a school social worker.

Q23 In what state do you currently practice as a school social worker?

Q24 Is your supervisor a licensed social worker?
- Yes (4)
- No (5)
- I am not supervised (6)

Q25 What type of organization do you work for?
- Public school (1)
- Private school (2)
- Agency that delivers contract services (3)
- School-based health clinic (4)
- Other (5) _____

Q26 In how many schools total do you work?

Q29 Does the agency you work for provide you with the resources necessary to access academic literature (scholarly journals, literature databases, etc.)?
- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Q40 Thinking only of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2014-2015 school year, please answer the following questions:

Q27 What is the source of most of your referrals?
- Self or fellow school social worker (3)
- Students (1)
- Teachers (4)
- Parents (5)
- School Resource Officers/School security personnel (2)
- Other (6) _____

Q28 How would you rate your overall workload?
- Very Low (1)
- Low (2)
- Moderate (34)
- High (32)
- Very High (33)

Q30 Thinking about your role as a professional school social worker in general, please respond to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (3)	Agree (8)	Strongly Agree (5)
I am satisfied with my job as a school social worker. (1)	•	•	•	•
I am committed to my work as a school social worker. (2)	•	•	•	•
It can be challenging to keep work life and home life separate. (8)	•	•	•	•
I feel personally driven to do everything I can to be the best school social worker possible. (3)	•	•	•	•
I am proud to tell my friends and family I am a school social worker. (4)	•	•	•	•
Sometimes I feel that the work I do is not helpful for the students I serve. (9)	•	•	•	•
When I wake up in the morning, I look forward to going to work as a school social worker. (7)	•	•	•	•

Q31 Please provide any comments you may have on school safety in your schools.

Closing Closing Section for School Social Workers and School Safety Survey
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. You have provided an invaluable response that is sure to contribute to our understanding of school safety strategies and their effects on school social workers. If you are interested in being entered in a chance to win one of twenty $50 gift cards, please cut and paste the link below into your web browser. Again, thank you for your time.

https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe3/preview/SV_1ZWVvQyqtvnOr2J

VITA

Matthew James Cuellar was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to the parents of Norma Graciela Cuellar and Richard Ray Robbins. He is an only child. He attended Petal Elementary and Middle School in Petal, Mississippi, and continued to Wissahickon Senior High School in Ambler, Pennsylvania. After dropping out of high school due to familial hardship, Matthew passed the General Education Development (GED) examination and began his college career at Montgomery County Community College. After transferring to The University of Alabama in 2009, he graduated with his Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree in 2011. Matthew then pursued his Master of Social Work (MSW) degree, during which time he worked as a graduate research assistant and received the Lori K. Herbert Student Endowment award. Matthew graduated from The University of Alabama with his MSW degree in 2013, after which he accepted a graduate research assistantship at University of Tennessee, Knoxville and pursued his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Social Work degree. Matthew graduated with his PhD in Social Work from University of Tennessee, Knoxville in May of 2016.