School social workers use person-in-environment perspective (PIE; Kondrat, 2002) to deliver student- and system-focused interventions designed to address various needs of students and schools. They focus on school-home-community relationships and facilitate student success by serving as a broker of resources for students and school personnel (Allen-Meares, Washington, & Welsh, 2000; Dupper, 2002; Frey, et al., 2013; Kelly, et al., 2010; Lee, 2007). In response to recent federal legislation and a push to implement evidence-based mental health services in United States schools, school social work has seen tremendous growth over the past two decades (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009). This subspecialty of social work is expected to grow 16 percent from between 2016 and 2026, which is much faster than average (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Concurrent with the growth of the school social work profession in the United States is the deployment of school police or other security personnel in the school setting. As a result of recent incidents of school-based violence, school police and security personnel are increasingly being utilized in today's schools (Addington, 2009). In fact, incidents such as those in Parkland, Florida, or Santa Fe, Texas, have resulted in immediate action under President Trump to improve the safety of United States schools through research and practice initiatives (e.g., the Safe Schools Act of 2018).

Despite the correlation in the use of school social workers and the deployment of school security personnel in United States schools, current research suggests we know little as to how school social workers interact with and perceive school security personnel within their schools, and ultimately how such interaction and collaboration among professionals might affect school safety. This study explores survey responses from a nation-wide sample of school social workers who report working in schools with active security personnel and interacting with them regularly. This paper concludes with recommendations for improving collaboration and communication across these increasingly present professionals in today's schools.

Literature Review

School Social Work Practice

School social workers provide a number of student- and system-focused interventions designed to address the needs of their students using a person-in-environment perspective (PIE; Kondrat, 2002). 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.

A Brief History of School Social Work. Historically, school social workers have served as agents for addressing biopsychosocial factors that influence student well-being (Costin, 1969; Allen-Meares, 1994). The subspecialty of 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 distinguished them from other school-based personnel, setting the framework for the school social worker today (Shaffer, 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. 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 the 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). 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. This 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) (Usaj, Shine, & Mandlawitz, 2012). 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 School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), and the American Council on School Social Work (ACSSW).

School Security Personnel

Concurrent with the increased presence of school social workers in today's schools is the deployment of school security personnel. In fact, one of the most prominent strategies used by school districts in recent years is the incorporation of law enforcement officers within schools (Coon & Travis, 2012). Incorporating with law enforcement, such as police officers, significantly more efficient in reducing school violence compared to previous school violence-related prevention program that was done within the school personnel (Addington, 2009; Na & Gottferdson, 2011). It is important to note that even though deploying security personnel in school setting effectively reduce crime rate, it is debatable whether or not its positive outcomes are consistent with different perspectives (e.g., students, principal; Addington, 2009).

Since the inception of law enforcement being present on campuses, school security personnel have taken on a variety of roles and duties that differ based on school expectations and professional responsibilities (Clark, 2011; Coon & Travis, 2012). There are many types of school security and safety personnel available to schools. Examples include School Resource Officers, School-Based Law Enforcement (sworn and non-sworn), and School Security Personnel

(Cuellar, Elswick, & Theriot, 2017). The many types and differing roles and expectations of school security personnel in today's schools has resulted in researchers urging schools to institute a clear differentiation between titles, training, and other notable professional characteristics (Rich & Finn, 2001; Theriot & Cuellar, 2017).

School Resource Officers (SROs). Roles and responsibilities for SROs vary across school districts and jurisdictions in the United States. As a result, Congress provided general guidance and a helpful definition in the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended, Title I, Part Q. According to this definition, an SRO is "a career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community-oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with school and community-based organizations" (Girouard, 2001; Raymond, 2010). In general, SROs are peace officers that are usually armed and employed by a local law enforcement agency, and assigned to work permanently in the schools or on the campus assigned (NASRO, n.d.). SROs typically perform traditional law enforcement functions while also participating in and facilitating educational programming within the school setting aimed at violence prevention and providing mentoring opportunities for students (Lawrence, 2007; Rich & Finn, 2001). NASRO (n.d.) recommends that agencies select SROs with a minimum of forty hours of specialized training, which is often referenced as their qualifications. While SROs have been hypothesized to criminalize student behavior by increasing arrest and discipline rates in schools, current research suggests there no difference in arrest or disciplinary rate between SROs and other school-based law enforcement (Theriot, 2009).

School-Based Law Enforcement (SBLE). Although SROs are more commonly represented and known within the educational system, another type of law enforcement service known as "school-based law enforcement" (SBLE) officers have become more prevalent. SBLEs share similar responsibilities with SROs in that they aim to maintain safety while promoting a secure environment conducive to learning. The use of the term "SRO" is sometimes used interchangeably with "SBLE", but the difference between these two professionals is that SBLE officers are employed by the school district through a school-based law enforcement department (McKenna, Martinez-Prather., & Bowman, 2014). Thus, SBLEs are directly employed by the school district. SBLEs typically represent a school-based and internal school police department and are not affiliated with an external local or county law enforcement agency. SBLEs roles are similar to that of the SRO, and these two types of professionals are often times confused in practice; the difference is primarily in the funding and affiliation of the personnel's position.

School Security Personnel (Other). Other school security personnel (SSP) in this paper are school-based personnel whose primary function is to promote school safety. Past research has classified these professionals and/or para-professionals as not falling in the SRO or SBLE category (e.g., Cuellar, Elswick, & Theriot, 2017). However, the term "school security personnel" can include any person whose tasks resemble those performed by either an "SRO" or "SBLE", with the difference being the funding sources the personnel receives to perform his or her duties and the needs of the school(s) in which they are stationed. Anecdotal experience suggests that SSPs can share similar responsibilities as SROs or SBLEs with or without specified training. These school-based professionals' roles can differ drastically depending on the professional's role and responsibilities and the school's needs. The school with risks of high-profile incidence, SROs in specific school settings will take a primary role as a disciplinarian to protect students' safety, often used by zero-tolerance (e.g., Kovac, 2006, p. B7; Hirschfield,

2011). On the other hand, some schools without being exposed to such violence, SROs may become educators and mentors for the students (e.g., NASRO, n.d.).

Practice Frameworks and Overlap in Professional Interests

School social workers and school security personnel share similar roles and responsibilities as they relate to improving school climate and creating safe and nurturing environments for children in schools. Regardless of the type of school security personnel, both professionals have a vested interest in ensuring a safe environment where learning and development can occur naturally. For example, the "triad concept" outlined by NASRO clearly identifies the SRO as taking on three roles: 1) Educator (i.e., guest lecturer); 2) Informal counselor/mentor; and 3) Law enforcement officer. Within these roles, examples of practices include providing valuable resources to school staff members, fostering positive relationships with youth, developing strategies to resolve problems affecting youth (NASRO, n.d.). Similarly, SSWAA's National Practice Model outlines three domains of practice: 1) Provide evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services; 2) Promote a school climate conducive to student learning and teaching excellence; and 3) Maximize access to school-based and community-based resources. Examples of practices across these domains include implementing multi-tiered programs and practices, enhancing professional capacity of school personnel, and promoting a continuum of services (SSWAA, 2013). Moreover, the guiding principles of the School Social Work standards (NASW, 2012) indicate that school social workers should serve as interdisciplinary leaders and collaborators. Despite the clear overlap in job duties, and governing bodies for both disciplines encouraging collaboration amongst school-based professionals, there is little research on the intersection of these professionals' responsibilities.

Two empirical studies are important to note regarding job overlap of these professionals. McKenna and colleagues (2014) studied a small sample of SROs in one southern state and found that in addition to their law enforcement role, 46% of SROs described their role as that of a social worker, while 38% described their role as an educator and 35% described their role as being a surrogate parent. A recent assessment of school social workers in one southeastern state (N = 75) suggests school social workers generally perceive overlap in their job duties with those of their school security personnel. Moreover, collaboration and time spent with school security personnel was perceived by school social work practitioners to improve outcomes relevant to the functions of SSPs, while little collaboration might exist (Cuellar, Elswick, & Theriot, 2017). However, current research fails to indicate patterns of the collaboration between these professionals. This is potentially problematic as an understanding of this collaboration could potentially promote safe educational environments and positive student outcomes.

The Present Study

The present study aims to address the above referenced gap in the literature through an exploratory design using data collected from school social workers across the United States. The purpose of the present study is to contribute to our understanding of best practices for increasing collaboration between school social workers and school security personnel with the goal of promoting safe learning environments. In order to meet this purpose, a mixed-method approach was employed to answer the following three questions:

1. How relationship between school social workers and school security personnel influence school social worker perceptions of sense of safety at their school?

2. Is frequency of interaction between school social worker and school security personnel associated with positive perceptions of school safety?
3. What comments do school social workers have regarding the school security personnel they work with in their school?

Methodology

Sample

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used to collect data from school social workers across the United States. Participants were recruited through the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), the American Council on School Social Work (ACSSW) and, 36 additional state-level school social work associations. Practitioners were selected for this study if they reported school security personnel as being employed in their school. All respondents were listed by their organizations as active, practicing social workers.

Data Collection

Cross-sectional data were collected via an anonymous electronic questionnaire that was initially distributed by email through the SSWAA, the ACSSW, and identifiable state-level associations. A small incentive was used to increase study participation in the form of a prize drawing. This was done by having each participant include his or her email address in a separate survey that was unlinked to the initial survey. Participants who entered their email were then selected at random to receive one of five Amazon electronic gift cards. Data collection began in March 2017 and ended in May 2017.

Participants were asked to think of only one school in which they were employed during the 2016 – 2017 school year by the following prompt: "Thinking ONLY of the school in which you have spent most of your time at as a school social worker during the 2016 – 2017 school year, please answer the following question." Using this approach, respondents were asked to consider 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 middle of the 2016 – 2017 academic school year). The rationale for having a full academic year as the basis of the data collection was by giving social workers the opportunity to consider recent year-long events related to school safety, they would have the opportunity to process their experiences and respond more thoughtfully.

Variables

Demographic Variables. Demographic information on the school social workers included, gender (Male or Female), race (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African-American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White or Caucasian, Hispanic, or Other), education level (BSW, MSW, DSW, PhD, Other), and professional licensure.

School Environment and student's characteristics. Six variables included Information about the categories of school (K-School, Elementary, Middle, High and combined), school settings (Rural, Suburban, Urban), the neighborhood crime rate (Low, Moderate, High), number of enrolled students (0-249, 250-499, 500-749, 750-999, 1000+), percentage of racial or ethnic minority students (0%-24%, 25%-49%, 50%-74%, 75%-100%), and percentage of low-socioeconomic status students (0%-24%, 25%-49%, 50%-74%, 75%-100%).

School Safety. Subjective measure of school safety was operationalized by asking, "How would you rate the overall safety of your school from incidence of violence?" The responses

were measured in ordinal (Not safe, Somewhat safe, Safe, Very safe*)*, that is one point increase indicates school social workers have a positive perception on their school safety.

   Interaction with School Security Personnel. Two variables included information about the type of school security personnel used in the school (School Resource officers, Sworn Law Enforcement, Other Non-Sworn Law Enforcement Officer, School Security Officer in School Setting), and the frequency of the school social worker interact with the school security personnel was measured in ordinal (None of my time, Some of my time, Most of my time, All of my time).

   Qualitative Responses. One item attempted to capture school social workers' general feedback regarding school security personnel. The item read "Provide any comments you may have regarding the school security personnel (e.g., School Resource Officers) in your schools." Then the participants subjectively and narratively answered officers in their school setting, without such structures.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 25 was used to produce frequency and percentages. M*plus8* was used to perform multiple regression analyses. Items including:

   Outcome Variables. School social workers' subjective measure for the overall safety of the school from incidences of violence; frequency of interaction between school social workers and school security personnel.

   Predictor Variables. School social workers' positive and negative perceptions on school security personnel.

   Controlled Variables. Category of the school; school's setting; the neighborhood crime rate; students' enrollments; percentage of racial/ethnic minority students, percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students were controlled.

   Multiple regression was completed in the order of, (1) school social workers' subjective measure for the overall safety of the school from incidence of violence were regressed on school social workers' perception of school security personnel, and a frequency of interaction between school social workers and school security personnel; (2) a frequency of interaction and school social workers' perception on security officers were regressed on school environment and students' characteristics; (3) a frequency of interaction between two professionals was regressed on school social workers' positive and negative perspectives of school security personnel. Furthermore, the study explored correlations between school environments and students' characteristics, as well as its impact on school social workers' perceptions of school security officers and frequency of interaction.

   Path analysis was also considered to explore under the assumption of school social workers' perceptions of school security officers and frequency of interaction are correlated, and to answer how it impacts their subjective measure of school safety. However, this study was to determine the different impacts of each perception and interaction, separately instead correlatedly (for differences between multiple regression and path analysis, see Carey, 1998). Therefore, multiple regression was more appropriate for this current study rather path analysis.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted using Theta parameterization with unstandardized (*B*) and standardized (STDYX) estimates reported. By applying this option allows dichotomized variables to be outcome variables without using logistic, and the variance of all variables in the model for standardization (Muthén & Muthén, 2012; 2017).

As for the qualitative data, once data were identified, coding began by dividing the qualitative responses into two different groups, those practitioners who had positive comments regarding their school security personnel (code 1), and negative comments (code 0). Researchers worked independently dividing two codes in Excel and came together to review on the first stage of coding to ensure the responses were synchronized. Additionally, researchers looked into a handful of unspecifiable responses, such as the responses indicating both positive and negative perceptions of school security personnel. For instance, "just like any position, there are good cops, and there are bad cops." The responses indicating both positive and negative were ambiguous rather specific. In other words, the respondents did not provide particular reasons for why a certain officer is good, and others are not. In response to this, researchers decided to exclude those responses instead creating new code. To determine the social workers' perception of school security officers and its impact on school social workers' subjective measure of school safety, coding was measured as binary categorical and dummy coded for series of multiple regression. That is 1-point increases indicate school social workers have positive view of security personnel in their school setting.

Diagnostics and Missing Data Analysis

Because the variables were imported and exported between different statistic programs and excel, data's accuracy was tested by comparing 25% of variables from SPSS spreadsheet and excel sheet. Variables from both SPSS and Excel was identical. A total of 151 cases of data were included for analysis. Of 151 data, three participants had missing values on the percentages of ethnic minority student's enrollment, and one from school setting. SPSS *Missing Value Analysis* was used to ensure the data were missing completely at random (MCAR). The Little's MCAR test was obtained, and the result showed $\chi^2(16) = 10.264$ ($p = .852$), which suggests that missingness within these data is completely at random without an identifiable pattern. As a result, listwise deletion was used to exclude four samples, leaving a final sample size of 147 for regression analyses (Little, 1988; Little & Rubin, 1989).

Results

As shown in *Table 1*, participants' age ranged from twenty-four to sixty-nine years ($M = 44.35$). Most of the participants were White (79%) and Female (87.5%); most held a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree (86.7%) with State-issued School Social Work certificate/license ($n = 108$; 71.5%). All states across the United States were represented in the sample. These sample characteristics are consistent with previous efforts to survey school social workers across the United States over the last two decades (Allen-Meares, 1994; Astor, Behre, Fravil, & Wallace, 1997; Cuellar & Theriot, 2017; Kelly et al., 2010; Kelly, et al., 2015; Kelly, Berzin, et al., 2010).

Table 1   Demographic Information for Sample (*N* = 151)

		M	Range	*n*	(%)
Age		44	45		
Gender	Male			17	11.3%
	Female			133	88.7%
Race	White			120	80.5%
	Black or African American			15	10.1%
	Asian			1	0.7%
	Hispanic/Latino/Other			13	8.7
Education	Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)			3	2.0%
	Master of Social Work (MSW)			130	86.7%
	Doctorate of Social Work (DSW)			1	0.7%
	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)			2	1.3%
	Other			14	9.3%
Professional Licensure[a]	State-issued school social work certificate/license			108	71.5%
	Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)			57	37.7%
	NASW Academy of Clinical Social Workers			2	1.3%
	NASW School Social Work Specialist			6	4.0%
	None			9	6.0%

Note: Valid percentages are reported
[a] Respondents can select more than one answer

As demonstrated in *Table 2*, 110 school social workers (73.3%) reported working with sworn law enforcement, and 55 school social workers (38.2%) have other non-sworn law enforcement in their school setting. A handful of school social workers reported that they have both sworn law enforcement and non-sworn law enforcement in their school setting. There were no observable differences between types of school security officers in their school settings and perception toward school security personnel, $\chi^2(1, N = 151) = .01$, $p = .92$. Further, no differences were observed between the location of the school (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) and perception toward school security personnel, $\chi^2(2, N = 150) = 1.05$, $p = .59$.

Table 2[a]　　　Types of School Security Officers Working with Participants (*N* = 151)

	n		(%)	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
School security officers both/or sworn law enforcement in school setting[b]	40	110	26.7	73.3
Other non-sworn law enforcement or security personnel in school setting[b]	89	55	61.8	38.2

[a] Valid percentages are reported
[b] Respondents can select more than one answer

Multiple Regression Analyses (RQ1 & RQ2)
　　　While current literature suggests interactions between social workers and security officers might increase social workers' perceptions of overall school safeness, the result shows the opposite.

Table 3　　　Results of Multiple Regression Analyses (*N* = 147)

	Estimate	95% CI	*STDYX*
Overall safety from incidences of violence in school *ON*			
Perception toward School Security Officers	1.07**	.54, 1.16	.85
Interaction with school security officer	-.55**	-.95, -.30	-.62
Interaction with school security officer *ON*			
Perception toward School Security Officers	1.06***	.60, .90	.75***
Perception toward School Security Officers *ON*			
Category of school	-.19*	-.34, -.03	-.18
School Setting	-.12	-.28, .09	-.09
The neighborhood crime rate	-.30	-.47, .02	-.22
Students enrollment	.008	-.13, .15	.01
Percentage of racial or ethnic minority students	.06	-.20, .36	.07
Percentage of low-socioeconomic status students	-.01	-.25, .22	-.01
Interacting with the school police officer or other school security personnel *ON*			
Category of school	.35*	.09, .38	.23
School Setting	-.09	-.23, .13	-.05
The neighborhood crime rate	.37	-.04, .42	.19
Students enrollment	.06	-.10, .22	.06
Percentage of racial or ethnic minority students	.14	-.16, .39	.11
Percentage of low-socioeconomic status students	-.02	-.20, .17	.01
Perception toward School Security Personnel	1.06***	.60, .89	.74

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

As shown in *Table 3*, the data demonstrate a negative association between overall school safety and interaction with school security personnel (*StdYX* = -.63; 95% CI [-.96, -.30], *p* = .002). Moreover, school social workers with positive perceptions of school security personnel reported having more frequent interaction with security officers (*StdYX* = .75; 95% CI [.60, .90], *p* = .00), and positive perceptions of school security personnel were associated with increased perceptions of school safety (*StdYX* = .86; 95% CI [.55, 1.17], *p* = .00). There was a positive relationship between education level of the school served and interaction with school security personnel (*StdYX* = .24; 95% CI [.09, .39]; *p* = .008), while school social workers at lower grades, tend to have more positive perceptions of school security officers (*StdYX* = -.18; 95% CI [-.34, -.03], *p* = .050).

Table 4   Correlations Among Variable (*N* = 147)

	2	3	4	5	6
1. School category	-.04 (-.17, .08)	.003 (-.13, .13)	.41*** (.29, .52)	.01 (-.12, .15)	-.03 (-.16, .10)
2. School setting	_-	.30*** (.37, .61)	-.05 (-.18, .08)	.61*** (.52, .72)	.32*** (.26, .50)
3. Neighborhood crime rate		-	-.19** (-.31, -.05)	.67*** (.64, .81)	.53*** (.58, .77)
4. Students enrollment			-	-.18 (-.25, .02)	-.21 (-.28, -.01)
5. Percentage of racial and ethnic minority students				-	.97*** (.70, .84)
6. Percentage of low socioeconomic status students					-

*Note: *p* ≤ .05; ** *p* ≤ .01; *** *p* ≤ .001.*
Note: Confidence interval is reported in parentheses.

Several correlations are important to note, here in *Table 4*. There was significant positive correlation between school categories and number of students' enrollment (*r* = .41; 95% CI [.29, .52], *p* = .00), and number of students' enrollment was negatively correlated with neighborhood crime rate (*r* = -.19; 95% CI [-.32, -.06], *p* = .016). Further, there were significant positive correlation between location of school (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) and crime rate (*r* = .49; 95% CI [.37, .61], *p* = .00); crime rate was positively correlated with number of racial and ethnic minority students (*r* = .72; 95% CI [.64, .81], *p* = .00), and number of students with low-socioeconomic status (*r* = .68; 95% CI [.59, .72], *p* = .00).

Qualitative Response Analysis (RQ3)
Qualitative coding was used to understand what comments school social workers have regarding school security personnel today. Participants were identified by positive or negative comments regarding the school security personnel they work with. Both positive and negative responses were complex and requited careful handling, regarding possible biased comments,

because the responses were from school social workers, instead incorporating both social workers and security personnel.

Table 5   Perception Toward to School Security Personnel (*N* = 151)

	n	%
Negative	92	60.9
Positive	59	39.1

As shown in *Table 5,* a higher percentage of school social workers in this sample viewed their school security officers more negatively (60.9%) than positively (39.1%). As related to the previous studies that suggest a positive relationship between school security officers and students (Kupchik et al., 2016; Theriot et al., 2016), school social workers likely view their school security officers when they are motivated to build a positive relationship with both students and the parents. For example, among the handful of respondents who referenced work or collaboration with their security officers, almost all focused on the relationship between students and parents. This might suggest school security officers are viewed based on how they treat their students and parents rather than through teamwork and collaboration among school-based professionals.

Positive Perceptions Toward School Security Personnel. As related to previous research that emphasizes the positive relationship between school security officers and students (e.g., Kupchik et al., 2016), of 59 positive responses, twenty-one (12.39%) school social workers have a favorable view toward their school security officers when they are motivated to build a positive relationship with both students and parents. Examples include:

> *I feel that ours takes the time to build relationships with the students so that they are not just viewed as punitive.*
> *… They are skilled at their jobs and take great pride and effort in developing relationships with our students. They are often critical in diffusing potentially dangerous situations because they are so connected to our students.*
> *Our school resource officers are amazing and build a positive relationship with students, parents, and staff.*

Thirteen (7.8%) school social workers mentioned how visible security officers are during school hours, and their willingness to collaborate with school social workers. As stated in responses:

> *He collaborates well for what's in the best interests of students.*
> *We are blessed to have a great school resource officer at our middle school. He is highly visible and does an outstanding job in terms of integrating himself into the lives of students and staff.*
> *It is great to have visible school resources officers present on all campuses.*

Lastly, twenty-one (12.39%) school social workers did not specify the reasons. Instead, they mentioned how valuable school security officers are to have in their school. Here are examples:

> *They are an integral part of our support team.*
> *We are fortunate to have a school resource officer in each of our 11 schools in our rural county. They are definite assets. Our SROs are Amazing!*

Negative Perceptions Toward School Security Personnel. Negative perceptions toward school security officers among this sample concerned lack of capacity and training and perceived

ineffectiveness. Of the ninety-two negative responses, thirty-one (27.6%) mentioned a need to increase the number of security officers in their schools. For example:

> *We share a campus with the high school, and one officer is not enough to serve the entire campus.*
> *We do not have enough School Resource Officers with the level of needs. We are now facing within the school system.*
> *Our School Resource Officer is difficult to reach and is based at another school.*

In addition to the issues with lack of capacity, 20 (18.4%) participants perceived issues with their school security officers' engagement in tasks they believe relevant to their duties. Here are examples:

> *Most stand around and talk and do not intervene.*
> *Don't do much.*
> *They don't do anything.*

Lastly, school social workers emphasized the needs of providing sufficient and consistent training for school security officers. In fact, twenty-three (21.6%) school social workers in the present study stated that school resource officers or security officers in school need to receive more and better training, especially in de-escalation strategies. Here are examples:

> *Always can use more training!*
> *They need more and better training in de-escalation and avoiding unintentionally reinforcing negative behavior.*

Similar to the positive responses, only two mentioned that they lack communication. Instead, both positive and negative respondents focused on how school resource officers and other security officer treat their students. Of 92 negative responses, 43 negative responses were toward school resources officers or sworn law enforcement officers (46.7%). Throughout the negative responses, many believed that sworn law enforcement officers are positioned at school when they are close to being retired. Further, many school social workers stated that sworn law enforcement officers often face role confusion between working with students and criminals, presenting an opportunity for both professionals to work together in addressing student maladaptive behavior.

Discussion

This study builds upon previous research that suggests increased collaboration among school social workers and school security personnel might be beneficial to not only students, but school environment and school safety efforts as well (e.g., Cuellar, Elswick, & Theriot, 2017). One of the most fascinating results in the current study comes from the quantitative analyses. Findings suggest that those who have positive perceptions of their school security personnel tend to feel that their school(s) is a safer place. Conversely, those who spend more time with their school security personnel report feeling that their school(s) is less safe. The latter finding suggests that school social work practitioner might tend to connect with their school security personnel only when issues arise, which excludes school security personnel from contributing to planning and program development and other school safety initiatives. This suggest it could be beneficial to overall school safety to increase communication and collaboration amongst these professionals through proactive, not reactive, initiatives.

The qualitative data and the emerging positive and negative trends examined in this paper highlight interesting perceptions from school social work professionals. Practitioners in this sample identify accessibility to their school security personnel as an important factor to

promoting safety in schools, with positive feedback highlighting how the school security personnel are always available to students and work to address student and school needs. Such interaction with school security personnel might present an opportunity for youth in school settings to have non-confrontational interactions with their school security personnel, which is hypothesized to promote more positive perceptions of police and law enforcement in the youth's future (Johnson, 2016).

Both positive and negative comments are saying the same thing. From the perspective of this sample, the most effective type of school security personnel is trained to address the specific needs of the school in which they are deployed, they are accessible to school personnel, and they take on roles that extend beyond the student to family and community involvement when appropriate. School administrators should carefully consider this when assessing their needs and how their school security personnel can assist in addressing them. In sum, these data suggest that collaboration can assist administrators in coordinating services for students that combine security and person-in-environment perspectives and ultimately engage students in more holistic programming. Steps must be taken to improve communication and collaboration between these professionals so that they are on the same page, and further research is needed to understand why the apparent disconnect between their disciplines remains in some of today's schools.

Implications for School Security Personnel in Current School Setting

One of the main implications for practice concerns responses for school security personnel training and preparedness. Over 20% of school social workers emphasized the needs of providing sufficient and consistent training for school security officers. This builds upon research which suggest that such specialized training is imperative to the quality of services these professionals provide, as well as to reducing any inadvertent effect the presence of school police might have on students' perception of the school climate (e.g., Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). Similar to the hire of school social workers and other school-based health professionals, school security personnel training, regardless of the classification, must match the need of the school and ideally all security personnel will be trained to work specifically with the students they serve.

Recommendations for School Security Personnel Working with School Social Workers

Results yield recommendations for administrators and educators when developing school-based programing and determining intervention and support services for youth in their schools. Ideally, these recommendations would be carried out with the support of the professional's administration or other applicable leadership.

- Both professionals must take time to build relationships within school, with students, school personnel, parents, and community stakeholders when possible
- Both professionals must maintain a physical presence and accessibility in schools and integrate professional expertise into programming when possible
- Both professionals must maintain accessibility to all students, school-based personnel, parents, and community stakeholders when applicable
- School social workers and/or SROs, SBLEs, or school security personnel should connect to discuss roles and responsibilities at (minimum) the start of every school year
- Regular meetings between professionals throughout the school year might increase collaboration and help both professionals provide more holistic programming

- Professionals should collaborate on trainings and programming for students, staff, and parents when possible (e.g., student suicide training, parent educational programming, etc.)

Following such recommendations will facilitate collaboration amongst these professionals, and subsequently increase their ability to provide high-quality and holistic services for their students. To elaborate recommendations regarding both professionals' building relationships and accessibilities, it is essential for professionals to be more active rather passive. In other words, scheduled meetings within the school-based social workers and security officers would be considered as passive collaborations. In order to enhance their relationships, it is recommended both professionals to be more active in engaging with one another beyond scheduled meetings. Scheduled parents and teachers meeting would also be a possible program for increase both students' and parents' connectedness. Further, as for the security officers, instead of patrolling specific times and periods, it would be suggested them to actively presence throughout the day in school.

Moreover, these recommendations are not necessarily new; they are in line with the standards of practice outlined by today's governing bodies of social work (NASW, 2012; SSWAA, 2013). Concurrent with previous research by Elswick et al., (2017), these professionals can take a leadership role to provide more effective services to their youth, and possibly provide a safer environment, with increased collaboration and understanding of roles and responsibilities. This research is an interdisciplinary call for school administrators, school-based mental health providers, school security personnel, and all other with a vested interest in school safety to facilitate and improve communication between professionals, making such collaboration an essential component of training at regular intervals throughout the school year. Moving forward, more comprehensive policies at the local level aimed at advocating and improving the enhancement of inter-professional collaboration between the mental health field and the school-based security officers would move current federal, state, and local policies towards best practices in schools. Both school social workers and school security personnel can play a role in the development of such policies and practices.

Study Limitations

This study provides an interesting perspective on school security from the perspective of school social workers, yet it is not without limitations. This study shares limitations with other non-experimental, cross-sectional designs in that non-probability sampling was used to collect data and the researchers had no control over the school security personnel with which participants interacted; as a result, no causal inference can be made concerning the theories discussed. In addition, the current research particularly aimed to explore how school social workers view their school security officers. Results suggest some responses may contain biased observation toward school security personnel, and importantly, less information on school security officers was included in the current study. For example, no information on types of trainings for security personnel have received before positioned at their schools. A quality of collaboration between school social workers and school security officers may depend on job satisfaction among school security officers and demographics of school security officers (Kelly et al., 2015). Exploring security officers' statements would be highly recommended for future research. Perhaps most importantly, the instrument used for this study was designed for the purposes of another study and has not been tested in previous research to be a valid and reliable tool for operationalizing the constructs discussed in this paper. The study design contains serious

issues concerning external validity. While this paper is intended to provide data-driven recommendations, findings should be interpreted cautiously and with careful consideration of school needs.

Conclusion

School security personnel and school social workers will continue to play a role in today's schools in light of media attention to school violence and the recent implementation of federal, state, and local legislation. Therefore, research must take additional steps in understanding the optimal level of teamwork between these professionals to promote student performance and school safety. Using an exploratory approach, this empirical contribution examined the associations between interaction, perceptions of interaction, and school safety when controlling for several school-level factors that are associated with less-desirable outcomes that result in negative interactions between these professionals (e.g., neighborhood crime rate where school is located, which likely results in increased interaction between professionals due to crime that might not be a result of school-based behavior). Findings provide insight into the potential for quality collaboration between practitioners and security personnel to promote safe and nurturing environments for students. Further research is needed to better understand the collaboration between these professionals and how this collaboration might improve academic performance and student programming within schools served.

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