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TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD:

Using Research and Action to Address (In)Visible Wounds



Perceptions of School Resource Officers & Emotional Wellbeing in Youth of Color



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Background

School Resource Officer (SRO) programs have existed for over 50 yrs in the US

SRO roles include:

Law Enforcer

Informal
Counselor

Teacher

The efficacy of these programs remains in question, resulting in some disinvestment.



Literature Review

- Schools began to utilize SROs around 1950 in part as a response to the Civil Rights movement, also working to stave off youth involvement.¹
- SRO programs often fail to reduce violence in schools and can cause harm.²
- Disproportionate disciplinary rates + SRO programs add to the school-to-prison pipeline.³
- SRO programs may further perpetuate existing racialized inequalities to prioritize and uphold needs and interests of white students over students of Color.²

(¹Gomez, 2021; ²ACLU, 2017; ³Ellis, 2016)

Purpose

This study seeks to understand the perceptions that youth of Color hold about their School Resource Officers and how these perceptions relate to their emotional wellbeing and internal identity assets.

Data

Data from 2019 Minnesota Student Survey conducted in grades 8, 9, and 11

Limited to the 75% of youth of Color who reported having an SRO (N=28,170)

Sample Characteristics

- 50% Female
- $M_{age} = 15$ yrs
- 18% Low SES
- ~30% scored as having Anxiety/Depression Symptoms
- Race:
 - 1% Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander
 - 4% Native American
 - 20% Hispanic
 - 22% Asian
 - 25% African American
 - 29% Multiple Race

SRO Demographics (2014)

80% Male

79% Between
30-49 years old

92% White

71% felt
adequately
prepared for
the role

89% enjoy
working with
youth

Analytic Approach

- Multivariable regression explored associations between perceptions of SROs and internal emotional assets
- Interaction test to determine if associations differed across six racial/ethnic groups
- Controlled for parent caring + SES

Measures

Positive Identity

Feelings about oneself and the future (e.g. I feel good about my future)

Anxiety

GAD-2 (e.g. feeling nervous, nonstop worrying)

Depression

PHQ-2 (e.g. lack of interest, feeling down)

SRO Perceptions

Feelings about whether SROs are trustworthy/worthwhile (e.g. approachable)

Controls

Parent Caring: how much students feel parents care about them

SES: created by combining food insecurity and housing insecurity

Depression, Anxiety, & Identity Assets in Youth of Color

Race	Perceptions of SROs (mean)	Positive Identity (mean)	Anxiety Symptoms (% Yes)	Depression Symptoms (% Yes)
Native American	2.85	2.60	32.5%	29%
Asian	3.07	2.72	22.5%	21.9%
African American	2.92	2.87	23%	23%
Hispanic	2.94	2.65	25.3%	24.7%
HPI	2.95	2.73	25.3%	27.9%
Multiple	2.88	2.63	33.9%	31%
Test Statistic	F=62.33	F=95.05	285.14	181.85
P-Value	P=<.0001	P=<.0001	P=<.0001	P=.<0001

Perceptions of SROs

Perceptions of SROs were generally positive across groups, on average landing in the 'agree' range for question items.

Race	Perceptions of SROs (mean)
Native American	2.85
Asian	3.07
African American	2.92
Hispanic	2.94
HPI	2.95
Multiple	2.88
Test Statistic	F=62.33
P-Value	P=<.0001

Positive Identity Assets in Youth of Color

Every group generally showed strong positive identity scoring, also landing on average in the 'agree' range for questions.

Race	Positive Identity (mean)
Native American	2.60
Asian	2.72
African American	2.87
Hispanic	2.65
HPI	2.73
Multiple	2.63
Test Statistic	F=95.05
P-Value	P=<.0001

Depression, Anxiety, and Identity Assets in Youth of Color

Approximately 20-30% of each group endorsed symptoms associated with anxiety

Native American & Multiple race groups had the highest symptom rates.

Race	Anxiety Symptoms (% Yes)
Native American	32.5%
Asian	22.5%
African American	23%
Hispanic	25.3%
HPI	25.3%
Multiple	33.9%
Test Statistic	285.14
P-Value	P=<.0001

Depression, Anxiety, and Identity Assets in Youth of Color

Similarly, about 20-30% of each group reported symptoms associated with depression

Again, Native American & Multiple race groups endorsed highest symptom rates.

Race	Depression Symptoms (% Yes)
Native American	29%
Asian	21.9%
African American	23%
Hispanic	24.7%
HPI	27.9%
Multiple	31%
Test Statistic	181.85
P-Value	P=.<0001

Associations between positive perceptions of SROs and emotional well-being among youth of Color*

Race	Positive Development Beta estimate (SE)	Depression symptoms Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Anxiety symptoms Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Interaction (race * perceptions of SRO)	p=.028	p=.215	p=.095
Native American	0.25**	0.78	0.67
Asian	0.28**	0.70	0.71
African American	0.21**	0.72	0.87
Hispanic	0.25**	0.73	0.79
HPI	0.25**	1.16	0.96
Multiple	0.23**	0.67	0.79

*Adjusted for poverty and parent caring **P=<.001

Associations between positive perceptions of SROs and emotional well-being among youth of Color*

Positive perceptions of SROs significantly correlated to positive development across all groups.

Race	Positive Development Beta estimate (SE)
Interaction (race * perceptions of SRO)	p=.028
Native American	0.25**
Asian	0.28**
African American	0.21**
Hispanic	0.25**
HPI	0.25**
Multiple	0.23**

*Adjusted for poverty and parent caring **P=<.001

Associations between positive perceptions of SROs and emotional well-being among youth of Color*

Positive perceptions of SROs significantly correlated to lower depression scoring across all groups except HPI youth.

Race	Depression symptoms Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Interaction (race * perceptions of SRO)	p=.215
Native American	0.78
Asian	0.70
African American	0.72
Hispanic	0.73
HPI	1.16
Multiple	0.67

*Adjusted for poverty and parent caring **P=<.001

Associations between positive perceptions of SROs and emotional well-being among youth of Color*

Positive perceptions of SROs similarly significantly correlated to lower anxiety scoring across all groups except HPI youth.

Race	Anxiety symptoms Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Interaction (race * perceptions of SRO)	p=.095
Native American	0.67
Asian	0.71
African American	0.87
Hispanic	0.79
HPI	0.96
Multiple	0.79

*Adjusted for poverty and parent caring **P=<.001

Exploratory Analysis: Presence of SRO

Race	Positive Development Beta estimate (SE)	Depression symptoms Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Anxiety symptoms Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Interaction (race * presence of SRO)	P=.764	P=.054	P=.151
Native American	-0.06 (0.07) P=.363	0.95 (0.60, 1.50)	0.92 (0.59, 1.45)
Asian	0.02 (0.04) P=.631	0.88 (0.65, 1.21)	1.04 (0.75, 1.43)
African American	-0.03 (0.03) P=.321	0.99 (0.77, 1.27)	1.36 (1.04, 1.78)
Hispanic	0.00 (0.03) P=.997	0.97 (0.77, 1.24)	0.96 (0.76, 1.21)
HPI	-0.10 (.18) P=.572	0.63 (0.18, 2.13)	0.87 (0.23, 3.25)
Multiple	-0.04 (0.03) P=.110	1.20 (0.98, 1.46)~	1.27 (1.04, 1.54)

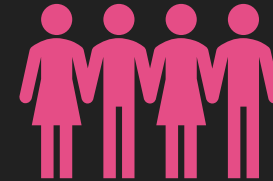
Key Findings



Positive perceptions of SROs correlated to higher Positive Identity scores for all groups



Positive perceptions of SROs correlated to lower anxiety & depression indicators for all groups except HPI



Presence of an SRO was linked with higher rates of reported anxiety symptoms for Black and Multiracial youth.

Discussion

Bottom line, good SROs can be beneficial but are more beneficial for certain groups.

This is dependent on the quality of SRO, which is not guaranteed and may come at the expense of support services.

When evaluating these programs, evaluators may be biased to overestimate positive impacts.

Limitations & Strengths



Minnesota only



No location data/out of date data for SROs



Cross-sectional analysis



Missing data: students who were unsure whether an SRO was present

Conclusions

Positive **perceptions** of SROs could be protective for youth of Color, though presence of SROs did increase likelihood of anxiety symptoms in Black & Multiracial youth.

Recommend **ongoing and targeted oversight** of ongoing SRO programs to ensure supportive role behaviors if these programs are maintained.

Evaluate whether the use of programs known to be more supportive may be **a better investment of resources**.

What's Next?



Qualitative Research



Looking at MSS Survey Items

Acknowledgments

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Thank you! Questions?