PLAN “B” STRATEGIES: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF HIGH SCHOOLS’ CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR TARGETED SCHOOL VIOLENCE

A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Educational Psychology

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by

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Rana Lee Shearer, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology, has presented a thesis titled, *Plan “B” Strategies: A Qualitative Inquiry of High Schools’ Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence*, in an oral examination held on April 22, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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*via teleconference*
Abstract

Targeted school violence (TSV), or armed attacks in schools, represent an essential part of school safety planning similar to fire drills (Lassiter & Perry, 2009), despite the rarity of both. Typically, schools use lockdown or evacuation procedures to respond to a TSV event. However, there are many types of violent events and variables within each situation. Therefore, it is argued that TSV emergency preparedness requires multiple plans (McDaniel & Ellis, 2008), or flexible responses that can accommodate diverse incidents, particularly what occurs during the event; once the perpetrator(s) enter(s) the premises until the arrival of law enforcement (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

Using a case study approach, the current study investigated the prevention efforts, during, alternate strategies, and confidence level of the current TSV plans of high schools in a Canadian prairie province city. Specifically, the research questions sought to examine participants’ preventative and during strategies for armed events, whether there is a plan “B,” and if not, why not. Fifteen (N=15) participants representing police, ambulance, principals, and school board staff participated in individual interviews focusing on their experiences and perceptions of their plans. The findings indicate that both school-based and emergency responder participants preferred flexible over multiple plans, as the latter may confuse key individuals during a TSV attack, and that most participants were sufficiently confident in the flexibility of their school’s planning efforts. The implications of this research included comparing participants with and without intruder experience and how the tangibility of intruder experience may impact planning and confidence. Further findings and suggestions from the participants for improving plans are also discussed.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, co-supervisor and committee for their mentorship, assistance, expertise, suggestions, encouragement, and patience. Dr. Heather Ryan, Dr. Scott Thompson, Dr. Ken Montgomery and Dr. Ann-Marie Urban: your dedication and commitment as educators and advisors is much appreciated. Thank you also for joining me on a journey discussing a topic which perhaps many others would prefer not to think about.

Also, thank you to our associate committee member, Jenn de Lugt, whose suggestions, advice, and enthusiasm were extremely helpful during the proposal stage. As well, Tania Gates, our department’s Academic Advisor and general go-to person, I thank profoundly for her guidance and ability to repair whatever requires attention. Thank you for always leading by example.

I would also like to express my appreciation to all the school boards, Emergency Medical Services, and Police Service for their cooperation of allowing their members to participate. To the participants of this study, thank you for your cooperation, wisdom, and honesty. I truly learned something from each one of you.

Finally, I extend my thanks to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, who over several semesters provided me with a Graduate Studies Scholarship to help cover my living expenses, as well as two Graduate Teaching Assistantships, which allowed me the opportunity to learn and get my foot in the door for my current teaching position.
Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my thanks to my external examiner, Dr. W. Rod Dolmage, for a spirited defence. Your contributions, suggestions, and ideas based on your experience with TSV incidents in educational institutions are appreciated. Thank you for challenging my knowledge and reflexivity.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter, Olivia Shearer. Without her ongoing support of my academic pursuits, her belief in my abilities, and the sacrifices we made as a family that allowed me to continue in school, this thesis would not be possible. I thank also my family members who never stopped believing in me and continue to believe with pride – my sister, Tara; my mother, Sharon; and my Uncle Ken (my hero). As well, I extend my gratitude to the many friends who supported, encouraged, and believed along the way, and I hope I have extended it mutually to those on their own academic journeys.

This thesis is further dedicated to all of the victims and survivors of school shootings, hostage/barricaded situations, and other acts of Targeted School Violence. In your name, I promise to never stop asking the hard questions in search of the answers that can save lives and prevent tragedies.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. i
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... ii
Dedication .......................................................................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................ v
List of Appendices ............................................................................................................................ vii
List of Abbreviations in Written Work ........................................................................................... viii
List of Data Codes ............................................................................................................................ ix

## INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review

1.1 Crime Typology .......................................................... 13
1.2 Crime Prevalence ...................................................... 15
1.3 Understanding Perpetrators Creates Preventative Strategies ....................................................... 17
    1.31 Perpetrator Considerations ....................................... 19
    1.32 Bullying ........................................................................ 20
1.4 School Issues and Programs ........................................ 23
    1.41 Bullying Prevention .................................................... 23
    1.42 Why Anti-Bullying Programs Sometimes Fail .......................................................... 24
    1.43 School Climate .......................................................... 26
    1.44 Zero Tolerance .......................................................... 27
    1.45 Physical Measures ..................................................... 27
1.5 Threat Assessment ..................................................... 28
1.6 Crisis Response Teams ............................................... 31
1.7 During the Crisis ........................................................ 34
1.8 Aversion Studies ........................................................ 35
1.9 The Goal of the Present Study ....................................... 38

CHAPTER TWO: About the Study

2.1 Methodology ............................................................ 40
2.2 Methods ................................................................. 48
    2.21 Participants .......................................................... 48
    2.22 Materials ............................................................. 51
    2.23 Procedure ........................................................... 53
    2.24 Data Analysis and Reporting ................................. 55
## List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>Research Ethics Board Approval Form</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B</td>
<td>Telephone Recruiting Script</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C</td>
<td>Informal Interview Guide for the Demographic and Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D</td>
<td>Informal Interview Supplementary Subcategories of Responses for the Demographic and Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E</td>
<td>Consent Form</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX F</td>
<td>Debriefing Form</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX G</td>
<td>Transcript Release Form</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX H</td>
<td>Photograph of Category Organization</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I</td>
<td>Photograph of Category Organization – Data Analysis and Writing</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX J</td>
<td>Approval for the Addition of Dr. Scott Thompson as Co-supervisor</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Abbreviations in Written Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Long form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMT</td>
<td>Crisis Management Team (Emergency Responders’ Term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Crisis Response Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Case Study</td>
</tr>
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<td>CSSN</td>
<td>Canadian Safe Schools Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
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<tr>
<td>EICS</td>
<td>Exploratory and Instrumental Case Study</td>
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<td>EMS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation (US)</td>
</tr>
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<td>GT</td>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
</tr>
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<td>Incident Command System</td>
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<td>PART</td>
<td>Professional Assault Response Training</td>
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<td>Preventative Hard Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMW</td>
<td>Preventative Measures Wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSM</td>
<td>Preventative Soft Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCMP</td>
<td>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REB</td>
<td>Research Ethics Board</td>
</tr>
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<td>SAFE Plan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Safe Schools Initiative</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Threat Assessment Team</td>
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<td>TSV</td>
<td>Targeted School Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Data Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
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<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AST</td>
<td>Alternate Strategies</td>
<td>Main Category</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bullying Prevention</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
</tr>
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<td>Students in the Bathroom</td>
<td>Describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Current Enrolment</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
</tr>
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<td>CL</td>
<td>Coping with Loss</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLP</td>
<td>Confidence Level in the Plan</td>
<td>Main Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>Crimes Mentioned (By Name)</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CON</td>
<td>Consequences for Bringing a Weapon</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPh</td>
<td>Cell Phone Usage</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Contact Parents (during an event)</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSB</td>
<td>Contact School Board (during event)</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
</tr>
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<td>Main Category</td>
</tr>
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<td>Drill Types Practiced</td>
<td>Preventative/Alternate</td>
</tr>
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<td>EXP</td>
<td>Behavioural Expectations</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAT</td>
<td>Gather Students in from Hallway</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>GME</td>
<td>Gangs Mentioned</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Incident Command System</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Intruder will come in (not our students)</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPC</td>
<td>Interprofessional Collaboration</td>
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<td>LD</td>
<td>Manual as a Living Document</td>
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<td>MMC</td>
<td>Mentions Multiculturalism</td>
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<td>MSB</td>
<td>Maintenance Staff Seal the Building</td>
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<td>NYD</td>
<td>Nothing You Can Do</td>
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<td>ORP</td>
<td>Origin of Plans</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMW</td>
<td>Preventative Measures Wanted</td>
<td>Preventative/Alternate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Practice Plan (how often?)</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSM</td>
<td>Preventative Soft Measures</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTS</td>
<td>Plan Tailored to School</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCP</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDQ</td>
<td>Response at during Question</td>
<td>Describe Plan/Alternate</td>
</tr>
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<td>RW</td>
<td>Reality of Our World</td>
<td>Describe Plan</td>
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<td>School Climate</td>
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<td>Socio-economic Status (of School)</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
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<td>SRAS</td>
<td>School Resource Officer Attendance at School</td>
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<td>SROV</td>
<td>School Resource Officer Value</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Social Skills (includes Respect)</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Mentions different Types of Scenarios</td>
<td>Collapsed with TYPE and CM</td>
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<td>STC</td>
<td>Statistics on Threats Collected?</td>
<td>Demographic/ Not Used</td>
</tr>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Threat Assessment</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
</tr>
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<td>TR</td>
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<td>Demographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Training how often (for TSV)?</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA</td>
<td>Teachers more Aware at Assemblies</td>
<td>Describe Plan/ Alternate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVI</td>
<td>Ever a Threat or Violent Incident at the School?</td>
<td>Demographic</td>
</tr>
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<td>Threat Types (Lockdown, Evacuation, Secure the Building)</td>
<td>Collapsed with CM and ST</td>
</tr>
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<td>ZT</td>
<td>Zero Tolerance</td>
<td>Preventative</td>
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</table>
Plan “B” Strategies: A Qualitative Inquiry of High Schools’ Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence

INTRODUCTION

As a Master’s degree student in Educational Psychology, my interest in studying school shootings emerged as the result of working in emergency services and health care, as well as previous course work in forensic psychology. Studying school shootings has been a hobby of mine for a long time, and is part of the reason I chose to pursue psychology as a profession. My undergraduate honours thesis in environmental psychology, *The Effect of Goal Construal on Pro-Environmental Behaviours*, investigated abstract and concrete goal construal, and whether how information is presented affects whether people choose or do not choose to make pro-environmental choices (Shearer, 2010). This interest carries over to studying targeted school violence (TSV) because perpetrators who commit armed acts at educational institutions are making choices that carry immediate and life-threatening impact on the school community. Therefore, to me, both as a parent and a researcher, it is an important area of study.

Arguably, the most famous school shooting is Columbine in Littleton, Colorado (see Chapter 1 for a full description). When Columbine happened in 1999, it was one of the first I remember being highly publicized on television as it occurred, particularly because I was working in the office at Emergency Medical Services. The impact of the school shooting, along with other incidents of the time that directly impacted first responders, was immediate in my city with the production of Risk Management teams, medically-equipped response vehicles or buses capable of transporting multiple victims,
bullet-proof vests for the field staff and supervisors, and increased practice city-wide for multiple-victim disaster scenarios. Beyond emergency services, schools began looking at safety in a new way too, as school shootings became more common throughout the U.S. and Canada.

This research focuses on chronicling high schools’ contingency plans for TSV scenarios. To be clear, in describing historical TSV incidents in the present study, references to the term “school” is meant to encompass all types of educational institutions – public, private, K-12, alternative, vocational, and post-secondary schools, even though my research focuses specifically on high schools’ plans.

School staff and parents alike strive to believe in safety at school for everyone in attendance. Although TSV attacks are extremely rare, they can happen anywhere at any time. In the research of specific school shootings, such as Columbine, survivors are frequently quoted as saying, “We never thought it could happen here.” However, approximately five years ago, an armed incident occurred at a high school in a Canadian prairie province city. Although no one was hurt, it illustrates that it can happen in Western Canada as easily as anywhere. Actual shootings have also occurred throughout Canada, including prairie provinces, since 1975 (see Chapter 1). The most proficient strategy for any team of educators and administrators involves planning for such eventualities, and ensuring the plan is thoroughly practiced, although hopefully never required for a real armed situation.

Much of today’s research on TSV investigates perpetrators (e.g. Vossekuiil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002), prevention efforts (e.g. Cameron, 2002), or crisis response strategies for support in the aftermath of an event (e.g. Heath & Sheen, 2005).
A new branch of research also examines thwarted and averted attempts at school shootings or hostage/barricaded events (e.g. Daniels, Volungis, Pshenishny, Ghandi, Winkler, Cramer, & Bradley, 2010). Each topic is important; however, very few studies delve inside the event, and little attention is paid to what can or should occur during an armed event. The term *during* refers to the period of time from when an armed perpetrator makes contact with the school until the arrival of law enforcement officials on the scene, or once they secure the scene (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). The goal of the present study was to investigate the current TSV plans of high schools from a Western Canadian city to understand their consideration of strategies, not only for prevention, but for during an attack, beyond lockdown or evacuation, including variations in strategies to accommodate the multitude of scenarios that might occur.

For the present study, participant interviews occurred with police officers, an emergency medical services (EMS) representative, school board personnel, and high school principals. Police officers and EMS were included to ensure the appropriate information was received from their perspective on emergency planning, and ultimately highlighted the improvements to protocols and strategies since Columbine for their respective professions. School board personnel were included since they are responsible for providing schools with emergency plans and professional development opportunities. Approximately five months into the process of establishing the present study, a school shooting occurred at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut wherein young children were shot (“Children and Adults,” 2012). Thus, I decided to invite only high school principals to participate, thinking that the recent event may have been too raw for elementary school personnel.
Understanding contingency planning in the wake of a recent attack requires empathy and attention to the individual’s experience. I chose to conduct personal interviews with participants because surveys can be impersonal and they are too easy to ignore. Educational administrators are constantly inundated with surveys, according to some of my participants. Also, surveys often fail to reach the personal experiences and stories of the individual. My research questions began very loosely with my supervisor and I deciding to base data collection and analysis on techniques of the grounded theory (GT) methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, post-analysis, my committee and I felt that the project fit better with principles of case study research (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995), because a considerable amount of literature review was conducted prior to data collection. Since GT techniques, such as using the constant comparative method for analyzing data, are commonly used for case study approaches (Merriam, 1988), re-examining the data as an exploratory and instrumental case study resulted in a more cohesive project. Ultimately, by exploring similarity and difference within the participants’ responses, I hoped to create a framework regarding school shooting protocols, safety perception, and knowledge. Accordingly, the questions and central concepts further evolved as a result of the data collected. The findings grouped into two main areas:

1. What were participants’ strategies for a crisis? The main foci were for the *during* phase of a crisis by having them describe their active-shooter procedures, alternate considerations beyond lockdowns (if any), and preventative measures for avoiding an armed crises.

2. What are their personal viewpoints and experiences with TSV and lockdowns?
During the personal experiences portion, I noticed a few participants viewed their *during* strategies differently than the other participants, which helped me reflexively consider my own stance on *during* procedures, and explore the implications of experiencing a tangible intruder incident for high school principals.

Thus, throughout the process, the experiences of my participants created a journey of understanding the complexities of TSV planning with some truly remarkable individuals.

Chapter I contains the literature review, which encompasses a variety of areas including not only strategies and explanations of *during* an event, but commonalities of perpetrators. Appropriate emergency planning for during an event must include understanding the perspective and motivation of the shooter, as well as prevention efforts that can proactively block events from happening. Chapter II, About the Study, contains a detailed description of exploratory and instrumental case study research, as well as an itemized methods section. Chapter III reports the responses to questions asked based on the literature review of participants’ strategies for a crisis. It provides the quantification of responses for subcategories on Preventative Measures, Describing the Plan, During Strategies, and Alternate Considerations. Chapter III further reports the results of the main category of Confidence in strategies, based on personal viewpoints and experiences with TSV and/or lockdowns. I examined variations in responses based on the lived experience of two participants: both participants who experienced intruders in their school focused more on physical safety planning and considerations than preventative strategies. Based on these observations, the
implications of experiencing a tangible intruder event (the tangibility implication) is explained. Chapter IV provides a discussion section to summarize and discuss the results in relation to the literature review.

The final chapter, Chapter V, highlights limitations and strengths of the study, as well as sharing the strategies of participants, and future directions in research and planning. These limitations include an examination of empirical objections to qualitative research; an explanation regarding the necessity of not using random sampling; the problems with using a small, homogenous group from a small city; a single researcher conducting all interviews, coding, analysis, and reporting; and interviewees potentially receiving different questions due to the evolving interview process. The strengths involve celebrating the descriptive data based on the lived experience of participants; the more personal nature of interviews compared to surveys; the flexibility of the case study; the inclusion of school boards, principals, EMS, and police to try and present a holistic picture of TSV strategies; and the aspiration to share strategies.

The rationale for the present study as a pilot project involves several factors, including the rarity of during studies. Recognizing that the odds of being involved in a TSV event are slim, we still have an ethical responsibility for preparedness, much as British Columbia prepares for tsunamis. It is also important to make space to have this conversation, to consider that incidents can happen anywhere. Historically, as with Columbine, planning is taken seriously after a tragedy occurs, instead of proactively. The overarching objective of this project was to enhance the preparedness of crisis planning for during an incident. Obviously, the goal of planning is 100% prevention.
Barring that, school staff must know what to do in the case of a TSV event. By sharing strategies among emergency professionals and experienced administrators from a variety of schools, I hoped that new ideas, common fears, or successful aversion tactics would express themselves, potentially improving understanding for different types of crimes, and aiding prevention efforts for other locales, such as the U.S. where incidents are much higher than in Canada.
CHAPTER I – LITERATURE REVIEW

On April 20, 1999, teenagers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold entered their school and opened fire at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Harris and Klebold rigged propane tanks to explode in the cafeteria, and had positioned themselves at exits on two sides of the building to shoot people in the panic as they evacuated in terror (Larkin, 2007; Murray Zoba, 2000). However, when the tanks failed to explode, Harris and Klebold modified their strategy, and entered the building, beginning their shooting rampage outside on school grounds (Larkin, 2007; Murray Zoba, 2000). Most of their victims were killed in the library, where students hid under desks, as the librarian had told them to do. In total, Harris and Klebold killed 12 students and one teacher, injuring many others, before taking their own lives in the library. Their motives and influences for the shootings have been widely analyzed to include everything from Satanism, potential homosexuality, heavy metal music, violent video games (Chamberlin, 2008), poor parenting, drugs, and their affiliation with a group known as the Trenchcoat Mafia, to name a few (Larkin, 2007). Truthfully, Harris and Klebold had many motives which were well-documented on self-made videotapes and a website, as well as a specific list of people they wanted to kill, out of revenge for perceived maltreatment (Fuentes, 2011; Larkin, 2007; Murray Zoba, 2000).

One of the most commonly used phrases throughout school shooting literature, news stories, and law enforcement bulletins alike is, “Columbine changed everything!” (e.g.: Murray Zoba, 2000). The response of law enforcement was heavily criticized because everything their training told them to do – set up a perimeter and wait for the SWAT team – was ineffective, and the shooting rampage went on for over half an hour as a result (Fuentes, 2011; Larkin, 2007, McDaniel & Ellis, 2008; Murray Zoba, 2000).
For example, paramedics could not enter the building until they received the all-clear from law enforcement, so teacher Dave Sanders lay bleeding to death for hours (Murray Zoba, 2000). While tragic, from these errors arose knowledge, and the ability to improve or innovate.

The subject of armed attacks in educational institutions emerged into mainstream safety planning following the tumultuous events at Columbine High School. For Canadians, it began 10 years earlier, when a lone gunman, Marc Lépine, entered École Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec, and killed 14 women, injuring 14 others, reportedly because he hated feminists (Lépine & Gagné, 2008; “Violence at U.S.,” 2007). Only 8 days after Columbine in April 1999, a student from W. H. Meyers School in Taber, Alberta killed one student and injured another (Cameron, 2002) before being disarmed by school personnel (“Alberta Town Tries,” 2000). More recently, 20-year old Adam Lanza entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut by force, and killed 20 children and six adults in December of 2012 (“Children and Adults,” 2012).

One of the first known and deadliest events occurred in 1927 with the Bath School disaster in Bath, Michigan. Andrew Kehoe, a former school board member in his 50s, set off an explosion at the school using dynamite (Fuentes, 2011). He had also murdered his wife, set fire to his own farm, and later ended his own life by purposely detonating a blast in his own car while he was inside it. Reportedly, Kehoe was despondent over finances, such as rising school taxes and an approaching foreclosure on his farm (Fuentes, 2011). In total, 45 people died during his rampage (including the perpetrator), and 58 others were injured. Therefore, school violence, although very rare,
has a long history, particularly in the United States. Accordingly, educational institutions must plan for such eventualities.

Targeted school violence (TSV) is any occurrence of violence where a perpetrator chooses a particular target preceding the attack, and where the school is chosen purposefully for the location of the incident (Vossekul et al., 2002). TSV includes the use of a weapon or weapons, most commonly guns/firearms, knives, and explosives. A target could be a specific person or persons, or it could be lashing out at humanity or an institution. Most of the focus of traditional research on TSV involves prevention via understanding perpetrators (Vossekul et al., 2002), threat assessment (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Fein, Vossekul, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, & Reddy, 2002; O’Toole, 2000; Reddy, Borum, Berglund, Vossekul, Fein, & Modzeleski, 2001), or crisis response and intervention (Cameron, 2002; Crepeau-Hobson, Sievering, Armstrong, & Stonis, 2012; Fox & Savage, 2009; Heath & Sheen, 2005; Jaksec, 2007; Kingshott, 2012; Lassiter & Perry, 2009; Wanko, 2001), although a new branch of interest investigates thwarted attempts at school shootings (Daniels, Buck, Croxall, Gruber, Kime, & Govert, 2007; Daniels, Volungis et al., 2010) and averted hostage situations (Daniels, Bradley, Cramer, Winkler, Kinebrew & Crocket, 2007a, 2007b; Daniels, Royster, Vecchi, & Pshenishny, 2010).

Most researchers agree that having a detailed emergency plan and practicing that plan is paramount to confidence in school safety protocols (e.g.: Fox & Savage, 2009). However, very little attention is paid to what can or should happen during a TSV incident, aside from lockdown or evacuation (Buerger & Buerger, 2010; McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). During refers to the period of time between the primary contact with an
armed assailant on school grounds and the arrival of law enforcement (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). Recommended active-shooters protocols usually call for a lockdown “hide and hope” strategy (Buerger & Buerger, 2010; McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). According to Buerger and Buerger (2010) during lockdown, classroom doors are locked, everyone hides within the hypothetical safety of the locked room, while lights and electronics are turned off to avoid drawing the shooter’s attention. The rationale behind lockdown is to diminish the perpetrator’s potential victims and force him to look for soft targets, which also provides police with a singular target upon their arrival on the scene. It is during the initial stages of lockdown that pre-determined staff would contact law enforcement, who would then engage their own active-shooter protocols. Alternatively, the armed assailant may also cease searching for targets and flee, which redirects their attention to escaping, hence reducing victims.

The recent shooting at Sandy Hook clearly demonstrated that lockdowns save lives, as most of the school was locked down by the time Lanza had entered the school. Although lockdown is a useful strategy, Buerger and Buerger (2010) clearly demarcate the two flaws in this plan. First, lockdowns are predicated upon standardized procedures of notification, which may fail due to staff absences or variations in assailant entry to the school, such as avoiding access through the front door. Second, lockdown assumes students are in classrooms and that school authorities will manage the scene until police respond. Unfortunately, there are many variations within school shooting scenarios to consider, far beyond the standardized lockdown procedures (Buerger & Buerger, 2010; McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). Moreover, most TSV events conclude or resolve prior to police arrival on the scene (Daniels, Royster et al., 2010; Vossekuiil et
al., 2002), with most active-shooter event, pre-police resolutions occurring approximately 41% (Schweidt, 2013) to 49% (Martaindale, 2013) of the time, most often by the attackers suicide. In fact, most TSV events occur rapidly (Fox & Savage, 2009). The average active-shooter event endures only 12 minutes (New York Police Department, cited in Schweidt, 2013). For TSV-specific events, approximately 50% end within 15 minutes, and 27% conclude within 5 minutes (Vossekuil et al., 2002), as was allegedly the case at Sandy Hook, including the time it took for the perpetrator to fight his way into the building (Christoffersen, 2013). Therefore, school safety strategies should consider looking beyond lockdown and waiting for the police.

It is also noteworthy to consider the variations in planning necessary for different types of educational institutions. For example, universities contain thousands of students, a revolving student body, multiple buildings, and numerous places for an assailant to flee or blend in (Fox & Savage, 2009). Therefore, planning for different scenarios would be difficult. Elementary schools, although usually one building, must contend with differences in emotional agility, keeping quiet, and staying where one is told, particularly for the youngest children, who are likely to be extremely frightened (Fox & Savage, 2009). These are important considerations, and offer key differences in TSV planning from that of high schools. The present study concentrated on high schools to maintain focus on the one particular type of educational institution where TSV is most common.

The primary aim of the present case study was to investigate the current TSV protocols of high schools from a city in a Canadian prairie province to understand not only their preventative efforts, but also their consideration of contingency plans for
during an attack, beyond lockdown or evacuation, including variations in strategies to accommodate the multitude of scenarios that might occur. If high schools do not employ multiple strategies as Buerger and Buerger (2010) assert, this may not be indicative of a lack of consideration, but rather other potential factors, such as a lack of resources. However, because Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold’s original plan varied greatly from what occurred at Columbine High School (Larkin, 2007; Murray Zoba, 2000), it seems important that schools be prepared for a number of eventualities with appropriate response tactics (Buerger & Buerger, 2010; Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010; McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). For example, if the Columbine students had not hidden beneath the desks in the library, as they would in a lockdown, they may have avoided being shot. Understanding contingency planning also requires understanding the perspective of the potential perpetrators, who are often suicidal, bullied, and/or recently suffered a loss or rejection (Vossekuiil et al., 2002), as well as understanding prevention efforts.

1.1 Crime Typology

In considering variations in TSV contingency plans during the event, there are three main types of scenarios I have extrapolated from the research. First, and most commonly, a shooter or multiple shooters enter the building and begin firing. Examples of crimes of this nature include Columbine, Taber, Dawson College in Montreal (“Violence at U.S.,” 2007), and more recently Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, CT (“Children and Adults,” 2012). This is the type of entrance upon which lockdown procedures are based (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). However, during the process of gathering students in from the hallway, the perpetrator can inadvertently be locked into
the classroom with potential victims since s/he is frequently a student (Buerger &
Buerger, 2010). Moreover, there are non-classroom times of day that are easy for
student perpetrators to anticipate, such as library, lunchtime in the cafeteria, between
classes, fire alarms, or student assemblies (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). Thus, lockdown
is not the best solution in all scenarios.

The second type of TSV is hostage or barricaded incidents. Although this kind
is rare, approximately two hostage or barricaded events occur in the United States each
year (Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010). While both hostage and barricaded events involve
holding others against their will, a hostage event includes the desire for a perpetrator to
have demands met by a third party, whereas barricaded perpetrators either target a
particular individual being held, or are expressing anger over something (Daniels et al.,
2007a). Although hostage events may lack a precise target, the pre-selection of the
school locale is purposeful for the perpetrator’s plan. One of the most famous hostage
events occurred in Beslan, Russia in 2004, when a cohort of terrorists killed over 360
people in a 53-hour standoff (Daniels et al., 2007a; McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). In this
situation, a lockdown would have been completely ineffective and irrelevant.

The third and final scenario of TSV is the outdoor shooter. Outdoor shooters
position themselves to fire at targets as they exit the school, such as during fire drills,
recess, or dismissal. An example of this type of shooting occurred in Jonesboro,
Arkansas in 1998 where five people, including one teacher, were killed, and ten
wounded when two adolescent males pulled the fire alarm, then shot individuals as they
evacuated the building (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003; “Violence at U.S.,”
2007; Vossekuiil et al., 2002). Ironically, the original plan for Columbine was likely
based on Jonesboro. In this case also, it is unclear whether a fire alarm and subsequent evacuation would trump the lockdown procedures.

1.2 Crime Prevalence

It is difficult to pinpoint exact statistics on TSV partly because schools are sometimes reluctant to report violent incidents (Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010; Daniels, Volungis et al., 2010), and partly because different reports disqualify certain types of cases, such as omitting incidents with gang violence. Another perhaps confusing factor is that many sources refer to all types of educational institutions – elementary, high school, and post-secondary – when reporting incident prevalence (e.g. Violence at U.S., 2007). For the purposes of the present study, the following compilation of crime prevalence includes incidents from all types of educational institutions.

In Canada, although no official statistics were found in a search of Statistics Canada’s Juristat, we have experienced approximately 9 known TSV events at educational institutions with casualties since 1975 to July, 2013, not including other incidents involving weapons (see “Violence at U.S.,” 2007). To be clear, although “weapons” usually refer to any object that can cause bodily harm, for the purposes of this study, “weapons” refers to those most specific to TSV events - guns/firearms, knives, and explosives. Guns/firearms are most commonly used.

Fuentes (2011) asserts that in the United States, the probability of being involved in an attack is approximately one in two million. The United States experienced 37 shootings between 1974 and 2000 (Vossekuil et al., 2002), although Klein (2012) reports that there have been 137 fatal school shootings resulting in 297 deaths in the United States between 1980 and 2012, and others have likely occurred since.

I personally counted from a compilation of other sources (e.g. Bodine & Crawford, 1999; Leary et al., 2003; “Violence at U.S.,” 2007), and found a total of 130 incidents since 1927, and 126 since 1975, including all types of educational institutions. Excluding the cases from my own analysis that did not result in fatalities, I found 99 incidents with deaths, including gangs, adults shooting other adults, and self-harm where the intent was to hurt others. Therefore, accurate statistical compilation for TSV is highly subjective, depending on one’s own inclusion criteria. However, 297 deaths between 1980 and 2012 indicates an average of nine per year; given a school population of about 50,000,000; that would suggest odds of being killed in a TSV event at about 1:5,400,000, rendering it extremely rare, yet still more likely than winning the lottery. Many researchers also assert that the media’s portrayal of TSV incidence is often a misrepresentation of actual events, sensationalized to broker fear with the public (Anderson & Dolmage, 2009; Borum et al., 2010; Fuentes, 2011; Males, 2008; Reddy et al., 2001) “[a]nd to entice to people to watch or buy their newspapers” (A. Urban, personal communication, April 7, 2013). The intention of the present study is not to pander to any moral panic, mythology, or misrepresentation.
Although frightening, school attacks are seemingly so sporadic that planning excessively may be construed by some as wasteful of valuable school resources. However, contingency planning is an important priority for a variety of reasons. Post-incident literature indicates that victims of TSV previously believed that an event was not possible within their own community, where they live or attend school (Lassiter & Perry, 2009; Murray Zoba, 2000). Because TSV kills students and school employees alike renders it worth studying, and provides motivation to keep everyone safe by planning appropriately and thoroughly. Prevention efforts are very important, but employing inclusive during strategies to accompany lockdown and evacuation is equivalent to practicing fire drills, despite the fact that school fires are extremely uncommon (Lassiter & Perry, 2009). With emerging insights in safety protocols since the learning experience of Columbine, understanding the during of the incident begins with recognizing prevention strategies for avoiding TSV altogether.

1.3 Understanding Perpetrators Creates Preventative Strategies

In response to a string of high profile school shootings in the United States, the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) was developed through the United States Department of Education’s Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program in conjunction with the Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center (Fein et al., 2002; Vossekuil et al., 2002). The collaboration provided an amalgamation of the Secret Service’s expertise in researching and preventing assassinations and TSV with the Department of Education’s experience of creating safe school environments for students and school staff (Fein et al., 2002; Vossekuil et al., 2002). As well, many Safe Schools programs (Duke, 2002; Furlong, Paige, & Osher, 2003; Phillips, Linney, & Pack, 2008; Wanko, 2001) emerged
in response, to assist administrators in the step-by-step implementation of protocols, strategies, and formats.

The overall goals of Safe Schools programs include safeguarding schools against crime and violence, eradicating intimidation and fear, preserving a drug-free atmosphere, generating a positive and hospitable school climate, and maintaining all of the aforementioned aspirations at all times (Wanko, 2001). Initiatives such as Safe Schools/Healthy Schools, a program of the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Justice, provided grant funding to schools and utilized a variety of resources and community reforms to assist children at risk of juvenile delinquency, school violence, and mental disorder, and to prevent drug and alcohol abuse (Furlong et al., 2003). The overarching goal of SSI projects is the prevention of maladaptive behaviours and violent events in schools (Furlong et al., 2003). In Canada, our own Canadian Safe School Network (CSSN) is predicated on similar values (see CSSN, 2013), and provides annual conference opportunities for school personnel in Canadian cities.

The American SSI’s inaugural study involved investigating and understanding the pre-attack behaviours of students who committed school shootings in the United States, including the deliberation and preparation phases. Vossekuil et al. (2002) investigated 37 episodes of American TSV from between December 1974 to May 2000, via case study. Data for each case study was extrapolated and independently coded from primary source material, and inter-rater reliability reconciliation of disparity ratings occurred between a social science researcher and criminal investigator (Borum et al., 2010).
Their findings indicated that there was no singular profile or set of intrapersonal characteristics that defined a school shooter and, therefore, that the use of profiling was not supported by research (Borum et al., 2010, Cameron, 2002; Fein et al., 2002; Vossekuil et al., 2002) because it stigmatizes the person being described (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001; Reddy et al., 2001). It is important to go case by case (Fox & Savage, 2009) particularly when the perpetrators are adolescents whose characters are still forming (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). Many things can affect the adolescent brain, which is not completely developed until the age of 25 (Arnett, 2007), including neurological contributors to depression (Davis, 2006; Kehle, Bray, Theodore, Zhou, & McCoach, 2004; Kingshott, 2002; Krueger et al., 2009), and erratic sleep patterns (Dahl & Lewin, 2002), which collectively affect decision making (Byrne, 2002). Therefore, Vossekuil et al.’s (2002) findings should neither be considered a checklist of potentially deviant behaviour, nor a profiling tool.

1.3.1 Perpetrator Considerations. According to Vossekuil et al.’s (2002) findings, the perpetrators were overwhelmingly male, ranging in age from 11 to 21 years. “White” attackers comprised 76% of the sample, while 63% were from two parent families. Approximately 41% were performing satisfactorily in school, 63% had never been in trouble, and 56% had not shown any behavioural changes in advance of their attack. Most attackers had no history of mental disorder, evaluation, or substance abuse, although 93% did engage in some type of unusual or concerning behaviour prior to the attack. Fifty-nine percent of attackers demonstrated a history of interest in violence (such as movies, books, video games, or their own writings), while only 31% had a history of actual violent or criminal activity. All of the perpetrators in Vossekuil
et al.’s (2002) study were male, but it is noteworthy that females, albeit rarely, also perpetrate TSV crimes.

The Vossekuil et al. (2002) report further suggests that TSV is often preventable because attackers did not “suddenly snap” as folklore might imply. Attacks were rarely impulsive, but rather extensively preplanned, although few of the actual targets received advanced threats (Vossekuil et al., 2002). In the cases studied by the SSI report, others (e.g., peers) were aware of the planned episodes prior to their execution 81% of the time. The Code of Silence refers to the phenomena of individuals knowing about the planned attacks but avoiding disclosure to school authorities to avoid being viewed as an informer by peers (see Vossekuil et al., 2002). Also noteworthy, many of the attackers had previously contemplated suicide, and nearly three-quarters of the attackers (71%) were bullied, harassed, persecuted, or physically injured by others prior to their rampage. Columbine, for example, was known to have a bullying problem, with Harris and Klebold as frequent targets of harassment by the athletes (Fuentes, 2011; Larkin, 2007, Murray Zoba, 2000).

1.32 Bullying. Because bullying was one of the largest common factors in school shooters (Vossekuil et al., 2002), its prevention warrants further research as a preventative measure. Bullying as a concept is indicative of a power imbalance among two or more people (Lund, Blake, Ewing, & Banks, 2012). It also involves a less dominant person being repeatedly and deliberately harmed (Wade & Beran, 2011). Leary et al., (2003) identified 3 main types of bullying: malicious teasing, ostracization, and romantic rejection. Similarly, Blake, Kim, McCormick and Hayes (2011) distinguished several categories of social victimization including overt, verbal, social,
and non-verbal social and peer exclusion. Moreover, in today’s world, cyberbullying (online victimization) reaches well beyond the prototypical mistreatment that occurs in the schoolyard (Wade & Beran, 2011).

Contemporary researchers recognize the value in studying bullying to deter violent or potentially lethal events within the context of the school. Using a questionnaire for high school and middle school students and analyzing the results via confirmatory factor analysis, Blake et al. (2011) discovered that boys are more likely to experience overt bullying, while girls are more likely to experience bullying in the form of peer exclusion. Canadian researchers Wade and Beran (2011) also utilized a questionnaire of grades 6, 7, 10, and 11 to investigate prevalence and sex differences in cyberbullying experiences. Their findings indicated that grade 7s were cyberbullied more often than other age groups, and girls more often than boys. Their findings also suggested not only that 21.9% of their participants had been victimized online, but 29.7% admitted to perpetrating cyberbullying (Wade & Beran, 2011).

One of the key factors in bullying is the victim’s perception of the events. In other words, aversive levels in bullying dynamics depend largely on the perception of the individual (Kowalski, 2001). Often, bullies qualify their taunts and behaviour with statements such as, “I was kidding. Can’t you take a joke?” (Kowalski, 2003; Leary & Springer, 2001). Also, classic studies in social psychology further emphasize the power of the social situation as a significant influence on an individual’s behaviour (Zimbardo, 2007). In other words, people may act or react in a certain way due to the situation itself, and not always intrapersonal factors alone. Learned helplessness or overbearing power, key factors in bullying victimization and perpetration respectively, are
situational factors, and an individual’s perception greatly influences how people internalize and react to the situation (Fox & Savage, 2009; Kowalski, 2003; Zimbardo, 2007). Therefore, it is imperative to consider the context of the behaviour that occurs, as well as how it is perceived by the victimized individual. To be clear, the perpetrators are often bullied, and their rampages result from how they perceive, internalize, interpret, and cope with that bullying, which often continues for years, as it did with the Columbine perpetrators (Fuentes, 2011; Larkin, 2007, Murray Zoba, 2000).

New research also includes the idea that masculinity itself creates conditions for young men to become distraught over their place in the social matrix. Klein (2012) examined the concept of gender pressure and masculinity in school shootings, and Larkin (2007) presented it in terms of Harris and Klebold. Klein (2012) refers to the concept of masculinity imperatives and hyper-masculinity as the dominant gender norm imposed by the “gender police” (p.1.). She asserts there are three key traits of everyday school culture: Gender Policing, Masculinity Imperatives, and Normalized Bullying (Klein, 2012). The crux of the problem is that kids are expected to conform to the gender norms, or suffer the social consequences by being outcast or ridiculed. As well, Columbine writers make reference to Harris and Klebold being called gay or faggot (Larkin, 2007, Murray Zoba, 2000), as were other shooters (see Klein, 2012). So why is gay considered to be such an insult? Presumably, homosexuality is seen as not masculine or deviant, whereas violence may be more manly (Larkin, 2007) according to the gender police (Klein, 2012), causing rejection from one’s social group (Leary et al., 2003). According to Eric Harris, that was partly why he targeted the “jocks” during the Columbine shootings (Fuentes, 2011; Larkin, 2007, Murray Zoba, 2000).
Within the context of TSV, Leary et al. (2003) reviewed case studies in school shootings, including many of the same cases in the Vossekuil and colleagues’ report, to determine whether perceived rejection was a factor in 14 school shootings that occurred between 1995 and 2001. In particular, they were interested in aggression against peers as a factor. Their findings denote, similar to Vossekuil et al. (2002), that social rejection was a factor in 80% of the cases. Where bullying exists, loss, understanding social rejection, and instilling skills for coping with loss become paramount for the mental health of today’s youth.

1.4 School Issues and Programs

1.41 Bullying Prevention. There are many available resources for individual support (e.g.: Kids Help Phone, 2013), initiatives for educators like RespectEd (Canadian Red Cross, 2013), prevention strategies (e.g. Public Safety Canada, 2011; Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2009), or designs specifically directed at schools (Bonds & Stoker, 2000; Duke, 2002; Lund et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2008; Richard, Schneider, & Mallet, 2011; Schmidt, 1998). One of the most comprehensive online resources in Canada is PREVNet (PREVNet, 2013), which represents 26 universities bringing together a variety of research, tools, and organizations to combat bullying, based largely on the findings of Canadian researchers, Debra Pepler and Wendy Craig. Overall, bully prevention programs teach students and staff what it feels like to be bullied, the human costs of bullying, and better ways of expressing themselves, or teach alternative behaviours that reduce bullying. Considering current understanding about bullying and the plethora of prevention strategies available to victims as well as schools (see Lund et al., 2012), one may question how or why it
remains a factor in today’s schools, since anti-bullying education is a part of the curriculum, at least in Saskatchewan (see Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2009).

1.42 Why Anti-Bullying Programs Sometimes Fail. Anti-bullying programs, although common, require an individualized approach specific to the school setting. In other words, one-size-fits-all programs do not work unless they are adaptable to accommodate the particular needs of a school or specific situations within bullying dynamics (Fein et al., 2002; Stueve et al., 2006; Twemlow & Sacco, 2008). For example, one of the largest factors contributing to bullying is the inaction or persuasion of bystanders. However, this barrier can be addressed by understanding that bystanders can become peacemakers if taught the correct skills to halt harmful behaviours that occur in their presence (Phillips et al., 2008). In today’s anti-bullying efforts, bystanders are encouraged to speak up (Lassiter & Perry, 2009). Programs must recognize differences between bystander behaviours and the norms of the community to appropriately identify and evaluate onlooker situations (Stueve et al., 2006). Hence, programs must be adaptable enough to take community values into account within the context of the situation.

However, it is also noteworthy that bystanders must consider the context of the social scenario as well. Bystanders who step in can easily become victims themselves (Stueve et al., 2006). As well, programs such as Safe Schools Ambassadors, which help build relationships and skills to prevent and halt bullying situations, can also reinforce the existing social structure of favouritism, as administrators are encouraged to select students who are known to be outgoing and popular (Phillips et al., 2008). Those
chosen could potentially be the bullies, although the authors indicate the program is very successful based on post-implementation survey feedback they received from a variety of schools (Phillips et al., 2008).

There are many other factors that can potentially nullify the efficacy of anti-bullying programs, including the perception of the school. Often, assessment of the school’s dynamics in relation to program requirements are misconstrued, such as thinking interventions are only appropriate for schools with higher budgets or larger populations, perceiving the school as too respectable or deplorable, believing that higher socio-economic status (SES) schools do not have bullying problems, assuming that a lack of physical violence at the school indicates an absence of issues, or that removing or concentrating only on the problem kids will alleviate the trouble (Twemlow & Sacco, 2008). These factors are fallacies of failure. Blake et al., (2011) advocate education on exclusion (e.g. the problem with excluding others) and inclusion to address social victimization for middle and high school students through the creation of cooperative learning groups. That particular recommendation is not exclusive to SES, school size, or any other factor. All students and school personnel alike may benefit from anti-bullying education, particularly if using evidence-based approaches (Lund et al., 2012).

One of the largest barriers to anti-bullying program success is the attitude of the staff toward the program. The staff must harmonize and support the initiative (Twemlow & Sacco, 2008), and a fundamental variable in the successful implementation of any program is managerial support (Farrel & Cubit, 2005). Often, staff such as teachers or psychologists, feel that anti-bullying programming is not part of their job description or responsibilities (Jaksec, 2007; Lund et al., 2012, Twemlow &
Sacco, 2008). The whole-school approach to bullying was previously viewed as unsuccessful, wherein efforts merely focused on the bully and the victim (Richard et al., 2011; Schmidt, 1998). However, Richard et al. (2011) found that positive school climate and a high quality of school relations prevents bullying, as evidenced by fewer episodes of bullying in schools with positive teacher-student relationships. Therefore, the efficacy of the whole-school approach requires the cooperation of all staff for program success, and to improve the overall climate and culture of the school.

1.43 School Climate. The researchers of current studies discussed in the present literature review reached a consensus on three important issues regarding a supportive school environment that promotes healthy relationships and obtaining assistance for youth in crisis before it escalates into a targeted violence scenario. First, school climate, or the emotional environment of the school (Vossekuil et al., 2002), is of the utmost importance. Creating a positive school climate assists students in feeling supported (Fox & Savage, 2009) and reduces violence (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). The avoidance of toxic school cultures helps schools address care issues in the curriculum (Duke, 2002; Larkin, 2007; see also Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2009). Maintaining a positive school climate that promotes trusting relationships allows a stream of accurate information from students to administration, and accordingly, the environment must encourage respect and honour for sharing in good faith (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). This, in turn, can also alleviate or eliminate the Code of Silence (Borum et al., 2010; Cameron, 2002; Fein et al., 2002, Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010; Kingshott, 2012; Phillips et al., 2008; Reddy et al., 2001; Vossekuil et al., 2002) making it easier for students to report when something is amiss.
1.44 **Zero Tolerance.** The second area of consensus in the literature is the negative view on Zero Tolerance policies. Zero Tolerance encompasses a range of guidelines that inflict severe punishments for minor transgressions to promote the prevention of more significant ones (Borum et al., 2010). In high school, the main sanctions prototypically involve suspension or expulsion (Borum et al., 2010), and are known to cause profiling (Fuentes, 2011). Contemporary researchers view such policies unfavourably (Borum et al., 2010, Daniels, Volungis et al., 2010; Fuentes, 2011; Lassiter & Perry, 2009; Lund et al., 2012; Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001; Twemlow & Sacco, 2008) because promoting healthy relationships provides a more effective means of decreasing violent behaviours and criminal activities within educational establishments (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). Maintaining an integrative model of support including peer-mediation programs, pro-social skills, and conflict resolution (Bodine & Crawford, 1999) are all forms of caring discipline, in lieu of zero tolerance policies (Clements & Sova, 2000) applicable and preferable for North American schools today.

1.45 **Physical Measures.** The third area of consensus in research is the idea of increasing security measures to enhance the physical safety of the school. Security measures include physical changes such as cameras, metal detectors, increased or armed security personnel, or identification systems (Fuentes, 2011). Although some proponents of Safe Schools advocate for increased security measures (see Wanko, 2001), in reality, these measures are unlikely to deter attacks (Reddy et al., 2001; Fuentes, 2011) as demonstrated when Adam Lanza infiltrated Sandy Hook Elementary School, despite their increased physical security efforts at the school. As well, physical
security measures can make the school more prison-like and less comfortable (Fuentes, 2011), counterintuitive to the recommended model of the positive school climate.

In reviewing school climate, policies, physical environment, and anti-bullying efforts, it becomes clear that a whole school approach is best for quelling violent incidents internally. Unfortunately, some students may still feel bullied, ostracized, or pulled toward engaging in an act of TSV, for suicide or revenge among other reasons, despite the school’s best efforts.

1.5 Threat Assessment

As previously discussed, maintaining a respectful and trusting atmosphere in the school helps eliminate the Code of Silence, which becomes very important in cases where threats are made against the school, particularly in the Safe Schools perspective. As discovered in Vossekuil et al.’s (2002) study, most school shooters revealed their plans to one or more people prior to their rampage. Hence, efforts to break the Code of Silence become integral toward the prevention of TSV.

Threats made may vary in nature and severity, and in the seriousness of intent (O’Toole, 2001); as well, there are differences between making a threat and posing a threat (see Fein et al., 2002). Additionally, Cameron (2002) of the Taber Crisis Response Team, revealed a connection between tangible shooting incidents and the threats that inevitably follow, even hundreds of miles away. Cameron (2002) indicated that reaction is crucial – both overreaction and under-reaction are possible, and both are problematic - and therefore, it is imperative to determine the seriousness of the threat. To that end, Fein and colleagues (2002) created the Threat Assessment Guide for Schools (See also O’Toole, 2001 for the FBI’s threat assessment resource). They
recommend that schools have a multi-disciplinary Threat Assessment Team (TAT), which includes not only school personnel, but also community members such as workers from mental health agencies and law enforcement (Fein et al., 2002).

Threat assessment is a fact-based approach that appraises potential perpetrators by their behaviours (Borum et al., 2010; Fein et al., 2002; O'Toole, 2001; Reddy et al., 2001; Vossekuil et al., 2002). The team may either make an inquiry, which involves school personnel investigating the matter with the student, or pending the outcome of their inquiry, an investigation, which then involves law enforcement (Fein et al., 2002). The overall goal of the TAT is to handle each threat on a case-by-case basis to determine if the threat is serious, and to get the potential perpetrator the assistance s/he needs proactively, thus averting the violent event (Fein et al., 2002). The main tenets guiding threat assessment are as follows (adapted from Fein et al., 2002):

1. Targeted violence results from relations between an individual, a target, a situation, and a setting.
2. Successful threat assessment results from an inquisitive, skeptical, and inspective attitude.
3. Accurate threat assessment does not rely on traits or characteristics, but upon facts.
4. The main inquiry of threat assessment involves whether the student poses a threat, as opposed to merely making a threat.
5. Threat assessment involves an “integrated systems approach” to direct inquiries and investigations
6. Targeted violence is the final consequence of an understandable, and often palpable, progression of thinking and behaviour.

In addition, an effective school threat assessment program includes authority and capacity to conduct inquiries, investigations, and assessments, as well as discerning important relationships among the various systems involved (Fein et al., 2002).
Because violence risk is dynamic and not static (Mulvey and Cauffman, 2001), the etiology of targeted violence diverges from that of regular violence (Reddy et al., 2001).

One of the most striking concepts within threat assessment is its emphasis on understanding the would-be perpetrator’s behaviour and thinking. Most threat-makers are attempting to convey something, such as emotional distress, suicidal intentions, or a combination of suicidal and homicidal contemplations (Cameron, 2002). Unfortunately, referring back to previous research on bystander behaviours and the code of silence, threats frequently go unreported. Nekvasil and Cornell (2012) conducted a correlational study using a self-report questionnaire of high school students to determine the barriers that prevent students from reporting threats. Their findings indicate that three-quarters of the students did not perceive even very specific threats authentically, even though specific threats were ten times more likely to be carried out than non-specific threats (Nekvasil & Cornell, 2012). Therefore, it is essential that TATs, school personnel, and students to take rumours of threats seriously (Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010; O’Toole, 2001) if we are to potentially avert TSV incidents.

Finally, the authors are very careful to note that threat assessment should not be substituted for or used as a profiling tool (Fein et al., 2002). The essential element of threat assessment is the investigation being launched by the student’s aggressive or troubling behaviour, and not by a pre-determined profile of characteristics (Borum et al., 2010; Fein et al., 2002; Reddy et al., 2001; Vossekuiil et al., 2002), particularly because adolescent behaviour varies as a result of a variety of internal, interpersonal, situational, neurological, and other factors that can influence their thought patterns.
While threat assessment provides a valuable means to deter violent criminal episodes within the school, its efficacy may be limited where armed intruders who are not students enter the school, such as the Beslan Hostage Crisis or Sandy Hook Elementary School. Accordingly, threat assessment is an important prevention initiative, but will not completely eradicate the need for preparedness for a potential TSV incident.

1.6 Crisis Response Teams

Implementing appropriate emergency preparedness protocols in schools includes having a multidisciplinary Crisis Response Team (CRT) in place (Cameron, 2002; Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012; Fox & Savage, 2002; Heath & Sheen, 2005; Jaksec, 2007; Kingshott, 2012; Wanko, 2001). A crisis is defined as any situation wherein an individual experiences an abrupt inability to utilize appropriate coping and problem solving skills, with the level of crisis being highly dependent on the individual’s perception (Kingshott, 2012). CRTs are populated with a variety of school professionals including teachers, administrators, counsellors, psychologists, nurses, and School Resource Officers (SROs), as well as applicable community members such as mental health practitioners, social workers, law enforcement, and emergency workers (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012; Heath & Sheen, 2005; Jaksec, 2007). School CRTs are created to manage any type of crisis situation or traumatic event in addition to potential school shootings, including the sudden death of a faculty member, bomb threat, homicide in the school (Wanko, 2001); news of a tragedy (Jaksec, 2007); racially motivated hate crimes (Kingshott, 2012), death of a student, natural disasters, or suicide (Crepeau-Hobson, et al., 2012).
There are many types of plans and strategies for dealing with crisis, trauma, or tragedy from pre-crisis until the era after it concludes, all with many overarching features. For example, Crisis Response or Crisis Intervention plans include pre-crisis planning, critical components in crisis response such as reunification of victims, safe-havens, mental health intervention, triage, communications, media management, and other aftermath considerations for immediately following the occurrence, as well as long-term considerations for psychological support (e.g.: Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012) for both the school and community (Cameron, 2002). Overall, the current literature emphasizes the importance of having an emergency crisis plan and team in place for all schools.

Many additional considerations for CRT’s emergency planning, aside from merely having one, include having emergency mass notification and communication systems, establishing a TAT, and giving special consideration for privacy information (Fox & Savage, 2009). While globally, the importance on crisis planning is understood as necessary within the school community, Kingshott (2012) emphasizes that no singular preparedness model will fit all situations, and that plans must be specific to the school. Accordingly, plans must be based on things like the number of students, number of buildings, and layout (Fox & Savage, 2009; Wanko, 2001). In particular, Fox and Savage (2009) note the differences in response and active planning for university campuses in comparison to high school or elementary schools.

CRTs enhance school safety for students, staff, and community by planning for emergency situations. Planning for potential crises and how to handle the physical, logistic, and psychological consequences for all members of the school community,
such as the Taber Response Project, focuses on immediate and enduring consequences (Cameron, 2002). However, most of the plans stress roles, lockdown and/or evacuation strategies, and then aftermath considerations for those affected, while not specifically addressing protocols for handling an armed assailant inside the school, or alternative strategies if there is any type of variation in the plan. For example, in some schools where staff turnover is higher, the CRT may have outgoing members each year. As well, not all schools in Western Canada have dedicated social workers, psychologists, nurses, or SROs on staff at all times due to budgetary constraints; in fact, most do not. This impacts who is present in the school on any given day, and thus who should populate the team.

Some staff members may not want to participate on a CRT for a variety of reasons, including this responsibility not being in their job description, lack of knowledge, negative experiences in the past, or the sheer intimidation of the task (Jaksec, 2007). Resistance to CRTs may also result from the “it can’t happen here” mentality, or from the expectation that principals, as the authority of the school, may anticipate risks to their own safety while office staff or custodian positions do not (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). Also, a multiple database query on “active shooter protocols for schools” provides plenty of information for law enforcement officials on how to enter the school, but as mentioned earlier, most situations are resolved before law enforcement arrives. The CRT plans do not discuss how “hide and hope” strategies may not work in all scenarios, or what can be done to potentially defuse the situation while the armed intruder is in the school.
1.7 During the Crisis

*During* refers to the period of time between the primary contact with an armed assailant on school grounds and the arrival of assistance (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). It is within this timeframe that a number of variables result in questionable efficacy of contingency plans. According to FBI researchers Buerger and Buerger (2010), the hierarchy of events in an active shooter or other crisis situation begins with the internal notice of lockdown, and next, the external notice of emergency personnel. These directives are based on the team leader, often the principal, setting the chain of command in motion. However, Buerger and Buerger (2010) note that many factors can confuse this plan, such as the principal being away. Alternate considerations include that the incident may not originate with the office staff (e.g. the shooter may not check in at the front office before beginning the rampage), or the office staff being the first victims (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). Procedures must include alternate team members, as well as execution of notification by alternate staff (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

Moreover, Buerger and Buerger (2010) note that the population of the school varies, including volunteers, workers, substitute teachers, or other guests; therefore, additional considerations must be in place to accommodate alterations in personnel as well.

Of particular concern during the crisis is that the lockdown “hide and hope” strategy is not best for every situation, such as acts of terrorism (McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). It is also important for schools to have evacuation and shelter procedures, depending on the situation (Kingshott, 2012). As well, administrators usually schedule practice of lockdown procedures during class times, when in fact, previous incidents indicate that they can occur also during assemblies (“Luther College Principal,” 2008),
lunchtimes (Murray Zoba, 2000), library times, busy times in the hall between classes, and recess for elementary school kids (Buerger and Buerger, 2010). Therefore, effective planning must defend during these alternate times of vulnerability (Buerger & Buerger, 2010) which are easily anticipated by any member of the school community planning to commit an act of violence. One of the main arguments for preparation for that gap of time during the incident before law enforcement arrive is that staff members have the opportunity to engross and possibly calm an agitated assailant, potentially even averting the incident (Buerger and Buerger, 2010). In other words, having an armed assailant enter the school need not always result in fatalities.

1.8 Aversion Studies

Some researchers, such as Kopel (2008), think schools should consider arming teachers with weapons, or training them in defensive combat tactics like Krav Maga. While such measures represent the extreme, the qualitative research undertaken within the past few years by Daniels and colleagues examines a previously unstudied topic in the area of school crises, predominantly hostage events, but in particular, incidents that were averted or resolved successfully. While most often they look at how plots were foiled ahead of time by breaking the code of silence, they also discuss scenarios where perpetrators are stopped during a TSV event.

Daniels, Royster, et al. (2010) conducted a content analysis of newspaper articles to examine common themes relating to the mitigation, prevention, and response archetypes among 19 school-based barricaded and hostage crises. Mitigation and prevention investigated SRO involvement, in-school student screening, observed behavioural changes, and expected outcomes. Response inquiries looked at injuries and
fatalities, the perpetrator’s demands, captive releases and/or escapes, choice of weaponry, resolution of incident, law enforcement response, and negotiation. Their findings indicate that the majority of these incidents occurred in high schools during mid-morning to midday, by lone male perpetrators who were students at the school, who most frequently held an entire class captive, with suicidal intent. Often, the incidents were resolved by staff prior to police arrival on scene, with 84% releasing some or all of the captives unharmed (Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010). Although situations in which adult male non-students perpetrated the event resulted in more serious consequences, the findings identified school staff as effective potential negotiators.

Daniels and colleagues’ other studies include the insights and responses of law enforcement and school employees regarding their roles, systemic conditions, advice, and attributions of successful resolution during three armed hostage and barricaded occurrences (Daniels et al., 2007a); a school counsellor case study of the same incidents (Daniels et al., 2007b); content analysis of 30 barricaded or hostage event plot details, including how the plot was uncovered, the school’s and police actions taken, and the legal outcomes for the intended perpetrators (Daniels, Buck, et al., 2007); and finally, averted school shooting rampages (Daniels, Volungis, et al., 2010). Taken together, their findings support positive school climate and relationships of mutual trust among school staff and students as instrumental in resolving hostage and barricaded armed crises, as well as school shootings. Moreover, since events may often be thwarted in advance by other students’ reports breaking the code of silence (Fein et al., 2002;
Vossekuil et al., 2002), Daniels and colleagues’ collective results support the notion of taking rumours seriously, thus further demonstrating the need for TATs in high schools.

In spite of the promising results of aversion studies, not only for prevention but also for during strategies, they also contain several limitations. First, Daniels, Royster, et al.’s (2010) studies reported number of tactical team respondents varied depending which section they were discussing. Consistency in reporting results is paramount to the validity of a study. Second, they discussed behavioural changes as including mental illness, suspensions, break-ups, transferring schools, and the death of a family member, stating that they found no pattern (Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010). However, all of these situations exemplify losses or rejections, each requiring coping skills. Since rejection or loss was a common attribute of TSV perpetrators in the SSI report (see Vossekuil et al., 2002), future research studies should be diligent in considering loss as a factor.

Third, and a common criticism for qualitative research, measuring the effectiveness of interventions must transcend merely recording staff perceptions (Farrell & Cubit, 2005). However, given the rarity of averted school shooting or hostage incidents, investigating the phenomenon any other way would be difficult. Fourth, their sampling included only American cases, while all foreign cases were omitted from their studies. Therefore, it is unclear how their findings generalize to Canadian situations and schools. Finally, for the studies utilizing only newspaper articles (Daniels, Buck, et al., 2007; Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010), media interpretations, when compared to court documents or police reports, are often inaccurate or incomplete (Anderson & Dolmage, 2009; Borum et al., 2010; Vossekuil et al., 2002), as emphasized by Daniels, Royster, et
Further studies should include primary source documents as well, to lend credibility to the study.

In spite of the limitations, the Daniels and colleagues’ studies demonstrated a number of promising concepts that support the literature presented. First, their data concurs with other assertions denouncing Zero Tolerance policies, promoting a positive school climate, breaking the code of silence, and establishing and maintaining good relationships between students and school personnel. Second, they illustrate the efficacy and importance of training school staff in crisis intervention. In the Daniels et al. (2007b) case study, they indicate that in the United States, 64% of counsellors receive crisis intervention training, which denotes that approximately 1/3 do not. Finally, they not only underscore the importance of having and practicing a crisis plan (Daniels et al., 2007a), but also suggest the importance of flexibility, because the rampage or hostage event always differs from the plan (Daniels, Volungis, et al., 2010). The importance of the latter is the focus of the present study.

1.9 The Goal of the Present Study

The present study had three main goals. The first was to investigate the current TSV plans of high schools from a Western Canadian city to understand their consideration of strategies for during an attack, beyond lockdown or evacuation, including variations in strategies to accommodate the multitude of scenarios that might occur. In particular, this study sought to examine contingency preparations according to current research recommendations, such as flexible plans or provisions for multiple types of TSV (e.g.: active shooter inside the school, armed hostage or barricaded events, or active shooter outside the school). As well, if no alternate strategies exist within
contingency planning, I wanted to determine the rationale for the omission. Understanding their *during* strategies included chronicling their prevention strategies as well, such as social skills training, school climate, threat assessment, student supports, and bullying prevention. Many participants were eager to share their preventative strategies when queried, and went beyond the question(s) to describe those plans.

The second goal of the present study was to focus on participants’ experiences and perceptions of their school, department, or facility’s plans. In particular, I sought whether they were confident in their *during* procedures, alternate scenario considerations, and preventative strategies, and whether their personal experiences of TSV impacted their confidence level. Ultimately, I hope to enhance TSV preparedness by sharing strategies, ideas, fears, and improving understanding of plans from the perspective of emergency responders, school board personnel, and school administrators.

A third underlying objective is that this research represents a pilot study, repeatable in other locales to study contingency planning from a variety of locations and perspectives. For example, interviewing principals in a larger city like Toronto or Vancouver, or a rural location, may yield different results. Therefore, throughout data collection, analysis, and writing, I questioned the efficacy of the questions, as well as the process itself.
CHAPTER II – ABOUT THE STUDY

2.1 Methodology

According to researchers in the area of TSV, qualitative research is best for “low-frequency phenomena” (Leary et al., 2003, p. 204; also Daniels et al., 2007a, 2007b). The rate of school shooting and hostage events are too infrequent to establish a reliable quantitative baseline (Reddy et al., 2002). Moreover, qualitative investigations provide more suitable methods of inquiry where experimental research involving manipulation of variables is not only impossible, but clearly unethical (Leary et al., 2003), as is the case in TSV. For example, finding an independent variable to manipulate and measure against a dependent variable for during strategies of school shooting scenarios is unlikely because it would be highly unethical to put a mock intruder into the school and observe reactions. Therefore, an exploratory and comparative qualitative approach is best for examining this particular phenomenon, not only to maintain ethical parameters, but obviously to minimize distress on potential participants.

The goals of qualitative research are to expound and comprehend, and to contribute to policy and practice (Stake, 2010). Based on its theoretical underpinnings, I chose to conduct my research using a case study (CS) approach to explore high schools’ plans for during strategies. A CS may often be thought of as the case of a single person or instance, but this is an antiquated notion. CS research is a qualitative and descriptive research design that allows for the systematic and in-depth study of a specific phenomenon (Merriam, 1988). Even though it is commonly thought of as an approach rather than a methodology (e.g. Stake, 1995) that focuses on description
before theory production (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011), others disagree in that CS is a type of research design that results in a product of its investigation (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007), arguing that the main foci is on insight and discovery (Merriam, 1988).

There are numerous types of CSs, all with different goals and divergent definitions, which can become confusing for the novice researcher. The variant types of CS approaches find commonality in their allowance of the in-depth study of a particular case (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011), targeting a precise aspect or the whole (Lichtman, 2011). For example, Chadderton and Torrence’s (2011) definition includes a policy focus and physical location to emphasize the social construction of a case. However, the most common definition includes the “exploration of a bounded system (group, individual, setting, event, phenomenon, process)…” (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Kingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 197) or systems, used to gain an understanding of a particular issue through detailed data collection from several data sources (Creswell et al., 2007). The term bounded system further refers to a situation with practical boundaries based on common sense for that case (Merriam, 1988), such as a particular context or setting (Creswell et al., 2007; Stake, 1995). In terms of my research, the CS involves a detailed, holistic inquiry regarding the policies, plans, and confidence levels of all parties involved in planning TSV during strategies.

For the purpose of the present TSV research, a combination of exploratory and instrumental case study (EICS) approaches seemed the best fit. Exploratory case studies are highly descriptive of a particular phenomenon or event, to gain deep insight and understanding, particularly suited to the pilot project (Yin, 2003). To Merriam
(1988), a descriptive case study is exploratory in nature. Instrumental case studies are initiated to understand a particular case or phenomenon beyond what is currently understood about it; “In other words, it is instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding” (Stake, 1995, pp. 3). Because my research sought not only to describe and understand all facets of TSV planning, but to hopefully share strategies and ultimately initiate potential during plan improvements, it becomes instrumental as well.

Data collection in CS research most commonly employs interviewing as the cornerstone, and analysis seeks to organize alike information into subcategories that are part of larger, overarching categories. The process of gathering narratives achieves the purpose of understanding the phenomenon from inside the experience (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Creswell et al., 2007; Lichtman, 2011; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2003). However, an important facet of CS research is enhancing credibility which is achieved by obtaining data from multiple sources. For example, one may combine similar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical methods (Denzin, 1970, as cited in Merriam, 1988) with the idea that the shortcomings of one method may be an asset for another. This commonly accepted notion, known as triangulation, (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Chadderton & Torrance, 2011, Creswell et al., 2007; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2003), includes a variety of options for ensuring data is not strictly from one source. For example, documents may include books, journal articles, newspaper articles, and other written work (Merriam, 1988). The main idea of triangulation is that multiple sources will lend support to the validity of the study, to go beyond the interviews of people and the interpretations of the interviewer.
For my EICS on TSV, the “triangulation” is not strictly a triangle. My literature review included many journal articles, newspaper articles, online materials, book chapters, my interviews with three different types of participants (school administrators, school board members, and emergency responders) wherein policies were also reviewed orally, and observations from my field notes. The literature consulted included many case studies that included material from people inside TSV events, close to victims, survivors, and perpetrators. As such, my goal was to conduct an EICS with a comprehensive presentation of considerations for TSV planning.

According to Lichtman (2011), CS research lacks explicit principles for data collection and analysis, and is deficient of specific instructions for how the findings should be exhibited and written. However, Merriam (1988) emphasises content over specificity of methods, stating that because CSs are not testing hypothesis, the focus is on the holistic interpretation, description, explanation and discovery. Moreover, Merriam (1988) also discusses the using the constant comparative method, similar to a GT study approach.

Data analysis in qualitative designs utilizes a complex, ongoing process in that as interviews occur, data codes are extrapolated and compiled, sometimes into a database (Coyne & Cowley, 2006). The “constant comparative method” involves continuously comparing new data with previously collected information; to examine each analytic finding in relation to the previous data source (O’Leary, 2010, p. 270). Throughout data collection, comparative analysis continues, involving line by line coding, assembling a code listing, categorization and elimination of codes, and ongoing literature review, thus eventually discerning predominant recurring themes. Once the
categories are developed, links and relationships of sub-categories become integrated into an overarching framework of the phenomenon being studied. Also, a critical component in the analysis and reporting of CS data involves stringent reflexivity, or considering, acknowledging, accepting, and even including one’s own potential biases throughout the research and writing process (Burns & Chantler, 2011). Thus, in CS data collection and analysis, the information is under constant examination and consideration throughout the process. The topic of analysis will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

The numerous strengths of CS Research as a qualitative approach begins with the completeness of the picture the case study can provide (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Merriam, 1988). CS research provides a thorough examination of a phenomenon (Lichtman, 2011). Another key strength of CS is its flexibility as an approach. A researcher has the freedom to employ a variety of techniques and to gather types of data which could be considered anecdotal by empirical standards. Qualitative researchers often use CS research for the purpose of developing an understanding regarding a certain phenomenon or experience, and recognizing how one’s experiences create personal meaning for their episodic events (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Finally, it has been suggested that stringent checklists of credibility measures and quality indicators (Brantlinger et al., 2005) help even novice researchers ensure their research projects contain the utmost qualitative validity measures. Credibility measures include the use of triangulation, but also member checks, such as having participants review their interview transcripts (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Several such measures were employed for my EICS, such as maintaining an audit trail, member checks, triangulation, seeking disconfirming evidence, external auditors (via my
committee), prolonged field engagement, and detailed description to name a few (see Brantlinger et al., 2005). Quality indicators include ensuring meaningful documents are included and scrutinized, measures to maintain confidentiality, fitting in at the interview site, participants being represented accurately and fairly, etc. (see Brantlinger et al., 2005). It is imperative for researchers conducting any research to be aware of their participants’ comfort and needs, and to follow the guidelines for the ethical use, transport, and storage of data, which CS methods emphasize.

There are several potential limitations to CS research. First is the question of whether a researcher as an outsider can definitively represent an accurate account of the situation (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011). This becomes important for a project like mine, since school policy on TSV planning originates from the school board, based on information provided from the police and experts in the field, or subjective opinion based on media accounts. However, triangulation or multiple sources of data assist with accurate representation, as do the credibility measures employed (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Another criticism of CS research is that it is not possible to generalize findings to the general population based on the information presented (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011). However, because CSs are generally based on unusual situations or phenomenon, it is unclear how much they must extend to the general population. Therefore, understanding the boundaries of the case itself becomes very important (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011). For example, TSV planning for high schools varies greatly from TSV planning for universities based on a variety of factors, such as number of buildings (Fox & Savage, 2009). Hence, it is a matter of judgement (Chadderton &
Torrance, 2011) that will depend a great deal on the type of case and where it must generalize.

Qualitative studies themselves can be viewed as very subjective and biased, and there are ethical concerns whenever one gathers personal stories (Stake, 2010). However, Stake (2010) also notes that the acquisitions in knowledge merit such risks. Moreover, quality indicators (Brantlinger et al., 2005) help quash that apprehension. In my own research, specifically omitting some of the participants’ stories and comments because they were deemed ‘too identifiable’ or ‘too personal’ was difficult, where I thought they would be useful to the overall picture. The importance of the participants’ comfort overrules researcher ideas, which hopefully does not detract from the project. Also, the use of self-report data is widely viewed as unreliable in the scientific community (Jackson, 2008). Some researchers posit that participants may engage in dishonesty to make themselves appear more favourably or to impress the researcher (Jackson, 2008). Within my own data collection, a few participants did inquire whether or not they were “coming off” a certain way, such as arrogant or uncaring. As well, one participant’s data regarding how often their plan was practiced had to be eliminated because of a discrepancy between what the participant said and another member of the school community’s opposite claim.

Another empirical criticism of CS is that its data are eliminated based on subjective categories. It is possible that someone else may view my categories in a different way. Therefore, a second researcher to review the data would be helpful, thus hopefully adding inter-rater reliability (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Jackson, 2008) as well. Also, using a constant comparative method requires the researcher to collect data,
analyze it, and return to the field (Corbin & Holt, 2011; Lichtman, 2011). In quantitative analysis, this would be viewed as a potential skewing of the data. The researcher may twist the questions to accommodate his or her own philosophical ideologies or biases, which is why reflexivity becomes important in qualitative research (Burns & Chantler 2011; Corbin & Holt, 2011; Lichtman, 2011), to avoid bending the research toward a specific conclusion. As my first time conducting EICS research, I cannot be completely confident these biases were addressed.

Finally, with regard to my own study, the participants represented many different realities, ranging from schools with gang members, to schools with a highly affluent student body, in addition to the many schools whose principals opted against participation. Therefore, it is difficult to determine to how great an extent my findings may differ with socio-economic status (SES). Further research may help illuminate the intricacies of these issues.

For me, EICS allows people to tell their own stories and trust me to take those experiences to generate a complete picture and framework based on their narratives, potentially to positively impact future planning for TSV. As well, using an EICS to investigate different realities was insightful because it is especially useful in encouraging me to stringently consider my own biases, which originated from my training in empirical research. Avoiding the seeking of numbers to support or refute categories required a reframing of my own thinking, although numbers and percentages of common responses are reported. As an approach, CS research represents an important means of utilizing information because the exploratory nature of data collection results in the identification and thorough description of the impact of a
particular phenomenon (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011). The instrumental portion of EICS allows a framework to extend beyond current understanding about that phenomenon (Stake, 1995), which can then result in further research. In this regard, qualitative studies lead the way for further quantitative research, thus illustrating that the two need not be adversarial. While it was frustrating at times, it was worth the reflexive effort to understand the participants’ lived experience, fears, and confidences with TSV. It also allowed me to give a voice in a confidential manner to those who may not feel comfortable speaking openly about their opinions.

2.2 Methods

2.2.1 Participants

Upon receiving Research Ethics Board (REB) approval (Appendix A, p. 124), participant recruitment occurred via personal invitation from the researcher over the telephone (Appendix B, p. 125). Since it was held that the study would benefit from including the perspectives of administrators from a variety of high schools, as well as school boards and emergency personnel, sampling was not random. Because school boards members are typically responsible for TSV plans, and principals oversee these operations from the school board within their schools, I approached specific leaders in emergency services, school board administration in charge of safety protocols, and school administrators from all high schools and school boards within the city limits of a Western Canadian city. Due to the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting occurring in Newtown, CT only a few months prior, only high schools without elementary-aged students were invited to participate. If principals declined to participate or did not
return the call after two messages, vice principals were invited. However, no vice principals volunteered to participate.

A total of seventeen participants initially agreed to be interviewed, although one cancelled his appointment and was unable to rebook, while one other was unable to participate for bureaucratic reasons; his superior officers would not approve his participation. Therefore, a total of fifteen people (N=15) participated, completed the interview process, and released their transcripts for use in this study. Of those participants, three were female, and twelve were male. Three participants were school board members, eight were current high school principals, and one was a former high school principal. Although the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) declined their member’s participation, both the city police and ambulance service allowed interviews with specific representatives from their departments (hereinafter known as emergency responders), with the understanding that their data would be used as background information. Emergency responders did not disclose any specific tactics, used or planned, during their interviews, for confidentiality and safety purposes.

The current principals included a diverse range of experience levels, ranging from less than two years (n=3), between two and five years (n=4) and over 5 years (n=1) respectively at their current schools. Overall, the past and present principals identified as having over ten years of experience as an administrator (n=3), five to ten years (n=4) or less than five years (n=2). The emergency responders group all identified as over ten years (n=3) in their respective department(s).

Of the eight current high schools, seven of them acknowledged having special programming at their school, while one identified as a “regular high school.” For the
purposes of maintaining confidentiality in a small sample size, special programming potentially refers to anything from programs for at-risk youth, transitional schools, vocational programming, and diverse age group accommodation, to French immersion and/or advanced-level academics. The schools with specialized programs were among the first to volunteer to participate. Student enrolment ranges, based on numbers provided by the principals themselves, included less than 200 students \((n=2)\), 201 – 500 students \((n=2)\), 501 – 1000 students \((n=3)\), and over 1001 students \((n=1)\). Socio-economically, two of the eight schools identified poverty as the dominant SES, one as lower SES, one as middle-income, and one as upper-middle income while three schools identified their student body as “too varied” to pinpoint a specific SES. None of the larger, middle-class to affluent schools (the ones farthest away from the police station) agreed to participate, which is unfortunate because they are statistically more likely to experience a TSV event than an inner-city school (Vossekuil et al., 2002).

Members from both school board offices confirmed that their schools had encountered a threat, weapons, or violent incident within one of their schools. Violent incident in this context refers to fighting, such as between students or with students from rival schools. However, the principals’ experiences with TSV varied; most had encountered the presence of weapons or a weapons confiscation within their own school. Weapons in the context of this study usually meant a knife, blade, or firearm. Less than half of the principals mentioned encounters with bomb threats at their past or present school. One school had experienced a secure the building on a weapons incident occurring outside the building, one school encountered a suspicious package where law enforcement was called (the package was ultimately benign), and one school
handled an intruder wandering around inside the school. Another school experienced an actual armed event, and the emergency responders confirmed their experience in responding to the same threat. Three of the eight current principals identified their school populations as including gang members, but all three of them reported no gang-related issues with violence.

In considering all fifteen participants, three of them (all emergency responders) received some type of education regarding TSV or emergency planning in their post-secondary training, while thirteen participants indicated receiving training through attending conferences or workshops, such as those offered through the Canadian Safe Schools Network (CSSN, 2013). Much of that training revolved around crisis planning, threat assessment, and emergency preparedness. In speaking strictly of school board personnel and school administrators (n=12), nearly half mentioned that they received additional guidance through administrator meetings or professional development days, and several mentioned specific training with their school resource officer (SRO), the city police service, or the RCMP. Eleven percent indicated that one of the most helpful resources was speaking to other administrators and their SRO. Additionally, two of twelve participants specifically mentioned threat assessment work with Kevin Cameron, one of the members of the Taber Crisis Response team, although four mentioned Threat Assessment training overall.

2.22 Materials

Each participant completed a brief oral questionnaire (Appendix C, p. 127) consisting of closed questions for demographic information, including position, confirmation of safety responsibilities, number of years at current position, and
education regarding safety. School administrators were also specifically queried regarding school predominant SES, current enrolment numbers, whether they had ever had a serious threat or violent incident involving weapons at the school, and if they collect statistics on violent incidents in their school.

Following the demographic collection phase, a semi-structured interview format used open- and closed-ended questions and employing active listening skills (Ivey, Gluckstern Packard, & Ivey, 2006) asked four main questions:

1) What preventative measures do you have in place to avoid armed crises in your school(s)?

2) Describe your school’s/department’s crisis plan in the case of a potential school shooter. What steps will transpire in your school/department/facility?

3) What alternate strategies are in place for variations in the crisis plan during the event?

4) How confident are you in your school/department/facility’s plans?

The nature of the responses often prompted other questions relating to their answers. Questions regarding categories derived from the literature review, such as bullying or school climate, were asked or checked off a checklist as they were answered during conversation (See Appendix D, p. 128). For example, if a participant mentioned their stance on the consequences of bringing a weapon to school, it would have been counterproductive to ask again. As well, additional questions were added or removed as the research process unfolded, based on previous participants’ responses or questions.

Participant interviews were digitally audio-recorded on an Apple iPod, as well documented manually through jot notes by me (the lone female researcher) to ensure the
accuracy of transcription. Questions were intended to meticulously avoid frightening participants over the variations that may occur within the types of TSV, in case they are unaware. For that reason, no specific rampage or hostage/barricaded examples were given by the researcher if the participant queried for further information. Instead, the question was reiterated, and the specific instance of whether alternate strategies exist if the principal is away was given. However, during interviews with school board members, or if interviewees indicated specific lack of fear in discussing TSV, they were then queried whether alternate plans were in place for hostage/barricaded situations, as well as what would be occurring within the school during the lockdown while they awaited the arrival of the police. The latter question was eliminated when it was realized that it resulted in a reiteration of the lockdown plan.

2.23 Procedure

Participant interviews occurred individually at a location of the participants’ choice, either at their office or in a meeting room at their place of employment. Appropriate interview times were selected to accommodate the participants’ schedules. Interview duration ranged from 13 minutes/18 seconds, to 39 minutes/6 seconds, with the average lasting 28 minutes.

Each semi-structured interview procedure began with the reading of the consent form (Appendix E, p. 129). Immediately prior to consent, the researcher queried interviewees concerning potential reservations regarding the study. Participants were assured that their responses would not be directly identifiable to them, and that any direct quotes would only be identified through a participant number. TSV was also defined for them as “any violent event with a weapon – any type of weapon – where the
school is deliberately chosen as the site of that violence.” Upon obtaining consent, the interview and taping began. The conversation evolved naturally, adding questions or encouragers, or relocating questions to accommodate the flow of dialogue throughout the interview, thus providing a greater breadth of information and consideration of strategies than the four main questions. Interview adaptations resulting from conversational evolution also illustrated the importance of researcher flexibility (Corbin & Holt, 2011). For example, asking school administrators to tell me about the school was a good rapport-building technique discovered in the third interview, but also resulted in the participant answering demographic questions along the way. Thus, the recorder was activated prior to asking that question. All interviews ended with a question regarding client perception and confidence in their emergency preparedness for crisis planning in the event of TSV. Finally, I invited participants to share their thoughts on any of the areas discussed or anything they thought I may have missed. Once the participant asserted that s/he had said everything they wanted to say, they were thanked, and the recorder was stopped.

Each participant was provided with the debriefing form (Appendix F, p. 130), thus explaining the purpose of the study, and welcoming further questions. The Buerger and Buerger (2010) article was referenced at the bottom of the debriefing form, to allow participants the opportunity to read more about the literature influencing the present study. Participants were additionally advised that they would have the opportunity to review their transcripts for translational accuracy and to remove any objectionable material; this is referred to as a member check for credibility (Brantlinger et al., 2005). They were given a choice whether to receive the interview transcript via hard copy or
email. All fifteen participants selected to receive it via email. Per REB guidelines, each of them was given a password that would open their electronic file. The intended processing time for transcript review was 48 hours of the interview for each participant. The receipt of their transcript also served to advise them of their participant number. Once participants reviewed their transcripts, they signed the transcript release form (Appendix G, p. 131) left with them after their interview, scanned it, and emailed it directly to the researcher, or called me to attend their school and pick it up from the front desk. Once transcript release forms were received, I entered coded participant information into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, as discussed at length in the next section.

2.24 Data Analysis and Reporting

Data analysis involved a constantly rotating cycle or matrix of listening to the interviews, database creation, line by line coding, comparison of codes, category development, and writing memos to formulate ideas for categorization, while reading and reviewing literature on emerging categories (Coyne & Cowley, 2006). During this process, the analysis continued through comparing memos, drawing diagrams of concepts, and constantly reviewing literature and transcripts to eliminate redundant categories (Coyne & Cowley, 2006), also known as the ‘constant comparative method’ (O’Leary, 2010, p. 270), and further involved being attentive of mutual themes that may transcend ordinary cases (Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2003).

The proposed foundational category involved understanding during strategies for TSV contingency planning, since very few studies to date investigate what happens inside an event, or the personal experiences of lockdown drills and preparedness.
Subsidiary concepts based on the literature review included reviewing participants’ alternatives or plan “B” strategies, and preventative measures. As well, it was hypothesized that confidence in their schools’ plans would provide important insights regarding participants’ perception of school safety. Prompts for the potential subcategories of the Informal Interview Supplementary Subcategories of Responses for the Demographic and Semi-structured Interviews (Appendix D, p. 128) were embedded in the questions or emerged naturally. For example, if a participant referred to the fact that they practiced lockdown drills “frequently,” I asked them to clarify how often. New categories and questions emerged and were eliminated as a result of the ongoing reciprocal process of data collection and analysis (Coyne & Cowley, 2006).

Although interviews were audio recorded for the purpose of accurate transcription, I also took notes during the interview, manually recorded my thoughts after the interview, as well as writing down my observations from the overall feel of the school or person I was talking to. For example, I waited for principals to finish school business at a few schools prior to our interview, thus providing me with the opportunity to note what the overall feeling of the office staff was like, or whether I was questioned by anyone on my way in. Similar observations were recorded from the school board offices. I also included behavioural observations, such as facial expressions, pauses, or gestures.

Upon completing each interview, data was transcribed into a password-protected Microsoft Word file, and emailed to the participant. Once the participant emailed the Transcript Release form back to me, and any objectionable material was removed or changed, the transcript was printed, and their data was coded (see List of Data Codes, p.
viii). Coding involved reading through the transcript line by line several times, underlining important key words from the questions (or other codes based on previous interviews as the process evolved), and writing the code abbreviation in the margin of the printed transcript. For example, if someone stated that they gather students in from the hallway, this statement was underlined, and the code GAT was written in the margin. The purpose of this was for ease of data entry. As new codes emerged, such as the GAT code which arose in the 11th interview, previously approved transcripts were reread and recoded to accommodate the additional code. If the older transcript had already been entered into the database, I used a different coloured ink (e.g. red) to delineate the newer codes that required entry. I also consulted literature and reviewed policies throughout this process. Hard copies of transcripts were kept in chronological order for ease of remembering which had been reviewed repeatedly.

All data was derived from interviews, field notes, and research reflection notes. Data in the form of words or phrases were entered by codes into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Upon completion of all data entry, codes were then counted manually, and compiled into another spreadsheet for reporting – demographic information in one, categorical information in another. Categorical information included things like Preventative Measures, which was further spliced into the subcategories of Preventative Hard Measures, Soft Measures, and Measures Wanted. Since the filter option for counting malfunctioned in my version of Excel, the manually counted figures were triple and quadruple checked for accuracy. Each category in the Excel spreadsheet was read and re-read several times for the purpose of gathering like and unlike material for reporting purposes.
Organizing categories within the spreadsheet database became too cumbersome due to the sheer volume of material. To assist me in obtaining a visual representation of categories and how they should be organized, I wrote the topics onto Post-It notes and stuck them to the dining room wall (see Appendix H, p. 132). This process assisted me in figuring out how to organize the material, as well as where ideas overlapped. For example, several categories that covered similar information mentioning specific crime types were collapsed into one subcategory. It also allowed me to move ideas around easily while maintaining the larger visual representation. I employed a similar strategy for writing the report (see Appendix I, p. 133) by adhering pages of notes by categories to the kitchen table using masking tape. As other notions occurred to me, or I perceived that concepts required relocation, I simply added a sticky note onto the appropriate page. When it became time to write that section, I removed the tape and the entire organized structure allowed me to revisit my thoughts section by section.

Reported findings were the product of qualitative methods only, such as compiling participant responses with subjective personal observations, such as noting facial expressions. Only the most basic quantitative quantifications were included, to elucidate the number of like or unlike responses (e.g. 9 of 12 or 75%), to maintain the personal experience of participants.
CHAPTER III – RESULTS

CS research allows many different methods for organizing and categorizing findings. Since the goal of the study is to review crisis planning for school TSV events, data was analyzed as it was collected, seeking commonality and difference within the participants’ responses. Not only did this elucidate differences in participants’ emergency protocols, but it also uncovered mutually beneficial ideas. Findings were compared not only between and within participants’ responses, but also with current research recommendations based on the literature review. What became most important to my analysis of the interviews was how participants interpreted the questions and thought about the subject matter.

3.1 Findings Based on Questions

Reporting participants’ individual responses while maintaining their confidentiality involved assigning each of them a participant number, as opposed to using an alias, their initials, or the date of the interviews. Because one school board was adamant that none of their data be identifiable to them, assigning participant numbers seemed most logical. For coding purposes, participants were also divided into three categories. Category one refers to emergency responders, category two is school board members, and category three represents school administrators. Thus, participant number abbreviations and categories are represented in cases of direct quotes. For example:

We practice these things so that we’re prepared in a crisis. And, think about how many times… you’ve had fire drills at your schools. And now think about how many fires you’ve had at your school, you know? Zero. But we still practice this so that in the event… [we are prepared]. (P8C3)
The moniker P8C3 credits participant number eight with the quote, and indicates that s/he is a principal; category three. All participant information will be identified in this manner.

Although a total of fifteen participants were interviewed (N=15), the emergency responders’ interview information (n=3) will be used as background information only. The other twelve participants were comprised of current high school principals (n=8), a former high school principal (n=1), or school board administrators (n=3). The collective combination of principals and school board members will hereafter be referred to in results reporting as school-based participants (SBPs).

3.11 Preventative Strategies

Preventative efforts was a salient part of the interviews with the high school administrators and school board members (SBPs, n=12). Most of the participants were eager to discuss their preventative efforts, particularly those with experience in threat assessment, as well as principals of schools with unconventional programming wherein students receive intensive supports. To the participants, prevention is equally important, if not more important to discuss than security plans, because good preventative efforts will inhibit violent intentions before they become an issue, a position supported by current research. As the interviews progressed, three subcategories of prevention emerged, because participants seemed to break them into Preventative Hard Measures (PHM) and what many of them called Preventative Soft Measures (PSM), or “the softer side of programming” (e.g. P8C3). The third subcategory, Preventative Measures Wanted (PMW), provides measures of interest mentioned by some of the personnel in the study.
3.11.1 Preventative Hard Measures (PHM). PHMs include items such as modifications to the physical environment of the school, as well as policies and practices that thwart violence directly. For example, 25% (3 of 12) of SBPs discussed locking perimeter doors as a preventative strategy. Although additional doors are locked, front doors or areas of access for students (such as those closest to parking lots) remain open for the most part. Forty-two percent indicated additional security measures were used at their schools, such as locking classrooms when they are not in use, video cameras, crash doors, keyless entry systems, and the presence and support of the SRO. A few discussed the value and responsibility of the SRO, although SRO’s are not at any of the high schools on a full-time basis. Two of twelve listed weapons confiscation as a PHM (although 5 of 8 current principals discussed weapons confiscations in other contexts), and one indicated that s/he had the right to search students, backpacks, or lockers, while another indicated s/he would never resort to that. Additionally, 3 of 12 shared other personal measures as preventative strategies. Personal measures included teacher presence as supervisors during class changes, the use of agendas as hall passes, and requesting students on spare to exit the building or work in specific locations, as opposed to remaining in common areas just inside the door.

Fifty percent of SBPs asserted that if an armed assailant’s objective was entering a school to inflict damage that it would not be difficult for them to do so, because the school remains a public building (25%). “Schools, I think, were and still are pretty free-flowing, easy spaced to walk into and access. Unless you are identified as an outsider, no one really pays attention…” (P8C3). While present to conduct interviews within the school setting, I was frequently asked to wait when principals were handling school
business – a completely understandable delay. During these occasions, I noticed several schools had a constant stream of visitors to and from the office, students and outsiders, such as delivery people or ancillary staff. Several of the schools’ offices were located where the front doors of the school were close to but not in plain view from the office. In observing these occurrences, it became apparent why schools must be aware at all times, but also why this is extremely difficult. Improved environmental measures may improve security, but as discussed with a few participants, it would not completely eradicate fear or eliminate the possibility of an armed intruder:

If somebody has the intent of coming into a building to do harm… there’s nothing you can do… they will find a way to do that. That was evident by Newtown [CT, Sandy Hook Elementary]. They had security doors, they had locked entrances; they had everything. The guy wanted to do damage and nothing stopped him. (P4C2)

Another SBP felt similarly, stating, “I go back to… either of those – Columbine or the Newtown thing – I just, I don’t know how any of that could have been prevented.” (P3C3)

Interestingly, when queried about their preventative strategies, half of the SBPs and all of the emergency responders identified having a plan and practicing drills as preventative. Although the importance of practicing drills and having a plan cannot be overstated, three of SBPs mentioned that they are preventative only in a reactionary capacity. Discussions included the notion that, “They could come in a side door and be well into the school before anyone would know” (P5C3). Thus, according to participants, having and practicing a plan is advantageous, but perhaps insufficient.

Several participants also mentioned Zero Tolerance policies. This arose naturally out of conversations regarding weapons in school, as many of the perpetrators
in the Vossekui and colleagues’ (2002) report had a fascination with weapons. Of the
twelve SBPs, eleven either did not mention or spoke out against Zero Tolerance
policies, while only one principal indicated that a weapon in school “almost always”
resulted in an expulsion. Most often, it was mentioned in the context of weapons, such
as if a student brought a weapon to school or made a threat, there would be “zero
tolerance” for that type of behaviour. Only one principal specifically mentioned Zero
Tolerance in this regard, and when queried for clarification, s/he indicated that it meant
weapons were not allowed in school. However, not only would the student at that
particular school not be expelled, quite the contrary. The student would, in fact, receive
the supports s/he needed to understand the consequences of bringing a weapon to
school:

Parents are called – parents / guardians – and then, after being counselled, of
course, the police will pick up the weapon and counsel the kids as well, and
talk about the cons of carrying a [weapon] and how it can easily escalate a
situation… But, we’d never kick a kid out of school or anything like that. It’s
just working with them; helping them [to] learn why it’s important not to
bring weapons. (P7C3)

The consequences of bringing a weapon to school varied among participants. Of
the twelve SBPs, eight indicated that a student bringing a weapon to school would result
in a suspension, most often for three-days, although the consequences ranged from
being sent home for the day to a possible ten-day suspension, depending on the
student’s intent. Fifty percent mentioned that expulsion was a possibility, although
some were quick to add that this was not commonplace to do so, aside from the one
participant who indicated that a weapon was almost always grounds for expulsion. The
police or SRO being contacted immediately occurred in nearly half of participant
responses, and contacting parents was mentioned by four participants. Only two SBPs
mentioned that the weapon would be confiscated in this context. Instances of having a weapon in school would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by three of the SBPs interviewed, most often the main difference or deciding factor being the student’s intent. As several SBPs indicated, the notion of carrying a weapon to school because it is part of your everyday situation if you live in a violent neighbourhood versus bringing a weapon to school with the intent to threaten or harm is vastly different. Still, many felt that a student with a weapon in school likely required assistance that the school or school board was equipped to provide:

> Ultimately, the student could be expelled. We haven’t gone there. Our approach has been about reclaiming [emphasis added] students. Students that make threats are obviously having challenges that have to do with their own mental health status, so that’s our primary concern… The consequences vary from student to student. (P10C2)

Threat Assessment, an important recommendation of the Vossekuil et al. (2002), Cameron (2002), and O’Toole’s (2001) studies, was a prevalent subject in several interviews. Four participants indicated they had received threat assessment training, most often level two, and two SBPs specifically discussed attending conferences with Kevin Cameron of the Taber Crisis Response Team (Cameron, 2002). Overall, the subject of threat assessment arose within the interviews with half of the SBPs, each identifying the members of the school community comprising their Threat Assessment Team (TAT). Twenty-five percent of them specifically discussed high, medium, or low-level threats. Most commonly, participants focused on the needs of the student. Threat assessments, as prescribed, are handled on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether weapons are involved, intent, the nature of the threat, and the manner in which
the threat arose, such as whether it was something a teacher noticed in a student’s writing or behaviour, or a specific complaint of a threat.

3.11.2 Preventative Soft Measures (PSM). Three-eighths of the current principals in this study identified their school as including a gang population, yet they asserted zero issues with violence at their schools which they attributed to proper school climate and supports (2 of 8) or behavioural expectations (1 of 8). Two of the twelve SBPs described their schools as gang-free, colour-free zones, as recommended by Clements and Sova (2000).

Sixty-seven percent of the SBPs talked about bullying prevention and anti-bullying strategies within their schools, although only one specified they used RespectEd (Canadian Red Cross, 2013). Social skills training including respecting others or respect for diversity, was identified in half of what many participants referred to as “soft” programming. Other related social skills mentioned included relations-building and decision-making. As well, three of the schools included a faith-based, religious component, which some felt modeled positive behaviours for students. One participant in particular described what he referred to as “modeling Christ-like behaviour” for the students. In this context, the administrative staff model traits like patience and avoidance of raising their voices, to create a place where students feel comfortable and not intimidated. The previous statement was not made in a way to denote fanaticism or to be a derogatory statement against religious institutions, but rather to provide a representation of the potentially preventative virtues in those particular schools.
Almost all of the SBPs discussed school climate - or used the word “culture” synonymously - (10 of 12) and behavioural expectations for students (10 of 12). Behavioural expectations referred to things like moral codes that encourage respect, common sense, having a good attitude, maturity, and honour. School climate was based more on supporting the needs of the student, and even their families in some cases, to create an environment that is safe, compassionate, and encouraging, but most of all places the students first, ranging in how they accomplish this:

[W]e have [more than one] counsellors here, and kids have that opportunity. If they are feeling really aggressive, they can go and talk to a counsellor or they can come and talk to me [the Principal]. It’s very open-door here. (P7C3)

Several of the participants discussed trust and relations-building to ensure not only the safety of the students, but to ensure they receive the supports they need to succeed.

It’s a cultural thing… there’s a trust built within our staff and our students. . . Students are treated like adults. In an adult situation, a weapon is not appropriate. We have conversations like that. . . I think the biggest preventative measure that you can take is to make your school a safe, welcoming, and supportive place where you don’t hide your head in the sand… I guess if there’s anything that I get discouraged by, it’s the idea that [anyone] would find ways to not have kids belong. (P6C3)

Beyond climate or culture, some emphasized interpersonal relationships to create the right environment:

We believe that’s a real key to building a safe and orderly environment as well. You build those relations and get to understand people and know people. It opens up the channels of communication, so you can deal with and be proactive in a given number of situations to create the opportunity to prevent; and secondly, it also builds trust. (P12C3)

Another SBP felt similarly about relationships as a proactive preventative measure: “I think that preventative stuff is inherent just in the relationships we
develop, as opposed to try to find ways to deal with it when the situation arises – let’s try to deal with it beforehand” (P13C2).

The behavioural expectations varied from school to school, and although some SBPs only mentioned the expectations, others clarified that skills are built and taught:

We promote, you know, responsible student behaviour from grade nine and up, and it’s talked about often. It’s not something we just expect; we teach it. . . I don’t think we can expect students to make good decisions if we don’t teach them how to make good decisions. (P9C3)

One of the SBPs also talked about having Advisory groups for fifteen minutes per day, which helps the students build relations with a staff member in whom they trust. This assists staff in recognizing when a student might be experiencing difficulties in his or her life, anxiety, suicide ideation, or any other type of inner crisis. This gets him or her the assistance s/he needs, before anything escalates. Thus, not only do preventative “soft” measures (PSMs) create safe and positive climates for schools, they also support students’ needs.

3.11.3 Preventative Measures Wanted (PMW). Although not specifically asked, five of twelve SBPs suggested preventative measures they felt would benefit the school. Most commonly, participants wanted more of the doors locked (3 of 12) followed by video cameras with monitoring (2 of 12), and increased funding to support safety measures, including PHMs and PSMs (2 of 12). Some of the other suggested items were walkie-talkies to improve intra-facility communication (1 of 12), the possibility of bullet-proof glass (1 of 12), and consideration of less open spaces (1 of 12). In speaking of the latter, one SBP discussed how the design of his/her school was influenced not by safety, but by the best learning environment for the students. S/he asserted that both are important, but planning for supportive education was of greater
relevance than for an attack that is highly unlikely. Per the literature review, both are important, but creating the caring school climate and accommodating educational opportunities was paramount in supporting students, thus preventing school crises.

One of the more controversial findings from PHM and PMW was the presence of, or desire to acquire and use video cameras. Two principals wanted video cameras for their schools. Others, however, held a dim view of the cameras. The three principals who discussed having them within their schools consider cameras to be purely reactionary. They pointed out that the cameras serve no practical purpose as they are not continuously monitored, identified by one principal as being due to cost and personal privacy reasons. Accordingly, video cameras alone may not provide a sufficient measure of safety, in lieu of an appropriate school culture: “…Just my experience of working in [several] different schools, cameras don’t deter shit. Right? It’s the way you treat people that deters stuff” (P6C3). In fact, three SBPs agreed that video cameras are only useful to provide give information “after the fact.”

Cameras and other preventative measures may not prevent attackers from entering the building, as evidenced by Sandy Hook and Columbine. Thus, the best and most effective preventative measures notwithstanding, it is still important to be prepared for a potential attack.

3.2 Describing the Plan

Descriptions of crisis plans for TSV events varied little between SBPs. All of them described a lockdown drill (known in some schools as a ‘Code White’), and some also included evacuation and a ‘secure the building.’ Secure the building is a term I had not read in the literature, but learned from the participants. It refers to an external threat
to the community wherein the external doors are locked to keep an intruder from entering the premises. School activity inside the building continues as normal, but the building is secured as precautionary measure. Secure the building can either result from the police advising the school of a potential threat in the area, or if someone notices something outside the building, it would then be secured and the police called. Both situations were described and experienced by participants (emergency responders and SBPs) in this study.

With regard to the specific question of their strategy for an armed intruder inside the building, all SBPs described lockdown or Code White, similar to that of Buerger & Buerger (2010). For the most part, they will identify the situation, call and announce or indicate a lockdown or Code White to the school population, and call 911, but not necessarily in the same order. The lockdown would be announced either by intercom announcement, bells, or both. Students must remain in their classroom or enter the nearest classroom, doors will be locked and/or barricaded, the lights turned out, and all personnel are instructed to stay away from the doors and windows. Everyone is expected to stay quiet and calm, remain hidden, and wait in the room until released by police or authorized school personnel. All SBPs were united on those steps and expectations in their procedures.

Many variations on small details within the plans for their lockdown drills also emerged from individual interviews, sometimes even among SBPs in the same school board. For example, two of twelve SBPs asserted that maintenance staff would seal the building, whereas most did not mention it. One SBP recommended leaving an entrance open for the police, and ensuring which door was communicated to them. Contacting
the school board during an event was mentioned by five, although there was some division over timing. One SBP asserted the office would contact the school board immediately after 911, while another asserted the police would contact them, and the other three SBPs did not specify when, just that contacting the school board was part of the plan.

Fifty percent of the SBPs discussed gathering students in from the hallways during a lockdown, and one indicated their staff must only collect students within a ten to twenty foot radius of their door, but not to loiter in doing so. Schools reporting variations in intercom systems include one partial and one unreliable system, while two schools reported having no intercom system. Additional contingencies were built into their plans, such as shouting “Code White” or using cell phones to advise those classrooms farthest from the event of the lockdown.

Participants were divided on the use of cell phones during an event. Although the recommendation is for cell phones to be off (Buerger & Buerger, 2010), only two SBPs indicated that the phones are off or on silent mode during a lockdown. Another two SBPs found this unrealistic, stating while they advise their students to stay off the phone during a lockdown, it is impossible to enforce. Conversely, another interviewee stated that they advise as many students as possible to call 911, so that the emergency responders have moment-by-moment information from a variety of sources. An additional two SBPs stated they have advised students to stay off their phones to ensure the lines of communication remain open, partially to avoid hindering the ability to communicate of emergency personnel inside the building:

Communication within the context would be kept to a minimum to maintain security and privacy, and lack of knowledge of individuals. We know that
cellphones, we always reiterate to our students that cellphones are a problem, and that you need to keep off the cellphones during a time of crisis so that the police services and variety of supports will be able to function properly. 

(P12C3)

If cellphone signals become jammed, the emergency responders could experience difficulties with their communications equipment. Five of the twelve SBPs did not mention cellphone use at all during their course of the interviews.

As well, several other variations or suggestions were revealed during the interviews. For example, based on his/her education from conferences, one SBP recommended that students and staff alike remove noisy footwear, such as high heels or dress shoes, to avoid noise making that might attract the perpetrator’s attention.

Alternatively, one participant suggested that students should use their cell phones during an event, to send out only a specifically-worded text message to their parents, to avoid panic and activate parents in contacting other parents.

When to contact parents was another area of diverse response that only arose with three SBPs. One specified that parents should be contacted as soon as possible, while another stated it would occur after the debriefing once the students are released. Another mentioned a phoning tree for parents, but this information was not specific concerning who would call, or when. It is noteworthy that a lack of mention does not indicate a lack of policy or practice. It is possible that discussions about cell phones, when parents are contacted, gathering students in, who seals the building, or other intricate details of the plan were simply not mentioned or recalled in the moment.

The origin of the schools’ plans, while not specifically queried, arose from participant responses. More than half indicated that their plans originated from the school board, while three mentioned their plans were conference-based, and one stated
the police assisted in creating their plans. One SBP specified that their plans considered what other school boards were doing, and another listed “trial by fire” or experience with an armed crisis as contributory to his/her school’s plans. Most of the SBPs (10 of 12) discussed the plans being part of a manual that is updated at least annually with the superintendent to ensure protocols and policies are up-to-date for the current school year. This follows Kingshott’s (2012) recommendation that there must be a consistently-updated emergency manual treated as a “living document” (p. 55). Several SBPs also indicated that their plans were tailored to their specific schools, in line with research recommendations against one-size-fits-all programs (Kingshott, 2012). Some of the considerations mentioned involved the inclusion of the SRO in developing the plan (1 of 12), and that different building sizes and types require different strategies (2 of 12).

Almost all of the SBPs discussed the frequency of practise for their plans (9 of 12). Three SBPs stated they practice lockdown or Code White four times per year, six run it twice per year, and one of the latter stated his/her school rehearses the drill verbally once and physically once throughout the year. Several participants mentioned that SROs or several police officers attended the drills, and assisted with highlighting the strengths and areas for improvement for their response. They considered this participation highly valuable:

Our [SRO] is very upfront about what takes place in relationship to a Lockdown or the presence of a situation… Our [SRO] is very keen on, “This is what’s going to happen, and this is what we’ll do when we come in. And we’re here on a very serious nature.” And, it really does bring to light the relevance and reality of what it is that we do. *(P12C3)*
The participants who really emphasized the value of the SRO involvement with the schools and the drills also mentioned that the kids now take the drills seriously, despite the fact that they are a fairly recent addition to the schools’ repertoire of safety measures.

Evacuation drills for fire or other situations requiring exit from the building received more rehearsal time throughout the year, with nearly half of the SBPs practicing four to six times per year, and one other school twice per year. Only one participant mentioned the frequency of practice for ‘secure the building’ as twice per year, while another stated that practicing for the same was not required since it only requires locking all of the outer doors and calling the police and/or school board. The rest of the SBPs did not mention, were unsure, or gave a vague response (e.g. “a total of 10 throughout the year”) regarding the regularity of practice for emergency drills.

The plans for emergency responders \( n=3 \) are different, according to the participants in this study. Emergency response personnel, particularly supervisors, are trained in Incident Command Systems (ICS), which brings together people from multiple agencies and teaches them how to respond to emergencies, and includes different levels of certification. Once a call is received regarding a lockdown situation at a school, the unit(s) and supervisors are dispatched to the scene. Police units are immediately deployed, and the closest available units respond. Unlike pre-Columbine, they no longer wait for the SWAT team, but work upon the immediate goals of getting to the school as fast as possible and stopping the shooting as quickly as possible:

[B]asically, Columbine was the difference-maker in basically North America in how we respond to these. And that’s, again, no secret. And that patrol members are expected to respond to this; it used to be that high-violent situations, it was a SWAT response, where we don’t have time for that. So
essentially, this is our response for these situations. Our patrol is expected to be attending and stopping that threat, not waiting for the SWAT team to mobilize and get out there. So that’s one of the major differences with these acts of Targeted School Violence or active threats. (P14C1)

Upon arrival, the responders and supervisors quickly assess the scene, which is likely already attended by the city Crisis Management Team (CMT), and the command post is set up in a mobile command vehicle, if this has not already been done. Once the team ascertains the potential number of people involved, the supervisors would determine the appropriate amount of resources required, which are then deployed. In the case of the police, every available unit in the city would attend. EMS would also call all available personnel, and extras if necessary. To accomplish this in smaller city centres - such as those found in prairie provinces - a Code Orange may also be called. Code Orange is a command system wherein emergency workers on a day off can be called in to work for a disaster situation. This plan, designed generally as any type of multiple victim scenario and not just school shootings, is practiced frequently by the CMT and its associated agencies, such as police, fire, EMS, city planning, and other stakeholders in emergency planning. The overarching plan is to stop the danger as quickly as possible, and get the injured the medical attention they need:

There’s lots of practice, and it’s really important to have a plan – especially in that type of high-stressed [sic] situation… It’s kind of like a golf swing; it’s muscle memory, and if you don’t practice, you’re not going to be a very good golfer. (P1C1)

3.2.1 What happens during the Lockdown? Deciding whether or not to approach the principals and school board staff (collectively, SBPs) regarding what will be happening in the school while they are locked down was a difficult decision. On one hand, I felt it was important to empathize with what they understood would happen
while a gunman was loose in their school and they were all hiding. Since Sandy Hook occurred only a few months prior, my original intuition was only to ask school board personnel. However, as I conducted interviews and as people spoke about their feelings and experiences, I began asking, “What’s happening during the lockdown? You’ve called the police, you’ve called the lockdown, and everybody is hiding. What’s happening inside the school?” In total, seven SBPs received this question, and five of them (71%) frowned and paused. The most common response, (3 of 7), involved a reiteration that they were hiding and staying quiet until the police got there. Only one participant called that period of time ‘the great unknown,’ further stating, “Your plan IS the two minutes between when the person comes in and when the police arrive” (P4C2). Two SBPs did not flinch or pause in their answers regarding their plans. Three SBPs were not asked the question because it was contraindicated in their response in just describing their plan:

…I mean, am I going out to go after the shooter-guy? No. <small laugh> I’ll be honest with you, and this is the scary thing, we’d have kids who would… When you have gang members in a school who know violence, and who have done violence, they’re not afraid of it. And once they develop that relationship, they’re very protective. (P6C3)

Unlike the above quote, most participants did not describe any process or consideration relating to what would be happening outside the door while they hid. Again, this is not to assert that they do not consider it, but if they do, they did not discuss it in their interviews. Several SBPs mentioned that the plan was considered out of their hands once they were locked down. For example, “Contacting the police is usually Plan ‘A’. Lockdown immediately after that. . . getting our student body as safe and our staff as safe as possible. And then, the rest is about police work” (P10C2).
A noteworthy strategy that emerged during the emergency responders’ interviews was the inclusion of paramedics on the SWAT team, much as larger city centres like Toronto have in place. The SWAT paramedics are trained in tactical medicine, police procedures, and special weapons training, in case they must secure a weapon before attending to a victim if an officer is down. The goal of this measure is to have a medically-trained professional on the scene during the crisis who can administer life-saving care during the event, unlike the criticisms of Columbine wherein the teacher bled to death due to the delayed response. Even though the SWAT team are not necessarily the first responders in an active-shooter situation, they would likely enter as soon as possible. Getting paramedics into the building expedites the process of getting medical care to the wounded during that critical first stage of emergency care. From a CMT standpoint, the benefits of this addition to the plan outweigh the danger: “Even though you put [the] paramedics at risk being on a SWAT team, it’s a lesser risk than not having a plan and putting [the] paramedics into an unsafe situation without the proper protection and know-how to do it” (PICI).

Although not always applicable to lockdowns where the first to arrive immediately enter, during a hostage/barricaded situation, emergency responders would set up a perimeter, try to make contact, and communicate with the perpetrator. In that situation, having paramedics on the SWAT team would be important, to medically assist the team entering and victims inside. This illustrates the relevance of having alternate strategies.
3.3 Alternate Strategies and Considerations

The crisis plans revealed for during a crisis involved lockdown, secure the building, and evacuation. SBPs described their lockdown procedures as their strategies for *during* an armed event. Because part of the study included determining whether they included alternate strategies and considerations to their plans, participants were queried accordingly.

Nearly all of the SBPs responded that either they required clarification on what alternate strategies meant, or responded with a description of the chain of command if the principal was away (11 of 12). The chain of command included the vice principal, office staff, guidance counsellors, and others, depending on school size and type. However, this finding may have been influenced by the content of my clarification of what alternate strategies meant. If SBPs required clarification on the question, it was important not to frighten them by revealing details of any crimes about which they may not have been aware. As such, if they requested clarification, the absence of the principal was the example given. Following their response, they were queried regarding any other situations they could think of, although school board personnel in charge of policies and principals who discussed such situations were openly asked about hostage/barricaded situations. In total, five SBPs were specifically asked if they have alternative plans for hostage/barricade events. Two of five of them discussed evacuation, two posited that their protocols are comprehensive enough to follow the template for any situation, and one did not answer the question. Two of them also mentioned that their teachers are “more aware” at assemblies, patrolling perimeters and
ensuring all students are accounted for, while another indicated that teachers are more aware overall.

As a group, the twelve SBPs displayed ample knowledge of other types of crimes and scenarios. In fact, 83% (n=10) discussed alternate considerations, such as alternate times of day, varying locations, and different types of crimes. The school shootings most frequently referred to by participants of their own volition was Columbine (5 of 12), followed by Sandy Hook, Jonesboro, and Taber (2 of 12 each). A local event was also discussed with one principal and all three emergency responders, and other acts of terrorism such as the Boston Marathon bombing were also mentioned. Discourse regarding other crimes arose outside the context of the interviews, but they are not reported here. Only three SBPs did not mention specific crimes.

Four SBPs also mentioned considerations for students in the bathroom, although variation was found. SBPs either stated that these students should stay where they are and hide, or escape out the nearest exit if it is safe to do so. Some of the other considerations mentioned were students in the library, at sporting events, late for school, or on field trips. As well, vulnerable times such as non-class times, lunch times, students on spares, keeping students away from common or open areas, caretakers painting in the hallways, and ensuring substitute teachers have access to the plans were mentioned. A further four SBPs discussed evacuating to a nearby school as an alternate strategy. Collectively, the variety of responses from many individuals indicated that these particular participants are well-informed concerning different scenarios, even though they did not have multiple plans aside from lockdown, evacuation, and secure the building.
Many interviewees also understood that the situation would vary from the original plan: “I know there’s always things that happen in the course of anything you’re practicing… You know, when the [provincial football team] run a play, it’s designed for a touchdown” (P8C3).

Four of the twelve SBPs specifically discussed the flexibility of their schools’ crisis plans. These interviewees indicated that their plans accommodate a variety of considerations, but that the plan would follow the same pattern, regardless of variation: “I think each of the schools has a fairly comprehensive plan that’s based on the framework. So, the alternatives are usually dealt with by the people who are responding to the emergency” (P13C2).

The emergency responders also felt their own plans were inclusive of enough variation, due to the comprehensive template of the all-hazards approach (e.g. P1C1). Plans are practiced from a variety of approaches in order to advance the efficacy for numerous variables. For example, police plans involve either entering the building immediately and stopping the shooting for an active-shooter situation, or establishing contact during a hostage/barricaded situation, which can quickly become an active-shooter scenario (P15C1).

In discussing alternate considerations, two SBPs elucidated why multiple strategies were not in place. First, plans change all the time. Manuals and plans are updated annually in conjunction with the superintendent, and having multiple strategies would complicate this process. Second, crime typology evolves, and as new events unfold, having a specific plan for each type would become very confusing. As such, SBPs prefer to keep plans simple, so that they can be followed and people do not
become confused during a time of potential panic. Third, they are aware of the infrequency of TSV events. P13C2 offered that in his many years of service to the school board, there has never been a Code White or lockdown called, although there have been secure the buildings. Finally, because situations vary greatly in what can occur regardless of precautions or plans:

…Every situation is so different from others. You want to be a little careful about ‘lock-step procedures’ and policies, because otherwise people might force the policy in the situation where it’s about the last thing you should be doing. . . . [T]hey’re meant to be guidelines (P11C3)

Therefore, a flexible approach is preferable to ensure the safety of the largest number of people.

There were a few mentions of concern throughout this discussion. A few of the SBPs mentioned that the office must call the lockdown. As discussed by Buerger and Buerger (2010), this is not possible in all situations, such as when the office staff become the first victims, if the emergency communications systems are disabled, or in larger schools where the first shots fired may not be noticed by staff. As well, all but one of the SBPs mentioned the SRO’s presence in their school, but none of them could provide specifics about the SRO’s attendance, other than the fact that they are not there full-time. Although SROs are trained to respond to TSV if they are the first person on the scene, they are not always present in the school, and this must be considered as well.

If the goal of the present research is the examination of during strategies, then investigating alternate considerations and preventative measures may not seem relevant. The objective in asking those questions involved understanding not only the participants’ preparedness, but how they perceived their plans, and the salience of different ideas among individuals. As a group, SBPs are well-prepared, and consider
their focus on prevention efforts to be proactive, avoiding crises before they begin. However, my results found many individual differences among participants with regard to policies and procedures, even from within the same school board. To be clear, this does not necessarily interpret as any evidence of ineptitude, but rather, it clearly illustrates that the professionals interviewed perceive things differently.

3.4 Confidence Level in the Plan

Throughout the process of data collection, the overarching category that consistently provided the most difficult area of analysis became Confidence. The question simply asked participants, “How confident are you in your school/department/facility’s plan?” The state of confidence itself turned out to be very subjective and variable, thus emerging as the central category in understanding differences in responses that implicitly focused more on physical measures during an armed incident based on the lived experience of two participants in this study, both of whom experienced intruders in their schools.

The question regarding confidence, although explicitly not quantified, was difficult to collate due to the variety of responses. Levels of confidence, which emerged from participant responses, were divided into four subcategories of positive or negative Confidence indicators: 100% Confident, Very Confident, Fairly Confident, and Not Confident. Another sub-concept spanning all four categories emerged, indicating Conditional Confidence. This sub-concept emerged due to the lack of operational definition for what confidence meant, and the resulting variations among responses. Within the group of 15 participants, two participants gave outright negative responses that they were either not confident in their school’s plans, or else that they were
confident someone could get in and wreak havoc very easily. On the other hand, 13
gave positive confidence indicators, ranging from 100% to Fairly Confident. All of the
emergency responders ($n=3$) were quite confident in their departments’ plans, but
indicated that more practice could always benefit responses and knowledge.

SBPs ($n=12$) experienced a larger range of variation. One participant asserted
100% confidence. Five participants claimed to be Very Confident (e.g. in the 80%
range). An additional four SBPs felt fairly assured, but also indicated particular areas
for plan improvement.

Five SBPs, across all four subcategories of confidence, indicated they were
Conditionally Confident. The condition was not for the overall efficacy of the plan, but
either naming specific improvements required to enhance their plan, or that their
confidence was in the staff doing what needed to be done in a crisis. For example, even
though the policy may dictate the office should call 911, there are exceptions: “I’d
expect anyone in the building who saw a shooter to call 911… there is no line of
command on that one” ($P2C3$). Several participants also mentioned the common sense
of their staff initiating the confidence:

…In the event that something like that happens, people don’t always react the
way they’re supposed to react. So, you need to be confident that they make the
right decisions. I have to be confident in my team. They certainly do what they
need to do in the building when we’re not in crises, so I would hope that if
there was a crises [sic], that they would step up to the plate and be able to make
the right decisions. ($P9C3$)

The Conditionally Confident participants also expressed assuredness in the
comprehensiveness of the plan, or the mindset that they have done everything that they
can do, based on their plans and/or preventative measures, either to avoid a crisis, or to
assist their students through an armed event at the school.
As a group, the SBPs are aware, practiced, and frequently confident. Yet, there was a certain resignation that if someone entered the building to commit harmful acts, that the person could not be stopped – suggesting that they felt prepared, yet resigned. Seven SBPs indicated that school shootings are simply a reality of the world we are living in now, while three stated that there is no fool-proof plan for a TSV attack. Four specifically indicated that an attack would not originate from within their student body, but would instead be an intruder, indicating confidence in their prevention strategies and school climate. Conversely, two of twelve thought it could be a student or an intruder. Three indicated that it could be either, although more likely an intruder, while only one said it would more likely be a student. In fact, more often the assailant is a student at the school (Vossekuil et al., 2002), but this perception may have emerged due to Sandy Hook being the most recent and hence most salient example of TSV at the time of this study.

3.5 Data Themes

Participant responses to the four main questions of the study regarding preventative measures, describing their plan, alternate strategies, and confidence levels were overall quite similar. As a group, SBPs focused on and openly discussed their preventative strategies. They feel fairly safe in their schools, and expressed confidence in their plans, and in their staff to accomplish the organized strategies in a crisis. SBPs also have ideas and suggestions for improving their plans, and recognize potential danger areas in their plans. Collectively, SBPs seemed comfortable in their planning, and the amount of practice that occurs in the course of the school year.
The descriptions of the SBPs lockdown plans were very similar, with a few variations throughout. Their responses during the question(s) about alternate strategies were also similar, thus indicating that their current strategies seem sufficient. Thus, the overarching themes of the present study are that SBPs are knowledgeable in their policies, and seemed content and relatively confident in their strategies.

Since observations are a part of case study research, during the process of comparing participant responses from within categories, two participants’ responses were frequently similar or identical. It became a source of curiosity to wonder why these two school administrators thought so similarly, yet slightly different from the other administrators. This provides an important credibility check according to Brantlinger et al.’s (2005) recommendations to seek disconfirming evidence. A comparative analysis revealed that both of these participants in particular had experienced intruders in their schools. At this point, I will identify them only as School A and School B, and not by participant number.

3.6 The Implications of Confidence – Disconfirming Evidence

When an intruder enters the school, even if s/he is not there to do harm or they are not there with a purpose, it is very unsettling, particularly in light of the shootings committed by intruders, such as the most recent occurrence at Sandy Hook, and the way the media sensationalizes such events. School A experienced weapons confiscations and a secure the building in the past, when a student was noticed on school grounds with a weapon. The buildings were secured, and incident ended. The student did not intend harm, but simply had the weapon in his possession, as is often the case with weapons confiscation. However, on another occasion, School A had an intruder:
He wandered into the school, and was ushered out. . . Within [less than one minute] of him entering the school, he was found by one of the supervisors, and taken to leave the school. That’s pretty good. . . However, if he had had a gun, it wouldn’t have mattered. He was already in the school. Thirty seconds in, and now you’re in the hallway. . . [I]t’s not going to protect against anything once they’re in.

School B described a few incidents with weapons or bomb threats over the years. However, they had an incident where a former student entered the school with a weapon and was threatening staff and students. The duration of their event was approximately 40 minutes, and ended without injury, to school personnel or the assailant.

Although these two incidents are vastly different, the common theme is the tangible, physical presence of someone who does not belong in the school. No one was hurt in either incident, but if either had been armed with a real gun or semi-automatic weapon, a school shooting could have been in progress. Therefore, it would seem that these two incidents may have impacted the perspective of the administrators, as will be discussed in the upcoming “commonalities of response” section.

Theoretically-speaking, at the planning stage of contingency planning for TSV, confidence levels are fairly high. As stated throughout the literature, the drills are often seen as extraneous because people think it cannot happen in their city or school. When an incident occurs, it gives the administrator’s perspective an opportunity to shift, depending on the type of incident. Schools that have encountered threats, confiscated weapons from students, or that have secured the building to keep danger out have experienced a preventable issue in the sense that they did or could have employed preventative measures to avoid the dangers. For example, in a secure the building, the doors are locked with everyone safely inside, no one is under direct threat of a weapon,
and once the situation is resolves, the doors are simply unlocked. At that point, those schools can revisit their preventative planning, as it worked to avoid the crisis. This is different from the corporeal presence of an intruder (student or otherwise) – a tangible opportunity for someone in the building to commit harmful acts. Tangibility or real life experience becomes the deciding factor in whether apprehension of the school’s planning occurs or not. In other words, the physical presence of an intruder, but not the presence of a weapon, potentially made Schools A and B regard their planning differently than the other schools in this study.

Interviewing the police officers in the study supports the notion of tangibility as a changing force in one’s perception. The police officers indicated that planning for school shootings occurred but was not prioritized until the armed event occurred in their city. Again, the actual occurrence of an incident wherein a person was physically in the building made the difference in how planning was perceived and now occurs.

### 3.7 Commonalities of Response Supporting the Tangibility Implication

The correlation in responses for School A and School B’s perception lends support to the tangibility implication. Demographically, both principals had the same amount of experience as the administrator of their schools, and both schools shared similar philosophies regarding the various subcategories under the main overarching category of Strategic Confidence.

#### 3.7.1 Preventative Soft Measures (PSM)

Both participants considered Behavioural Expectations as a strategy, as opposed to discussing school climate or specific programming. This does not imply that social skills programming, bullying prevention, or school climate are not important at these schools; just that neither
participant discussed it within the context of preventative measures. Likewise, neither school listed practicing drills or having plans as a preventative strategy.

3.7.2 Preventative Measures Wanted (PMW). Although School B did not indicate any PMWs, nearly all of the Preventative Hard Measures (PHM) desired by School A were already installed or implemented at School B.

3.7.3 Describing the Plan. School A and School B recounted very similar strategies with only minor variations in the plan. When they talked about safety and crisis planning, they focused more on the PHMs and getting people out of harm’s way, whereas the other participants who had not experience intruders focused more on prevention and supports to avoid crises. Again, it is not that Schools A and B have less support or that they care less, but rather that they asserted an atmosphere of the behavioural expectations in their schools, which are in place for the physical safety of students and staff alike.

3.7.4 During the Crisis. Both participants recounted detailed descriptions of the incidents that occurred at their schools. The descriptions reported in this paper are deliberately indistinct, attempting to maintain the confidentiality of these participants. School board members also described incidents, but more vaguely, specifically avoiding details. Tangible incidents are very personal when they occur within one’s own school. It is also noteworthy that neither participant flinched nor frowned when discussing their strategies for during an armed event.

3.7.5 Alternate Plans and Considerations. Schools A and B both discussed hostage/barricaded events, particularly in the sense of teachers now being more aware at assemblies. School A in particular discussed how they ensure all students are in the
auditorium and not skipping, and how teachers watch the entrances and exits cautiously. As well, both participants throughout the interview emphasized how every situation is different.

3.7.6 Apprehension Indicators. The tangibility implication is partially predicated on apprehension indicators – words participants used in their interviews to indicate apprehension concerning their plans. The participants from Schools A and B used more apprehension indicators within the context of their interviews than the others. In particular, both participants discussed worry several times. Other semantic examples include words like scary, body count, havoc, evil, psychotic, instigator, traumatic, guns, shot, prime target, and “only a matter of time.” Alternatively, several other SBPs discussed panic in a variety of contexts including parents, staff, or keeping kids calm, whereas these two participants did not, perhaps further indicating their focus on physically keeping students safe at the forefront.

3.7.7 Confidence Level. Reviewing the verbatim transcripts, Confidence Level seems an area of disagreement, but it really is not. One participant asserted more Conditional Confidence in the plan than the other; however, both indicated that if someone wanted to inflict mayhem that they would find a way without much challenge. They also agreed that their Confidence Level was lessened based on the unpredictable nature of the perpetrator as a human. Both further asserted relative confidence that their staff members would conduct themselves according to the plan.

3.8 Limitations of Considering Tangibility

Although the participants from Schools A and B were alike, their responses shared differences as well. Some examples on disagreement include cell phone use
during a crisis, consequences for a student bringing a weapon to school, and only one of them discussed threat assessment. There were two other participants whose answers matched these participants’ responses on several of the subcategories. However, School A and B’s answers had more in common, relative to the rest of the SBPs’ responses, who provided a baseline measure. Both respondents also had previous experience with confiscating weapons from students on school premises, even though the students did not intend harm. It is possible this factor may have influenced their perspective on tangibility, due to the presence of a person with a weapon in the school, although such events reasonably return to supporting preventative strategies, as with the baseline respondents. It is noteworthy that the presence of a weapon is not necessarily the issue, as opposed to simply the presence of an unauthorized individual.

Another limitation of the tangibility implication is that participants’ perceptions of their plans prior to their actual incidents are unknown. However, it would be extremely unethical to take pre-event measures and then manipulate tangibility by creating an intrusion and re-examining confidence. It is also possible that participants with intruder experience consider practicing lockdown drills to be a waste of time, because the event will always vary from the plan. Although both participants outwardly stated that incidents will not follow the plan, neither indicated feeling like the drills were a waste of time. Finally, because the notion of intruder tangibility as influential on planning is based on the experiences of only two participants from the same city, it may not be representative of other locations.
CHAPTER IV – WHAT HAVE I LEARNED ABOUT TSV PLANNING?

4.1 Discussion

The goal of the present exploratory and instrumental case study was to conduct a qualitative investigation of the preventative and *during* strategies, and the subjective experiences of high school administrators, school board members, and emergency personnel from a concentrated locale in a Canadian prairie province using personal interviews. Each interview asked participants:

1. What preventative measures do you have in place to avoid armed crises in your school(s)?
2. Describe your school / department / facility’s crisis plan in the event of a shooter. What steps will transpire in the school / department / facility?
3. What alternate strategies are in place for variations in the crisis plan during the event?
4. How confident are you in your school / department / facility’s plan?

The rationale of this pilot study was to understand participants’ consideration of strategies for during an attack, beyond lockdown or evacuation, including variations in strategies to accommodate the multitude of scenarios that might occur. As well, where no alternate strategies existed within contingency planning, I wanted to examine the reasons for the exclusion. Understanding their *during* strategies further involved documenting participants’ prevention strategies, including social skills training, school climate, students supports and bullying prevention, since that was a focal consideration in many of the school-based participant interviews. Collectively, the findings of the current research demonstrate that the school administrators and school board members
are conducting their procedures and formulating their policies according to current research and conference recommendations.

The other important objective of the present study was to focus on the perception of, experiences with, and confidence in their school, department, or facility’s plans. Asking participants the questions regarding their preventative measures and alternative considerations pursued a better understanding of their feelings and perceptions around their current measures, plans, and policies for TSV, and whether they feel their efforts are sufficient. The overarching objective is the potential improvement of crisis planning for during an incident. By sharing strategies, hopefully new ideas, common fears, or successful aversion tactics will become evident, potentially improving understanding of the different types of crimes, and aiding prevention efforts for other locales, such as the US, where incidents are much higher. After all, the more comprehensive the plan, the more assured the team (Jaksec, 2007).

Preventative Hard Measures (PHMs) and Preventative Measures Wanted (PMWs) were discussed by only some of the participants. Seven of twelve SBPs did not mention any required improvements. The ones that were mentioned included walkie-talkies, video cameras, increased funding, and (most commonly) more locked doors. Thus, in discussing the context of the physical environment of the school, some participants indicated vulnerability, although many did not.

Most administrators and school board members in the study considered prevention the key to averting armed crises in the school. Many of them felt confident about their efforts, particularly because they believed that they were doing everything they could do. Not only were they teaching the students the skills to handle conflict and
avoid bullying behaviours, but they were also including good decision-making, respectful communication, morality, mentorship, and peer support programs. Schools with at-risk students included additional supports, including extra counsellors on staff. Four SBPs spoke extensively about Threat Assessment – training and realities – and all administrators and school board staff shared their policies and consequences for weapons possession and making threats in the school. Although a few still adhere to a Zero Tolerance policy, almost everyone indicated that weapons and threats are handled on a case-by-case basis with the individual, his/her parents, and the SRO or local police. The difference was intent – whether or not the student intended to do harm or if carrying a weapon is part of their individual culture, such as students who live in high-crime areas. Thus, the concept of Zero Tolerance is perceived differently by the SBPs in this study than it is in the research. Interestingly, no one mentioned in-school suspensions.

Overall, participant discourse on PSM was favourable. They overwhelmingly saw PSMs, like creating a positive school climate, as a proactive approach to averting TSV in their schools. The important consideration within these participants, however, was that PSMs supported students’ needs first, and created safety as a happy consequence. What I found interesting was that even though I asked about preventative measures, I never differentiated between hard or soft measures. Yet, several participants referred to non-physical measures as ‘the softer side of programming,’ or thought I called it soft. I speculated whether this relates back to Klein’s (2012) and Larkin’s (2007) discussions on assumptions of masculinity, since the majority of my participants were male. None of the female participants referred to anti-bullying or social skills programming as ‘soft.’
Crisis planning in this particular prairie province city closely followed protocols and recommendations established by research findings and experiences from the TSV field of study. Their strategies include lockdown, secure the building, and evacuations, and they revisit their plans annually (Kingshott, 2012). Of concern, four of 12 schools without full intercom systems may consider alternate PHMs, such as a tone system or bells. They may have these strategies in place, and did not mention them. Yelling or trying to call individual classrooms on cellphones may be difficult during a chaotic event. The problem with ringing bells or strictly office-based approaches is that office staff can easily be the first victims (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). Therefore, contingency plans must include alternate plans for notifying the school.

Lockdown strategies work well in the case of an intruder. Police can then enter the building, locate the criminal easily, and remove him/her with minimal disruption to the day. Aside from the two SBPs who experienced intruders, only one other SBP speculated concerning what would be happening outside the door while students were locked down inside the classroom. Everyone else who received that question frowned and paused, perhaps an indication that the question itself is faulty, or that they had no idea how to answer.

Beyond their lockdown plans, my study further sought to chronicle SBPs’ alternative strategies and contingency planning. Specifically, I wondered if their school crisis planning included multiple or flexible strategies (Buerger & Buerger, 2010; McDaniel & Ellis, 2008). If they did not include a variety of plans, what potential barriers prevented such planning? The findings indicate two main strategies – “stay in or get out” (P13C2) – are believed to be sufficient in crisis planning. Although multiple
considerations are given, such as for students in the hallway or bathroom, times of day, students outside the school, and a multitude of other variations, engaging lockdown, secure the building, or evacuation procedures are most frequently considered satisfactory by the SBPs in this study. School board members and principals alike posited that the main reason to avoid over-planning the crisis was to avoid confusion during an event. That is, if too many plans exist, school personnel may become confused as to which plan is which during a high-stress situation. They believed that any variations would be handled by law enforcement on the scene.

The obvious issue with assuming that emergency responders will handle the variations is that many events conclude prior to the arrival of law enforcement. Also, plans that only cover locking down or evacuation seemingly fail to recognize what should be done in a hostage/barricaded situation, such as in School B. The police have a separate plan for hostage/barricaded events, while recognizing they can escalate into an active-shooter event quickly. Hence, their planning is flexible. However, the unofficial plan for SBPs in hostage/barricaded situations involves evacuating as many students as possible to a secure location. Additional considerations should be given to train staff for such eventualities.

Collectively, the results of the study indicate that principals and school board staff are relatively confident in their plans, particularly that staff will do what they need to do, and that as a group, they are doing all they can do to prepare with drills and preventative measures. The two participants who previously experienced intruders inside their schools – one with a weapon and one without – were the most critical of lockdown plans; specifically, they both called the plans ‘reactionary,’ and discussed the
worrisome nature of counting on the speed of the police, the large number of access points into the school. For example, some of the remarks from one principal included:

…The only thing that’s changed in the time I’ve been an administrator… is that we do these drills. And for the most part, the drills are to make people feel a little bit better that we are doing something. For me, that’s worrisome… If something like [TSV event] ever happens, it’s going to be a bad case result no matter what. There’s simply no way to protect against it… Myself and fellow administrators, [we’re] not very satisfied with the state of things and how we can or can’t protect our students and staff in our present structure.

The majority of SBPs thought an intruder and not a student would be more likely to perpetrate a TSV event, but the two participants who experienced tangible incidents spoke more about how to keep intruders out, and more specifically what to do to if one entered the building. Both principals also invited me to return for another interview to ask additional questions if I required further information, even though they were the only two to make such an offer.

In short, the disconfirming evidence of my study indicates that for schools wherein the actual presence of an intruder occurred, the SBPs perception of the plan’s efficacy changed. For all of the other SBPs in the study, the plan for during an armed event was more hypothetical, and they focused more on discussing prevention. For the schools that experienced intruders, their focus was on the physical measures of the plan, referring more to the physical safety of students. Regardless of whether anyone got hurt, the fact that the person was in the building rendered it, as P1C1 put it, “real enough.” It becomes real enough very quickly, and in that moment, everything changes. The intensity of the anticipated danger and the perception of how quickly trouble could occur increases.
Situations that are “real enough” potentially influence how school administrators view the efficacy of their plan. However, at this point, the tangibility implication is more of a concept that arose from the data that elucidates what it means when someone has gone through something like this. Its weakness lies in the amount of divergence found. Further research is required to determine the veracity of the tangibility implication in relation to TSV events. The relevance of tangibility corresponding to planning strategies for during an event is the difference in administrators’ perception.

The tangibility factor potentially influences how school administrators view the efficacy of their plan. This becomes important because it is the people with experience in armed events (e.g. Kevin Cameron of the Taber Response Team) who ultimately facilitate the conferences that school boards send their personnel to – to help people become better prepared, including preparation for variations. In truth, no one can teach what it is like or how unsettling it is to have an intruder in your school, and all of the “what-if” scenarios that follow. Personnel learn and institute the ideologies not to confront the intruder, or that if someone wants to enter your school to commit evil, that there is nothing you can do except to hide and hope. Alternatively, studies in averted crises clearly demonstrate that there are, in fact, strategies for averting crises not only through prevention, but in that horrible during phase, such as engaging or disarming the intruder, when there is no other choice.
CHAPTER V – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

5.1 Summary

Chronicking the preventative and during strategies and procedures for inside a TSV event with emergency responders, school board members, and high school principals evolved into a fulfilling, holistic case study. Although most SBPs preferred to discuss their preventative strategies, all of them are prepared and practiced for a lockdown situation. Most participants expressed some degree of confidence in their school or department’s plans, particularly in the anticipated response of their staff. However, confidence level in the plan may be affected by a tangible incident of encountering an intruder in the school. SBPs that experienced intruders used more apprehension indicators in discussing their school’s plans, and spoke more in terms of the physical safety of the students during an armed event, as opposed to preventative supports to avoid the events. Thus, the presence of an intruder in the school may influence one’s perception of the efficacy of their plans, rendering the threat of an attack more physically real or salient.

High school principals, school board members, and emergency responders alike in the present study preferred flexible during strategies as opposed to multiple variations, to avoid confusion during a potentially high-stress situation. Strategies for during a lockdown involve getting everyone to a safe, barricaded location and maintaining quiet and calm until released by law enforcement, who will take charge of the scene upon arrival. Alternate strategies to accommodate hostage/barricaded events were only found within the law enforcement group, although members of SBPs indicated that their plans are comprehensive and cover all scenarios, based on either
lockdown or evacuation. As well, administrators from schools who experienced intruders advise against stringently adhering to the plan, recognizing that variations can always occur. Accordingly, although the plan is hopefully never required for a real armed event, personnel should prepare for the unexpected. The SBPs in the present study were also largely focused on preventative efforts, such as positive school climates and providing support based on the individual needs of the student, in line with research recommendations. Such measures reduce the likelihood of violent events because they get the student the help s/he needs before issues grow beyond control. They do not, however, assist in case of non-student intruders. Overall, the collective group of participants exemplified a caring group with a healthy attitude toward safety planning – take it seriously, but do not live in constant fear of an armed attack. That they are thinking about it in a variety of ways and eager to learn other strategies or participate in research about the issue is important. What I personally found most striking was how much they care about their students and planning.

5.2 Limitations

Although the present case study is grounded in the data based on the experiences of high school principals in particular, there are several limitations to this study. First, like any qualitative study, it is subject to criticism from the empirical establishment. However, TSV is not a situation where one can purposely manipulate a variable and measure the outcome in an ethical manner. Therefore, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. Second, the sample was not random, but rather selected from a small potential participant pool. However, purposeful sampling is normal for studying a particular phenomenon, particularly to obtain the wisdom of key personnel. Third, the
study is based on a small, very homogenous group all from a specific city – mostly “white” males over 40. However, participants were invited based on the experience of being in charge of safety planning. It is also noteworthy that the present research is based on a smaller, Western Canadian city with a dedicated police force. However, contingency planning for TSV in rural locations must include other considerations, such as the speed of response for the RCMP (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). In rural locations, the perpetrator likely has a larger window of time before police arrive. As well, since many rural schools are K-12, additional supports and planning must include provisions for dealing with elementary-aged students who will likely be more panic-stricken or frightened than adolescents (Fox & Savage, 2009). Additional provisions must also be given for students with disabilities (Buerger & Buerger, 2010), and assisting them to safety. These things were not part of the discussions in the present study.

Another limitation of the present study is that the interviews, coding, transcriptions, analysis, and reporting were all conducted by a single researcher. Because the project was unfunded and the supervisor was not part of a research laboratory team, another coder was not possible. Even though another coder may suggest additional categories, questions, or other areas of relevance, s/he may have also concurred with my findings. However, my supervisor and committee were diligent in their efforts to ensure a quality study.

Finally, because this was a pilot study, the questions evolved as interviews went on. Second interviews occurred with two individuals – one to ask further questions, and another due to technical difficulties with the first interview – but not with all interviewees. Therefore, not all participants received the same questions, and not all
participants could have found time for a second interview. This is an important consideration for qualitative researchers, because one’s data is strongly influenced by the questions one asks.

A key strength of the study is that the descriptive data is grounded in the experiences and perceptions of the people responsible for the safety of students in the event of TSV. Also, because participants were individually interviewed in a personal manner, this allowed a greater opportunity for emotions, subjective experiences, and ideas to be heard in a more personal way than if they filled in an online survey. Another asset of this study, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) have suggested, is that findings based on experiences are more difficult to refute. Moreover, the flexibility in the instrumental case study approach allowed me to consider beyond what was found the literature review. Investigating *during* strategies evolved into unasked questions regarding why the strategies were the way they were. Namely, flexible strategies were preferable to multiple strategies because this helps to avoid confusion during a high-stress situation. As well, this study gave me the opportunity to consider and bring together the perspectives of four separate groups: principals, school board members, EMS, and police. In this way, the picture presented to the reader is firmly grounded in significant data sources as the perspective of participants for of what may occur during an armed crisis from a variety of perspectives.

Finally, one of the aspirations in examining TSV protocols was to share strategies and discover new ideas from different schools; the present study accomplished that. Ultimately, extra considerations and improvements to both strategies for *during* an armed event and/or preventative efforts materialized as the
research developed. Those strategies, in addition to suggestions for further research, as well as my own suggestions for improve TSV responses, are the focus of the next section.

5.3 Future Directions

5.3.1 Cell Phone Use During a Crisis

One area of disagreement in the present study was the use of cell phones. While many felt students could not be stopped from using them, others firmly asserted phones must be put away, and one participant encouraged as many students as possible to call 911. Students’ first instinct may be to let their parents know that the school is on lockdown, and that they are safe out of harm’s way. However, this could also become problematic as parents hear about the event, as they are likely to call in (Buerger & Buerger, 2010). Even cellphones set on silent or vibrate have displays that light up, and vibrations that still make noise, which could further signal a perpetrator to the whereabouts of potential targets.

Cellphone use during a crisis should be discouraged according to Buerger and Buerger (2010), but P4C2 suggested that since students are likely to text out anyway, they should send a specific message. The message would potentially be provided ahead of time, as approved by the school board. Although one could argue that in a crisis, they may forget to send the specific message it could be mounted on a large board, perhaps the back of whatever is covering the window or door. During a lockdown when the window gets covered, the board could reveal what the message should say, such as ensuring cellphones are on silent, sending only the specific message, and the direct contents of what the message should say. No parent wants to receive that text, of
course, but at least they would know their children are alive until reunification occurs following the event.

5.3.2 Parental Notification

The notification of parents is an important issue when dealing with TSV scenarios (A. Urban, personal communication, April 7, 2013). P4C2 indicated that the school board plans to use email to contact parents in the event of an emergency, instead of a phoning the home number, as email seems the most effective way to reach parents during school hours. Parents will be officially notified by the school board either immediately following the incident, or the debriefing after the incident, but as soon as possible. On the other hand, parents may not like or understand this.

Parents’ first instinct may be to rush to the school, with the intent to protect their own child. However, this could hinder police and emergency workers’ ability to respond if a mob of panicked parents arrive demanding to know if their children are safe, thus potentially putting themselves in danger. As well, excessive cellphone calls in or out of the building could jam communications for emergency responders. Therefore, perhaps parents should be advised of what occurs during a lockdown, secure the building or evacuation, when they will be notified, the rationale behind the policies, and given the opportunity for feedback. This could occur at a Parent’s Night (P12C3) or a handout given at the parent council meeting (P8C3). Perhaps involving the SRO would help parents accept the authority and reasoning of the lockdown procedures. As well, students, parents, the media, and the general public should be made aware of the difference between a secure the building and a lockdown, so the two are not confused.
As suggested, there may be a perceptual difference between an intruder inside the school and one who has been locked out.

At the beginning of the current school year, my own daughter’s school had a secure the building. This was strictly a precaution for all schools within a few kilometres of a domestic dispute wherein an assailant was known to be agitated and armed. It was, however, widely reported in the media that the area schools were “on lockdown.” When I mentioned the unnecessary panic using the wrong term could cause, a friend of mine who is a former vice principal in another province, asked if we differentiate between a lockdown and secure the building here, because they do not in her school division. Thus, I believe that this is an important distinction to make.

It is also noteworthy to mention that the school’s automated system failed to reach me because I was teaching, which further illustrates the importance of advising the school of the best way to contact parents at all times.

5.3.3 Behavioural Expectations

Many of the participants discussed the importance of a welcoming school climate, and several discussed moral codes or behavioural expectations. These represent two distinct constructs. A positive school climate indicates that students will be supported based on their needs, whereas an expectation is indicative of a less flexible approach. The two need not be mutually exclusive, although providing the code of expectations does somewhat hinder a more supportive approach.

When behavioural expectations and supports work cooperatively in the best interest of the student, crises can be avoided. Through threat assessment and supportive techniques, troubled students can be removed from the situations, but more importantly,
they can obtain the help they need, as many of the participants discussed. The long-term impacts and life outcomes of such interventions on individuals remains unknown, however. Therefore, research should thoroughly review the final outcomes of interventions for youths convicted of plotting TSV crimes (Daniels, Buck, et al., 2007).

5.3.4 Coping Skills

Discussions about providing support to develop appropriate coping skills occurred with three separate participants after the recording device was shut off. This was of particular interest since the SSI report findings indicated that 98% of school shooters had suffered a recent loss or rejection directly before their crimes (Vossekuil et al., 2002), and that many had contemplated suicide. Yet, the SSI report neither discussed nor focused on this finding in their results, conclusions, or recommendations for threat assessment procedures.

Since 98% of school shooters may experience difficulty coping with loss or rejection, then bereavement skills for dealing with all types of loss and coping may be important proactive strategies for schools to consider, as opposed to reactively attempting to determine why a perpetrator committed a shooting. Research supports rejection as a contributory factor in most school shootings (see Leary et al., 2003). If rejection can be considered a loss, then perhaps the École Polytechnique and Columbine rampages could have been avoided if Lépine and Harris had the appropriate abilities to cope with their losses. For example, Eric Harris’ rejection from the military may have been devastating, since he came from a family with a long military history. Most of the shooters felt wronged and suicidal (Daniels, Royster et al., 2010; Cameron, 2002), which can be deadly combination for people who suffer losses.
While many of the SBPs in the present study discussed social skills training, only two mentioned decision-making, and none mentioned skills for coping with loss or rejection during their interviews. However, one school-based participant in particular discussed developing skills for coping with life losses, and how important it was in particular for at-risk youth. Because the basic stages of grief (American Psychological Association, 2013) remain stable across situations of loss or rejection, coping education could include teaching Emotional Intelligence skills (Bodine & Crawford, 1999), strategies based on grief counselling that include other types of loss (Smith & Segal, 2013), and building resiliency (Lassiter & Perry, 2009). Perhaps if teaching coping, life, and decision-making skills, and behavioural supports continue their prevalence in the school system, fewer adults will grow to become perpetrators, because they could be put on a more psychologically healthy path, and not discarded as “difficult”, as several participants mentioned.

5.3.5 Other Shared Strategies from Participants

- Be sure to leave a door open for the police during a lockdown. (P11C3)

- Make sure people with potentially noisy shoes remove them to avoid attracting the attention of the intruder. (P11C3)

- Use agendas as a hall pass to ensure the people in your school are students, and to make students accountable for where they are supposed to be (P12C3)

- Leave a copy of the lockdown and evacuation plan on the teacher’s desk, and ensure each class of the day goes through it at the beginning of the semester. That way, if an event occurs when a substitute teacher is present, the students know what to do and the plan is in plain view. (P9C3)
• Create advisory groups, which meet with students 15 minutes per day. This provides people in students’ lives who get to know them on a personal level, and who are, therefore, aware when a student’s behaviour changes. This allows the school to get the student the help s/he needs before the problem escalates. (P9C3)

• Practice ‘lockdown inside a fire drill’ - pull the fire alarm (mimicking Jonesboro) to ensure students stay in lockdown until released by official personnel. (P3C3)

5.4 Future Directions in TSV Research

In presenting the strengths and limitations of the present pilot study, several recommendations for future research become clear. For example, the idea that intruder tangibility may be influential on TSV contingency planning is based on the experiences of only two participants from the same city. As such, this finding may not be representative of other cities, particularly larger metropolitan centres. The tangibility implication is also based on only 2 cases. Future studies could test high school principals from a variety of locales who have experienced an intruder with those who have not, to test whether or not tangibility is the main factor in Confidence. Such studies could also determine whether the variables of disagreement, such as cell phone use, affect tangibility and confidence in participants with TSV or intruder experience. Questions should also inquire directly whether participants consider planning for TSV or lockdowns to be a waste of time.

To address the small sample size of participants from the same locale, future studies interested in the quantification of data, larger sample sizes, and improved heterogeneity may consider conducting a provincial, regional, national, North American, or international survey. While this approach may not yield the same richness
of data as the experience of sitting down and personally interviewing the individuals, it would produce larger amounts of data from a variety of locations. Future studies could further include other key personnel such as Teachers, Vice Principals, Psychologists, Guidance Counsellors, Social Workers, SROs, Maintenance Staff, Administrative Support staff, other school employees, and even students to gain their perspective on TSV contingency planning. Likewise, studies could focus on considerations such as the special kinds of preparedness required for students with disabilities or special medical conditions, different types of learning institutions, and rural schools should be researched, to examine their planning, since there are many variations from the present study.

The interviews in the present study were flexible enough to accommodate the order of responses, but because the questions evolved as the interviews progressed, earlier interviewees did not receive the same questions as later interviewees. Future studies may consider which questions are the most important to ask of all participants, and advise participants that second interviews may be necessary. As well, the present study did not investigate the risk assessment procedures of school boards, nor delve deeply into aftermath strategies, specifically because my focus was on present prevention and during strategies. Future studies would likely benefit from investigating these areas. Additionally, the present study did not query participants regarding what could be done to improve their plans. Given that two participants in this study were so different from others, yet so alike, it would be interesting to see what future studies might find by including such questions.
For perpetrator considerations, Daniels, Buck et al. (2007) recommend using primary source documents and interviews with assailants who do not die or whose plots were thwarted to deeper understand causal factors of TSV, as well as research on the long term effects of interventions with adolescents sentenced with TSV crimes. It is also noteworthy that the present study purposely avoided specific controversial issues such as gangs, drugs, gun control, or anti-depressant use, which could provide valuable perpetrator information. Another important potential area of investigation with perpetrators could be the role of academic pressure on violent behaviour (Twemlow & Sacco, 2008).

Finally, in response to the information presented regarding coping skills, the research community should pay more attention to it. Because rejection or loss was a common attribute of TSV perpetrators in the SSI report (see Vossekuil et al., 2002) and aversion studies (Daniels, Royster, et al., 2010), future research studies should be diligent in considering loss as a potential factor when TSV crimes are perpetrated. Moreover, focusing research on developing coping skills, particularly in adolescents, may assist in preventative strategies, and provide valuable life skills.

5.5 Addressing Apprehension

The rationale of this study included making a space for conversations to develop strategies beyond what is currently being done. Some researchers suggest additional training for staff in crisis response (Jaksec, 2007) or defensive techniques (Kopel, 2008). Although potentially controversial, the inclusion of this possibility arose directly from the data of participants. That is, both participants with intruder experience (Schools A and B) expressed uneasiness in planning that relies on waiting for the police.
Additionally, more than half of SBPs indicated there was nothing anyone could do but hide and hope during an armed event. The literature on crisis research and previous incidents demonstrate not only that nearly half armed events conclude prior to police arrival (Blair & Martaindale, 2013), but also that all many types of TSV events have been and can be prevented or stopped by school staff by engaging or immobilizing the intruder (e.g.: Taber; “Alberta Town Tries, 2000).

To address the “nothing you can do” belief, schools may consider regular training opportunities (Jaksec, 2007), such as Professional Assault Response Training (PART; see Farrell & Cubit, 2005) for empowering staff with techniques similar to health care or youth care workers. None of the SBPs received training during their post-secondary or graduate studies for TSV, crisis planning, or hostage/barricaded events. The two SBPs who received training through the school board in non-violent crisis intervention or crisis management, indicated that it was voluntary. Although one participant surmised that techniques likely become obsolete quickly, P15C1 asserted that the only change in crisis planning was ‘speed of response’ compared to several years ago. Some administrators further indicated that their teachers were now more aware at assemblies. This consciousness provides a fantastic strategic position, but what are the teachers reasonably prepared to do in the event of an intruder without adequate training? Will closing the doors be enough? Any school staff trained in negotiation, assault response, and disarmament tactics may be able to avert or end the situation where no other choice exists, such as if the intruder breaks into a locked down space. Although Kopel’s (2008) suggestion that staff be trained in defensive techniques may seem severe or unrealistic, it perhaps raises a point worthy of future investigation
and discussion with regard to empowering school staff, particularly those most likely to be directly in harm’s way.

5.6 Conclusion

Ultimately, extra considerations and improvements to strategies for during an armed event, as well as preventative efforts, may materialize as this research of this type develops. Although, overall, the participants in the present study were confident and prepared for lockdown, dealing with hostage/barricaded strategies could use further development and consideration. Because these represent two separate types of crimes, policies should provide a template for hostage/barricaded situations, recognizing that every situation is different, and that the event will vary from the plan. Flexible responses are preferable to multiple strategies to avoid confusion during an armed event, although the “best” strategy involves prevention. The participants interviewed from this particular Western Canadian city are not only informed on crime variations, but well-prepared for lockdown, secure the building, and evacuation, and unquestionably focused on the safety and well-being of the students.

School-based employees would like more locked doors and a review of surveillance policies. School boards could further consider empowerment strategies for employees, and initiatives for advising parents thoroughly with regard school safety policies, and what they can expect as parents, to enhance the school community’s cooperative efforts. Hopefully, the findings of the current study will prove useful in developing additional or flexible Plan “B” strategies for places with higher TSV crime rates, such as the U.S.
References


Appendix A: Research Ethics Board Approval Form

OFFICE FOR RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIP
MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 2, 2013

TO: Rana Lee Shearer
   40 Wolfe Place
   Regina, SK S4R 8S5

FROM: Dr. David Senkow
       Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Plan "B" Strategies: A Qualitative Investigation of Local Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence (File # 6181213)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☑ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. ** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. ** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. David Senkow

cc: Dr. Heather Ryan - Education

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 105) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4893
Appendix B: Telephone Recruiting Script

TELEPHONE RECRUITING SCRIPT

Title: Plan “B” Strategies: A Qualitative Investigation of Local Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence

Researcher: Rana Shearer, B. A. (Hons.), MEd. Candidate

Supervisor: Dr. Heather Ryan

“My name is Rana Shearer. I am a Master’s student in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina. May I please speak with the person in charge of safety planning for your school/department/organization?” <once connected, proceed to next line>

“Good morning/afternoon. My name is Rana Shearer. I am a Master’s student in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina. I understand you are the person in charge of safety planning for your school/department/organization?” <once confirmed, proceed to next line>

“Under the direction of Dr. Heather Ryan, I am conducting a research project with emergency services, school board members, and school administrators regarding safety planning at local area high schools. Specifically, I am interested in interviewing you with regard to your school/department/organization’s policies and procedures, as well as your perceptions of your school’s or organization’s crisis planning for active-shooter scenarios. The purpose of this research is merely an investigation of active-shooter protocols and preventative strategies. Ultimately, we hope to improve overall strategies for school shooting scenarios.” <pause to determine whether they may be interested or are clearly not interested in participating>

“The scheduling and location of the interview would be completely at your convenience, and it is anticipated to be 60 minutes in duration. Interview data from this study will be recorded by
password-protected iPod, which will remain solely in the possession of the researcher. The purpose of audio-recording the interview is to ensure verbatim transcription of our conversation. Data will be coded in a manner to ensure participant responses are not readily identifiable to the individual. All interviewees will receive the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy within a few days. The interview does not involve any anticipated risks. Would you be interested in participating?" <pause for their response>

If they agree to participate, obtain their contact information and arrange an appropriate interview date, time, and location. If they are not interested, thank them for considering the request, and wish them a nice day.
Appendix C: Informal Interview Guide for the Demographic and Semi-structured Interviews

Informal Interview Guide and Categories of Responses for the Semi-structured Interviews

**Title:** Plan “B” Strategies: A Qualitative Investigation of Local Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence

**Researcher:** Rana Shearer, B. A. (Hons.), MEd. Candidate

**Supervisor:** Dr. Heather Ryan

1) What preventative measures do you have in place to avoid armed crises in your school?

2) Describe your school’s/department’s crisis plan in the case of a potential school shooter. What steps will transpire in your school/department/facility?

3) What alternate strategies are in place for variations in the crisis plan during the event?

4) How confident are you in your school/department/facility’s plans?

**Demographic Information Checklist:**

I. All Participants:

   A. Position
   B. Number of Years at Current Position
   C. Responsibilities with regard to Safety Planning for Targeted School Violence
   D. Education regarding safety (e.g., during post-secondary training?)

II. Specific to School Administrators:

   a. Predominant Socio-economic status of school
   b. Current enrollment numbers at the school
   c. Do you collect statistics on violent incidents at school? (If yes, are they willing to disclose them?)
   d. Have you ever had a threat or violent incident involving weapons at your school?
Appendix D: Informal Interview Supplementary Subcategories of Responses for the Demographic and Semi-structured Interviews

1) Do you collect statistics on the incidents of violence or potential violence in your school?

2) How often is your School Resource Officer on-site?

3) What approach(es) do you use for inter-student violence episodes? (e.g.: potential consequences for students? Zero Tolerance?)

4) What is the origin of your school violence intervention and/or crisis plan(s)?

5) How often is your crisis plan(s) rehearsed?

6) What is your school’s policy on bullying?

7) What strategies are in place to encourage bullying prevention?

8) What initiatives do you utilize (if any) to teach social skills?

9) Do these initiatives include coping with loss (not just death, but any type of loss in life)?

10) Who selected the policies and plans at the school?

11) What is the overall morale of the school (e.g.: emotional climate)?
Appendix E: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Title: Plan "B" Strategies: A Qualitative Investigation of Local Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence

Researcher: Rana Shearer, B. A. (Hons.), MEd. Candidate

Supervisor: Dr. Heather Ryan

Objective: Investigation of the policies, plans, and experiences of school administrators, school board members, and emergency administrative personnel surrounding armed crises in local high schools

Procedure:
Each participant will be interviewed regarding their policies, procedures, and perceptions of their school’s or organization’s crisis planning for active-shooter scenarios. There are no right or wrong answers, nor psychological analysis. The purpose of this research is merely an investigation of active-shooter protocols and preventative strategies. The data from this study will be recorded by password-protected digital audio recording, which will remain solely in the possession of the researcher. Data will be coded in a manner to ensure participant responses are not readily identifiable to the individual. All interviewees will receive the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy within a few days. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes, and does not involve any anticipated risks.

This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. However, if you have any questions or concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4775, or by email: research.ethics@uregina.ca.

I, _______________, have read the above conventions and agree voluntarily to participate. The procedure and goals of the study have been explained to me by the researcher, and I fully understand them. I further understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or prejudice. I also understand that even though the data from this study may be published, confidentiality regarding my identity will be maintained. All data will be identified only through participant number only, and signed consent forms and transcript release forms will be stored separately from my interview data. Written data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Regina campus for at least 5 years, after which time it will be shredded. Electronic data will be password-protected and stored indefinitely. If I wish to withdraw my data, I may do so by contacting the Researcher directly within one month of my interview date. My signature confirms that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

(Participant signature) (Date)

(Researcher)

If you have any questions or require further information about this study, please contact the Researcher, Rana Shearer at __________________ or by email: shearer@uregina.ca; or Dr. Heather Ryan at __________________ or by email: Heather_Ryan@uregina.ca. Thank you for your participation.
Appendix F: Debriefing Form

DEBRIEFING FORM

Title: Plan "B" Strategies: A Qualitative Investigation of Local Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence

Researcher: Rana Shearer, B. A. (Hons.), MEd. Candidate

Supervisor: Dr. Heather Ryan

The purpose of the present research study was to investigate the crisis response plans, preventative measures, and confidence in strategies for local high schools with regard to targeted school violence, such as active shooter scenarios. While school planning preventative efforts and strategies for after a crisis event are extremely important and well planned, this study sought to investigate planning for during an armed event, beyond lockdown.

Understanding the realities of emergency personnel as well as school administrators from diverse socio-economic conditions acknowledges different perspectives about safety planning of educational professionals in similar situations. This will help determine any qualitative differences between the planning strategies among schools. A recent article by Buerger and Buerger (2010) indicated contingency preparations must include a variety of plans, or flexible plans that can accommodate divergent situations. In particular, Buerger and Buerger (2010) note variations in scenarios that can occur, but also the small but integral period of time between declaring a lockdown and the arrival of the police on the scene. Therefore, the present study further sought to determine whether flexible or multiple plans exist, understand the details of different strategies, and analyze potential barriers that may prevent the implementation of flexible planning.

The present study represents a pilot project, to determine the efficacy of the interview questions, and to scrutinize the current research process. Eventually, the ultimate goal of this research is to create a theory grounded in school administrators’ experiences to help institutions and programs in understanding active shooter protocols, and better assist them in improving their plans. Potentially, sharing strategies will reveal innovative ideas and approaches that could enhance safety for all school personnel during an armed event.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions, please contact Rana Shearer: shearrer@uregina.ca, or Dr. Heather Ryan: Heather.Ryan@uregina.ca.

Sample reference:

Appendix G: Transcript Release Form

TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Title: Plan "B" Strategies: A Qualitative Investigation of Local Contingency Plans for Targeted School Violence

Researcher: Rana Shearer, B. A. (Hons.), MEd. Candidate

Supervisor: Dr. Heather Ryan

I, ____________________________, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview for this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Rana Shearer.

Data in hard copy from this interview will remain locked in a secure cabinet at the University of Regina for a minimum of 5 years. Electronic data will be password-protected and stored indefinitely.

I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Rana Shearer to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I understand that I may withdraw my data within one month of my interview date.

I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Signature of Participant: ____________________________ Signature of Researcher: ____________________________

If you have any questions, please contact Rana Shearer: shearer@uregina.ca.
Appendix H: Photograph of Category Organization

Post-It Notes organization chart with topic information, evolved with titles, adhered to the dining room wall. This method allowed for categories to be moved easily, to assist in conceptual thinking and mental organization.
Pages with major category points adhered to dining room table using masking tape. Additional points and categories added in the form of sticky notes, were added where they fit in. When I was ready to write that section, I simply removed the tape and took the pages to the computer. This method allowed me to constantly review the organization of my material.
Appendix J: Approval for the Addition of Dr. Scott Thompson as Co-supervisor

January 29, 2014

Ms. Rana Shearer
Regina, SK

Dear Ms. Shearer:

This is to inform you that the Faculty of Education has requested and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research acknowledges that Dr. Scott Thompson has been added as your co-supervisor, along with Dr. Heather Ryan.

Thank you for advising our office of this change.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact this office.

Sincerely,

D.R. Blachford, Ph.D.
Associate Dean

DRB/jt
cc e-file