AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL SAFETY PREPAREDNESS IN CANADA

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Janel Leigh Matt, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Justice Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *An Examination of School Safety Preparedness in Canada*, in an oral examination held on January 4, 2017. 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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ABSTRACT

Although a rare occurrence, at least 32 Canadians have died in school shootings since 1902. School shootings and incidents of serious school violence in Canada are not as prevalent as they are in the United States, however, educators and school staff should be prepared for these critical incidents. This study uses an online survey to collect information from school staff across Canada about their preparedness for incidents of school violence. Topics solicited in the survey are: respondent beliefs about the prevalence of violence at their schools, their awareness of school safety plans, and strategies used to promote school safety. The researcher hypothesized that school staff have not received the appropriate training and they are unfamiliar with school policies and procedures related to school violence, including threat assessment processes and strategies implemented by their school divisions to prevent violence.

Of the 223 respondents to the online survey, all respondents strongly agreed they felt safe at their schools although a majority of them believed there was a high likelihood of an assault that leads to serious injury happening at their school within the next year. With respect to less serious incidents, between one-quarter and one-third of respondents believed that minor and serious acts of violence were very big or fairly big problems at their schools, whereas one-third to one-half of respondents felt that bullying and cyberbullying were very big or fairly big problems.

A majority of the respondents indicated having safety plans in place at their schools. Most schools were reported as having practice drills for school shooters but not for hostage taking or bomb threats. In regards to training and feelings of confidence in executing the safety plans, the respondents reported mixed findings, with almost equal
proportions reporting either having adequate, or not enough familiarity with these plans.

Inferential statistical tests, including chi-square, t-tests, and analysis of variance were used to analyze the results. The key findings were that respondents working in schools with more than 250 students were more likely to report having a school safety plan in place, have a security or police presence at their schools, report insufficient supervision and a lack of student connection to their schools. Respondents working in smaller schools, by contrast, believed students were more likely to bring weapons to school.

Respondents also indicated that high schools were more likely to utilize security cameras and have a security or police presence at their schools compared with elementary or middle schools. Respondents working in middle schools were more likely to report that students lacked a connection to their schools whereas those working in elementary schools were the least likely to report that cyberbullying occurs. When compared with respondents from other provinces, Saskatchewan respondents reported having more trained crisis intervention teams although fewer Saskatchewan schools deployed safety measures such as closed circuit video systems, identification badges for staff and visitors or had a security or police presence at their schools.

The results of this research offer school administrators and agencies responsible for ensuring community safety, such as the police, information about future training needs. The results suggest that school safety plans may exist but it is imperative that staff members be aware of their plans and be prepared to carry them out.

**Keywords:** School violence, Threat assessments, Risk factors, School safety plans
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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research examines the results of an online survey that solicited information from Canadian teachers and staff members about their perceptions of violence in their schools, and their knowledge of threat assessments and school safety plans intended to reduce the likelihood of injuries to school staff and pupils. Although examples of extreme school violence, such as shootings, hostage-takings and bomb threats are relatively rare in Canada compared to the United States, they do occur; and since 1902, 32 teachers and students have died in acts of school-related violence. The most recent incident in Canada, within the timeframe of this research, occurred on January 22, 2016 where two staff members were murdered and seven others were injured at the La Loche Community School in Saskatchewan. Given that school violence does occur in Canada it is important that every teacher and school staff member be trained to help prevent school violence and to reduce the harms if acts of violence occur.

1.2 School Violence

On October 10, 1902 the first recorded Canadian school shooting occurred in Altona, Manitoba. Although there are conflicting reports of the circumstances of the incident, Reimer (2011) writes that Henry Toews, a schoolteacher, had a disagreement with three school trustees and confronted them on a road leading to the school. During this confrontation he shot all three of the trustees, killing one. Toews then went to the schoolhouse and shot three female students—who were the daughters of the trustees—one of whom was killed, while the other two survived. Toews fled the school, turned the gun on himself, and died two months later from his wounds (Reimer, 2011). The first
recorded school shooting in the United States occurred on July 26, 1764. Known as the Pontiac’s Rebellion School Shooting in present-day Greencastle, Pennsylvania, four men entered the school and shot and killed the schoolmaster and eleven students (Crews, 2016). Since these incidents, there have been numerous school shootings across Canada and the United States.

One of the deadliest rampage shootings in history occurred at the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado on April 20, 1999, where two teenagers murdered 12 students and one teacher before taking their own lives (Larkin, 2009). Eight days later, a 14-year-old boy opened fire at his school in Taber, Alberta, killing one student and injuring another. This shooting was believed to be a copycat incident given that the Columbine tragedy had occurred only a few days prior (Cameron, 2000). Larkin (2009, p. 1309) believes the Columbine shootings inspired other rampage shootings across North America in several ways. First, it influenced potential shooters by illustrating how to plan and execute a potential school shooting. Second, it gave inspiration to potential shooters to exact revenge for past wrongs including being bullied, humiliated, socially excluded and/or isolated. Third, it generated a benchmark for carnage that some subsequent shooters sought to exceed. Finally, the Columbine shooters attained a mythical status for the outcast student subcultures, which was then emulated in subsequent rampage shootings and attempts as a way to honour their memory. In a number of cases of school shootings either the perpetrators reported being influenced by the Columbine murders or police found evidence of Columbine influences (Larkin, 2009).

Some researchers believe other rampage shootings were influenced by the psycho-sociological process of imitation, whereby students mimic high profile school
shootings (Rocque, 2012). According to Muschert (2007), rampage shootings are “expressive non-targeted attacks on a school institution” (p. 63). Newman (2004) also defines the victims of rampage shootings as selected almost at random and involving attacks on multiple parties. The shooter may have a specific target to begin with, but they often continue to shoot at others, and it is not unusual for the perpetrator to be unaware of who has been injured or killed until after the incident. Such shootings can be considered attacks on institutions such as schools, teenage pecking orders, or entire communities (Larkin, 2009; Newman, 2004).

No school is immune to acts of violence and attacks have occurred in both urban and rural Canadian schools educating students from kindergarten to Grade 13. Mass shootings have also occurred at Canadian institutions of higher learning. In 1989, a gunman opened fire on students and staff at École Polytechnique in Montreal, killing 14 women and injuring ten others. In 1992, a Concordia University professor killed four colleagues and wounded another (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2012). A school shooting also occurred at Dawson College in Montreal in 2006, where one woman was killed and 20 others were injured.

The media has reported the outcomes of numerous tragedies occurring in schools across North America. Although the actual number of school shootings in Canada is very low as compared to the United States, the media tends to sensationalize these events, which then contributes to fear and creates the possibility for copycat attacks. Although the focus of much research thus far has been on lethal violence, many less serious incidents of school-related violence occur every day and never make the headlines. Furthermore, even though school shootings are rare, teachers and school staff must be
trained and prepared to act in the event these crimes occur in order to reduce injuries or deaths. Moreover, police services should also provide their officers, and particularly school resource officers (SRO), with training that enables them to respond to these acts in a manner that reduces harm. This research analyzes teacher and staff preparedness on preventative and reactive responses to extreme school violence.

1.3 The Media and School Violence

The media play a significant role in how school violence is portrayed and television, radio, and the Internet have become the primary sources of the public’s information about crime and justice issues (Britto, 2015). Some scholars (Lindle, 2008; Muschert & Ragnedda, 2011) argue that the media over-report school violence, which in turn leads to an increase in public fears and moral panics, including the fear that some evil threatens our well being. This perspective is related to the social constructionist point of view (Lindle, 2008; Muschert & Ragnedda, 2011). Social constructionists believe the media shape the public’s view of social life by reporting only partial information about social problems and by framing issues in ways that lead the public to adopt particular beliefs (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009, p. 137). Media reports regarding school violence often draw attention from a large audience and media outlets broadly disseminate these stories (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009).

In order to examine the influence of the media on the public’s perceptions about school violence, researchers have analyzed how the media describe and sensationalize these acts. Kupchik and Bracy (2009) examine how the print media influence perceptions of school violence by analyzing news reports from the New York Times and USA Today from 2000 to 2006. These scholars examine the key messages reported in
these articles and found that a relatively large percentage of articles describe school crime/violence as very prevalent (15.8%), while fewer reports define the problem as getting worse (6.2%) while 8% of the articles report school crime/violence was decreasing.

In their analysis of media accounts of school shootings, Kupchik and Bracy (2009) found that a number of different themes emerged. These themes either convey good or bad news by explaining school violence in dire or optimistic terms (e.g., these offences are rare), and many cite past extreme events such as the Columbine High School shooting to frame their messages. These scholars also found that most media accounts attempted to elicit emotional responses in their reports rather than relying upon objective sources of data. They assert that many reports state school violence is unpredictable yet blame schools for being unable to prevent such violence (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009).

Muschert and Ragnedda (2011) found that the media also frame incidents of school violence into a number of themes. These scholars contend that in the past school shootings were considered to be a local issue and because the incident did not happen in their own town or city, people from other communities were able to disassociate from these events. However, as more acts of serious school violence occurred between 1997 and 2001, the media shifted their focus to a national audience, which led the public to believe that an epidemic of school shootings was occurring and they were likely to happen anywhere and at anytime. Following 2001, however, the media attention surrounding the Columbine shooting began to wane and most issues of school violence were again reported as local events (Muschert & Ragnedda, 2011; see also Kupchik & Bracy, 2009).
In some cases, media attention toward the issue of acts of school violence changes over time. A Canadian study of the media coverage of the 2007 murder of 15-year-old Jordan Manners in his Toronto high school is an example of how print media reporters can frame an offence. O’Grady, Parnaby and Schikschneit (2010) examined 266 newspaper articles from the *Globe and Mail, National Post* and the *Toronto Star* from the period between May 23, 2007 and May 23, 2008 about the incident. They found that the media included accounts of previous school shootings to contextualize the student’s death, much the same as Kupchik and Bracy (2009) who found that past tragedies are included in reports of contemporary incidents.

O’Grady, Parnaby and Schikschneit (2010) reported that over the course of 48 hours the media changed the theme of Manners murder from school to gang violence. The police later released information that two young offenders were arrested for the crime and the incident was not considered gang related. The victim’s death was ultimately framed as an example of localized neighbourhood violence where gun crimes and gangs were common. The researchers argued that if the media reported only the facts of the story, it would have been less newsworthy. The media, O’Grady and colleagues (2010) contend, wants to attract a large audience and increase the number of readers or viewers. To achieve this, journalists focus on subjects that affect a large number of people and report on topics that are of interest to a broad audience. Most people have a connection to schools and reporting on school crime fuels public fears that school shootings could happen anywhere (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009).

In order to shed light on the prevalence of crime in the Toronto high school where Manners was murdered, a survey of 423 students (56% of the student population) was
conducted and the results reveal that violence was widespread. Almost one-quarter (22%) of the students indicated they had been a victim of robbery or extortion on school property and 21% had been victims of a robbery outside of school (Roher, 2010). Furthermore, 18% of the students reported having been threatened with a weapon at school and 16% outside of school, while 11% had been assaulted with a weapon at school and 16% assaulted outside of school. Roher (2010) also found that gang membership was associated with having a gun pointed at respondents and in the previous two years 41% of current gang members and 20% of former gang members indicated these crimes occurred, while 8% of non-gang members made similar reports. Lastly, 14% of students reported having been sexually assaulted at school over the past two years, including almost one-fifth (19%) of all female students.

Few of these violent crimes were ever reported to the police. Roher (2010) reported that most students would not talk to the police or school officials about crimes they witnessed or their own victimization. According to the students, the reasons for not reporting these offences included distrust of police, to avoid upsetting their parents and/or they did not want to be labelled as a snitch.

Media attention on an issue such as school violence can lead to policy changes. After the Manners shooting an advisory panel appointed by the Toronto District School Board was formed to examine the issues surrounding school safety and specifically the Manners shooting (Falconer, Edwards & MacKinnon, 2008). The School Community Safety Advisory Panel examined the circumstances surrounding the shooting and recommended strategies for making schools safer. Their report, entitled The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety (Falconer et al., 2008), rejected media and
community sensationalism based on school or gang violence and instead emphasized the importance of considering the context of the communities schools serve. As a result, issues of school safety are not just school problems and attempts to make schools safer must address the social ills that communities face (Roher, 2010). The Falconer, Edwards and MacKinnon (2008) report also emphasized that different approaches to school violence are required because the philosophy of a “one-size-fits-all-approach” does not make schools violence and weapons free.

The media have also reported incidents where threats to school safety were thwarted. A January 18, 2013 account in the National Post reported that school administrators contacted police after learning that three Quebec City students had posted their plan to carry out a school shooting on Facebook. Police found enough evidence to charge the 14 to 16-year-old students with conspiracy to commit murder (Koch, 2013). There is some evidence to suggest that a relatively large number of school shootings have been averted throughout North America, although the factors that lead to stopping these acts have not been well-researched (Madfis, 2014).

Cameron (2002), in concert with the Behavioural Sciences Unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) developed Canada's first comprehensive, multidisciplinary threat assessment training program. He contends that there are time periods where the likelihood of a school shooting may increase, including the period directly after a traumatic event or on the anniversaries of previously school shootings, such as the Columbine or Taber High School murders. As a result, media reports of school shootings may contribute to further violence.
1.4 School Safety Plans

In the past, teachers and school administrators managed student misbehaviours through school-based actions, guided by their interpretation of their respective provincial Education Acts, school board guidelines, and school discipline policies. Guidelines in government and school board documents define the discretionary powers of school administrators in handling unwanted student behaviours (Jull, 2000). Pursuant to many provincial Education Acts, it is the duty of school administrators to maintain order and discipline in their schools, and it is their responsibility to protect students in their care. In order to achieve these goals, schools have implemented violence prevention and intervention programs as well as policies intended to confront issues such as bullying and suicide. For example, peer mediation programs are designed to promote healthy relationships and appropriate behaviours for students (Roher, 2010).

An example of a School Safety Plan is from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (2009). The plan uses several interventions to prevent violence and disruptive, antisocial or illegal student behaviours. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association (2009) defines violence and states that these acts are unacceptable. The goals of the Safety Plan include the expectation that schools will have: (a) caring, respectful, peaceful environments; (b) school division policies will define the acceptable behaviour and code of conduct of students; (c) social skills programs (including anger management and peer mediation) will be offered to all students; (d) school environment and design will reduce undesirable behaviours; (e) participation and input from the community regarding school policies will be considered; and, (f) ensuring parents are made aware of these policies to reinforce them at home (Saskatchewan School Boards
Association, 2009). As there are ranges of potential threats (e.g., a bomb threat compared with a school shooting), policies and protocols are created to ensure the safety of the students and staff in the event these acts occur.

School safety plans have a number of common elements: the situation is assessed, the response level is determined, and action is taken. There is a range of options depending on the level of risk and the nature of the incident (e.g., a violent act compared with a natural disaster) and each school district develops their own responses. In Regina Public Schools, for example, there are three methods to secure a facility. The first is to “secure the building”, where the doors to the facility are locked but regular school activities continue. The second method is to “shelter in place”, where students and staff are secure in the building away from environmental threats such as tornados or exposure to hazardous materials. Lastly, in serious cases where students cannot be evacuated in time, schools are placed on “lockdown”, which is a situation where all occupants are secured in designated locked areas and regular school activities are suspended (Regina Public Schools, 2016). School safety plans can be quite extensive as they can specify responses for a diverse range of incidents. The Toronto Catholic District School Board (2013), for instance, publishes a 91-page school emergency response plan. Appendix D includes an example of their school lockdown policy to illustrate the nature of these plans.

In order for safety plans to be effective, school staff and students must know the proper actions to take when threats occur. Sergeant Jeff Harder, who supervises 17 Calgary School Resource Officers (SROs), states that drills teach staff and students what to do and how to behave should a real emergency occur. He advocates having at least two drills a year to prepare for internal and external threats (McGinnis, 2007).
Dinse, a Los Angeles Police Department officer, also advocates for more lockdown procedure drills in schools. He believes these drills should be practiced as often as fire drills and argues that everyone from the school groundskeeper to the principal needs to know what to do if a shooting occurs. Dinse observes that without practice, there will be chaos and “if you don't know how to lock your door under low stress, you're not going to be able to lock your door during go time” (Alemendra, 2014, n.p.).

Some scholars believe that school intruder drills in schools are detrimental to students because they can traumatize them and causes stress on the students. Drills that are unannounced and utilize fake props such as guns and makeup are not received well by some stakeholders including parents (Kerr, 2016). A study carried out by Zhe and Nickerson (2007), however, analyzed the effects of school intruder drills on 74 fourth, fifth and sixth graders. The study utilized two different scenarios (a study session and a drill) and the researchers found there was no difference between the groups in terms of anxiety levels. Zhe and Nickerson (2007) also found that the students with the drill were able to respond appropriately in the drill and they believe that it may contribute to a sense of preparedness if a real situation were to occur.

Other agencies also respond to serious acts of school violence, which includes police officers who train for the possibility of responding to these acts. The types of responses that are developed by law enforcement depend somewhat on where an incident occurs. In a rural hamlet or First Nation, for instance, there might only be a single officer on duty within a half-hour drive. This contrasts with a large urban centre, where police response to a serious incident at a school might involve a trained special weapons and tactics (SWAT) or emergency response team (ERT) that is able to respond in minutes.
Many high schools in large urban centres employ school resource officers who work on-campus and are able to immediately respond to emergencies, including acts of violence.

One type of active shooter training is called Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD), a strategy that uses a small team of officers to assault and neutralize an active shooter to prevent them from causing more harm (Simmons, 2003). IARD is one example of the many types of critical incident training police officers in Canada receive. No one method has been proven to be better than others as they all serve the same purpose of saving lives by first stopping the threat. In order to increase officer effectiveness in these situations, use-of-force simulations are used by many Canadian police services to develop officer skills in stressful situations and enable them to make the most appropriate decisions about using force in different situations (Bennell, Jones, & Corey 2007).

Although it is important to train officers how to respond to acts of school violence and to know their schools safety plans, it is vital that school and community stakeholders develop strategies to reduce their occurrence in the first place. In this respect, school officials, the police, and other stakeholders must be able to work effectively together. The first step in this process is determining how many of these acts actually occur. The following pages describe the extent of youth violence in Canada to put these acts in context.

1.5 Youth Violence in Canada

School violence is often related to larger issues of violence in the community. Although some media accounts suggest youth crime is on the increase, information from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics shows otherwise. Figure 1 shows the
involvement of Canadian youth aged 12 to 17 years in crime over time. According to Boyce (2015, p. 22) in 2013, there was 105,000 youth between 12 to 17 years of age accused of committing a *Criminal Code of Canada* (CCC) offence, but that number had dropped to 94,100 in 2014, which was a 9% decrease (or 11,000 offences). Figure 1 shows this drop is part of a long-term decline in the youth crime severity index (CSI). There are two youth CSI, which are measures of the volume and seriousness of crimes reported to the police, and one is for overall crime and the second is for violent crime. Figure 1 shows that these two indicators are closely related. The decrease in the youth CSI represented a 9% drop in 2014 from the previous year and a 42% decline between 2004 and 2014.

**Figure 1. Police-reported youth crime severity indexes, Canada: 2004 to 2014.**

![Graph showing police-reported youth crime severity indexes, Canada: 2004 to 2014.](image)

Source: Boyce (2015)

The police reported rate of youth crime, however, is not a totally accurate reflection of the actual volume of youth crime because it does not take into account
crimes that were never reported to the police and this is known as the “dark figure of crime (Biderman & Reiss, 1967). A further limitation of these statistics is they do not show how many youth were diverted from a formal youth court appearance due to diversion programs. Youth are usually diverted for their first offence (although that will depend on the severity of the crime committed) if they take responsibility for their actions and agree to participate in the diversionary program, which might involve completing some community service. Boyce (2015) indicates that over one-half (55%) of youth are diverted from the formal youth justice system and only 45% are formally charged.

The volume of violent youth crime has been declining since the 1990s. For example, the number of youth accused of homicide in Canada decreased from 39 in 2013 to 25 in 2014 and the rate of youth accused of homicide in 2014 (1.07 per 100,000 youth) was lower than the 10-year average rate (2.25 per 100,000 youth). With respect to gender, of the 2014 total, five of the 39 youth accused of homicide in 2013 were girls, compared to one in 2012 (Allen & Superle, 2016), suggesting that like their adult counterparts, males are more likely to be accused of murder. Thirty percent of all the youth-involved homicides were classified as gang-related, which is a higher proportion than adult homicides (Cotter, 2014).

There was also a decline in the number of youth involved in non-violent offences. The most common classification of youth crime was theft of $5,000 or under (such as shoplifting offences) and this crime accounted for 18% of the youth accused. According to police-reported statistics, in 2014 about one in ten crimes involving a youth occurred at school and a summary of these offences is presented in Figure 2 (Boyce, 2015). Of these youth crimes, cannabis possession (24%) and assault (22%) were the most commonly
reported school-related offences. Uttering threats (12%) was the next frequently reported crime and theft under $5,000 occurred less often (7%).

**Figure 2.** Select offences as a proportion of police-reported incidents with youth accused committed at school during supervised hours, 2014.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of school-related offences](https://example.com/bar_chart.png)

Source: Boyce (2015)

Although rates of serious youth violence, such as homicides, have fluctuated throughout the past two decades, it is important to acknowledge that acts of bullying, cyber bullying, and minor offences such as simple assaults can create a negative culture within a school and have a devastating effect on victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Moreover, there is evidence suggesting some students who are bullied at school have assaulted or murdered their peers, while others committed suicide (Bjorkqvist, 2015; Gerard, Whitfield, Porter, & Browne, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). According to media reports, the 17-year-old perpetrator who carried out the La Loche school shooting was said to have been teased and bullied relentlessly about his large ears (Quan, 2016). Victims of bullying may develop intense feelings of rage and anger toward the students.
who abuse them, which may lead to aggressive or violent outbursts when the victim’s coping resources are overwhelmed (McCann, 2002, p. 116). As a result, it is important that these acts also be considered in any study of school violence and responses developed to reduce bullying and other negative behaviours targeting other students.

There are several other indicators of crime apart from the statistics based on reports to the police. The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study is cross-national research conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). The HBSC surveyed students aged 11 to 15 years every four years and follows a common research protocol across the participating countries. In Canada, the HBSC research team surveyed students from Grades 6 through to 10. The HBCS defines bullying as a relationship problem that is a form of repeated aggression based on an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim (Jaffe, Crooks & Watson, 2009; Olweus, 1997). According to Craig and McCuaig Edge (2011), “[p]ower can be achieved through physical, psychological, social, or systemic advantage, or by knowing another’s vulnerability (e.g., obesity, a learning problem, sexual orientation, family background) and using that knowledge to cause distress” (p. 167).

Victims of bullying are often unable to defend themselves from the negative actions of bullies. Their victimization is related to a number of short- and long-term negative outcomes including: aggression, running away from home, alcohol and drug use, dropping out of school, and committing suicide (Olweus, 1993). Psychological problems, such as depression, low self-esteem and anxiety are often associated with victimization, which may increase over time and result in emotional reactions leading to physical illnesses (Craig, 1998). According to the HBSC acts of bullying include when a student
was repeatedly teased in a way he or she did not like, or when they were deliberately excluded from activities. Using their definition, acts were not classified as bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argued or fought. It was also not considered bullying when the teasing was done in a friendly and playful manner (Craig & McCuaig-Edge, 2011; Roher, 2010).

According to Craig and McCuaig-Edge (2011), the percentage of Canadian students who reported being bullied, who had bullied others, or were both bullied and were bullies remain largely unchanged across all three waves of the survey. Approximately 40% of the students admitted to being a bully and a victim as well. The HBSC results further reveal that boys bullied others more often than girls, and this was equally true for occasional (about once a month) and frequent (once a week or more) bullying. The bullying of girls peaked in Grade 8 at 11%, and remained at that level in Grades 9 and 10, however, for boys, the prevalence of bullying others peaked in Grade 10 with 21% of the sample engaging in these acts, A small proportion of students participating in the study (1 to 4%) reported bullying others once a week or more (Craig & McCuaig, 2011).

The HBSC study also revealed there was a decline in reported victimization from Grade 6 to 10, among both boys and girls (Craig & McCuaig-Edge, 2011). A fairly consistent proportion of students across grades reported being occasionally victimized (about once a month). Girls reported occasional victimization across all four grades, while the frequency of victimization (once a week or more) was relatively similar for boys and girls. A higher proportion of frequent victimization was reported by younger students and between 3% and 8% of students reported being victimized once a week or
more (Craig & McCuaig-Edge, 2011).

A study conducted by Goldbaum, Craig, Pepler and Connolly (2003) examined victimization using four classifications of students: (a) non-victims, (b) late onset victims, (c) stable victims, and (d) desisters. Study participants included 635 boys and 606 girls enrolled in seven schools in a large Canadian city who were between nine and 14 years of age and enrolled in Grades five through seven. These researchers found that non-victims reported consistently low levels of victimization whereas desisters started with high levels of victimization, which decreased over time. Late onset victims, by contrast, reported increasing levels of victimization and whereas stable victims reported consistently high levels of victimization (Goldbaum et al., 2003).

The researchers found that risk factors for victimization included anxiety, decreased levels of trust and affection and low friendship quality (Goldbaum et al., 2003). They also found there was a relationship between aggression and victimization. As victimization increased, late onset victims reported engaging in more aggressive and bullying behaviours. It is, therefore, plausible that children who are targets of victimization for prolonged periods may learn and imitate aggressive strategies from the bullies, whom they view as powerful. Furthermore, they may act aggressively toward those weaker than themselves as a way of coping with the anger and hostility associated with their own victimization experiences (Goldbaum et al., 2003). Responding to bullying with aggression is not the appropriate way to deal with the issue as this may lead to further violence (Goldbaum et al., 2003; Mahady-Wilton, Craig, & Pepler, 2000). Given those facts, these scholars argue that bullying prevention strategies should include coping strategies for victims of bullying to prevent further aggression.
National rates of serious youth violence reported to the police have decreased between 2004 and 2014. Although rates of officially reported violence show a decrease, the Roher (2010) research reported above reveals that not all youth crimes are reported to school officials or the police. Furthermore, previous studies show that bullying seems to be widespread in Canadian schools and victims can act aggressively, including engaging in serious crimes against the students who are tormenting them.

1.6 Purpose of Study

Although acts of serious school violence, such as shootings, serious assaults, hostage-takings and bomb threats are relatively rare in Canada, school administrators in conjunction with other stakeholders (such as the police and mental health personnel) have developed strategies to prevent these acts from happening. In the event these incidents do occur, school officials should have plans in place to reduce the harm to students and staff members. The purpose of this study is to survey teachers and school staff across Canada to determine the type of safety-related training they have received and their perceptions about whether their training prepared them to respond to acts of school violence.

1.7 Research Questions

After reviewing the extant literature on school violence, threat analysis, youth violence, and violence prevention, the following four research questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions of Canadian teachers about the prevalence and possibility of extreme violence in their schools?

2. Are Canadian school staff members familiar with their school’s safety plans?

3. What steps does the respondent’s school take to prevent violence?
4. Do school staff members feel they receive enough training on school safety?

It was hypothesized that school staff had not received adequate training to manage extreme acts of school violence. Moreover, it was hypothesized that respondents would be unfamiliar with school policies and procedures related to school violence including threat assessment processes and strategies implemented by their school divisions to prevent school violence.

1.8 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provides a brief overview of the challenges of responding to acts of school violence. In addition, the role of the media in shaping our perceptions about such crimes was described. In order to place the study of school violence in context, a brief review of youth violence in Canada was provided. The four research questions to be examined in this study were also presented.

In terms of the remainder of the thesis, Chapter two provides several definitions of school violence, and a review of the research related to individuals involved in school violence, including their characteristics and an overview of theories of youth crime, and the risk factors associated with violence. The third chapter describes the development of the survey instrument, how the survey was carried out, and the types of data that were analyzed. Chapter four presents the results of the study, while the implications for policy, practice, and further research are outlined in Chapter five.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to school violence. In the pages that follow a number of different definitions of school violence are presented. In addition, the literature on youth and young adults involved in school violence is reviewed in order to shed light on the risk factors associated with these offences. That section is followed by a summary of school threat assessment procedures that are used when threats of school violence occur. Policies in Canadian schools have been developed to prevent students from acting violently and they are also described. The chapter ends with a description of the steps school administrators and staff members have undertaken to prevent and reduce violence.

2.2 Defining School Violence

School violence is a serious problem that school administrators and staff must acknowledge and confront. Although the focus of this study is preparing for the possibility of acts of serious youth violence, school violence can range from subtle threats and bullying to aggravated assaults and homicides. There are a number of definitions of school violence although there is no single, all-encompassing or universal definition (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Williams, 2005). School violence has been defined as any action or threat of action resulting in intimidation, coercion, physical harm, or personal injury. Phrased another way, acts of school violence can range from bullying to violent deaths including self-mutilation, suicide, and homicide (Givens & Swearer, 2010).

School violence is a subcategory of youth violence, which is a broad criminal
justice and public health problem particularly when dealing with aggressive or violent behaviours in youth. Youth who are exposed to violence can suffer from psychological problems including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and/or suicide and therefore violence becomes a large public health issue (David-Ferdom, Simon, Spivak, Gorman-Smith, Savannah, & Listenbee, 2015). Violence can include any act that results in the victimization of an individual or group. School violence can include acts of intimidation, threats and harassment, which happen on school grounds or on the way to and from school (Capozzoli & McVey, 1999). Violence in this context has been defined as any act jeopardizing a healthy and effective learning and working environment and includes any act that results in “victimization of a particular person or persons, irrespective of physical contact” (Roher, 2010, p. 2). School violence can also be broadly defined as youth violence that upsets or negatively affects the schooling process (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Roher, 2010). These acts can be directed at students, teachers, school staff, parents and volunteers (Roher, 2010).

Each of the definitions presented above acknowledges that violence can affect everyone at a school including other students, teachers, school staff, as well as families and the entire community. Acts of school violence can range from a threat to cause harm to oneself or others to cases of serious bodily harm, forcible robbery, sexual assault and homicide (Shafii & Shafii, 2001, p. 26). Other forms of minor aggression, antisocial behaviour, and incivilities can have a significant impact upon victims and bystanders. However, most of these acts go unreported to schools or police and are not regarded by the public to be very problematic (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). However, as highlighted in the prior chapter, these forms of minor aggression may lead to more extreme acts of school
violence by the perpetrator or by victims. It is important to acknowledge that minor acts of bullying or acts of violence that may not typically be considered as serious (e.g., an act classified as a simple assault in the CCC) may have a long-term debilitating psychological impact on a victim and can even psychologically damage witnesses of these acts.

There are other impacts of school violence, whether those acts are reported or not. Learning, for example, cannot flourish when students and teachers feel unsafe or are worried about being hurt, humiliated, mocked, or having things they value damaged or destroyed (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). The ways an individual perceives violence can be socially constructed and affected by race, class, gender, age, geographic location, ability, and religion (Williams, 2005). As a result, some people, who are already marginalized, may suffer more severely from acts of violence than individuals coming from privileged circumstances.

For the purpose of this study school violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power against another person, group, or community, and the behaviour is likely to cause physical or psychological harm (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003). This definition includes school violence occurring on school property and on the way to or from school, and also includes violence against anyone in the school setting (e.g., students, teachers, school staff, volunteers, or visitors). Although all types of violence are harmful, this study focuses on extreme acts of school violence, which includes school shootings, weapon use, hostage takings, and violence resulting in serious harm.

2.3 School Crime and Violence in Canada
One limitation in using crimes reported to the police to understand youth crime is that many offences are never reported. The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* also does not allow for anyone under the age of 12 years to be charged with an offence and therefore makes it difficult to study youth crime. According to statistics youth crime is measured by youth between the ages of 12 and 17 years. Uniform Crime Reports do show police involvement with all youth over 12 years of age who have been charged with an offence but do not include youth who were dealt with by alternative means. As a result, one of the best ways to learn about the actual prevalence of crime is to ask people if they have committed crimes.

A survey completed by The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family investigated the extent and nature of youth victimization, delinquency and crime in Alberta by asking respondents about their involvement in crime (Gomes, Bertrand, Paetsch, & Hornick, 2003). The survey was distributed to junior (Grades 7, 8, and 9) and high school (Grades 10, 11, and 12) students aged 12 to 18 years from 67 schools (n=2,001). Students were asked about their involvement in crime, and two-thirds of them reported having engaged in at least one criminal act in their lifetime and over one-half (56%) reported they had engaged in one delinquent act in the 12 months preceding the survey. (Gomes et al., 2003).

With respect to their involvement in actual offences, Gomes, Paetsch and Hornick (2003) reported that minor property related crimes (e.g., theft of less than $50 or damaging property) were the most common form of delinquent behaviour for both males and females. By contrast, the most prevalent form of violent behaviour was a common assault (e.g., slapping, punching or kicking someone in anger) or threatening to hurt
someone. A relatively large number of respondents (15.6%) reported possessing a weapon at school on at least one occasion in the previous year. Knives were the most commonly carried weapons, while handguns were the least prevalent. Males and older students were more likely to report carrying a weapon. With respect to involvement in violence, the results of this Alberta study are similar to the Toronto research carried out by Roher (2010).

Gomes et al. (2003) found that a number of factors were associated with weapons possession, including poor family functioning, low levels of parental monitoring, and respondents with highly delinquent peer groups and poor school conduct (e.g., suspensions, expressing thoughts about dropping out, parental disapproval of peers, and negative attitudes toward school). In addition to weapons possession, these indicators were also positively associated with engaging in criminal behaviours. Respondents living with both parents also reported having less involvement in delinquency than respondents from single parent homes. Students who had a conduct disorder or hyperactivity reported higher rates of involvement in delinquency and these factors were also associated with weapons possession. Participation in leisure and extracurricular activities was weakly associated with delinquent behaviour but involvement in commercial or entertainment activities (e.g., going to the mall or arcade and attending cultural and/or educational activities) was also associated with involvement in delinquent behaviour (Gomes et al., 2003).

In 2008, the Toronto District School Board released a report entitled, *The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety* (Falconer, Edwards, & MacKinnon, 2008) a study that was precipitated by the death of Jordan Manners (see Chapter 1). These
investigators reported results that were similar to those reported in the Gomes study carried out in Alberta nine years earlier. The Toronto District School Board (2008) surveyed staff and students from two Toronto high schools. Participants were asked a number of questions regarding school safety, violence and victimization. The results of the surveys from both schools were similar and about 60% of the student respondents think that weapons are a serious or very serious problem at their school. The students report that about 22% of them had been victims or robbery or extortion. About 18% report having been threatened with a weapon and 11% report they had been assaulted with a weapon. About 12% of students from one school and 5.7% from the other indicated they have had guns pointed at them or had been shot at in the previous two years. Despite those risks, most students report feeling fairly or very safe at school (Falconer et al., 2008).

2.4 Theories of School Violence

Rich (1981) observes that four theories can explain school violence: social disorganization, social learning, labelling and differential association. Psychological theories and the conflict approach provide two additional frameworks for understanding school violence. In this section, these six approaches are briefly reviewed.

Firstly, the social disorganization approach proposes that a break down in informal social control can result in increased crime and violence. Indicators of social disorganization include higher levels of population heterogeneity, a high proportion of single parent families, increased poverty and low levels of residential stability, such as neighbourhood residents moving often. Under these conditions community members
(including teachers) may be less successful in exerting informal social control and crime may increase.

The social disorganization theory was developed by Shaw and McKay in 1942 and they identified the criminogenic effects of a breakdown of social institutions in the community. They based their proposition on the work of Ernest Burgess who theorized that urban areas grow through continual expansion from the inner core to the outer areas (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1925). Burgess et al., (1925) observed that poor newcomers would settle in transition zones until they were able to move to safer and more prosperous neighbourhoods. Shaw and McKay (1942) argued that rates of delinquency would be higher in the transition zones due to poverty, rapid population growth and residential instability (e.g. transiency) which disrupt the core social institution of the family. The delinquency rate is lower in the outer zones because there is more community organization and the neighbourhoods are more stable (Cullen & Agnew, 2003).

The conflict approach focuses on power relationships within society. Generally the dominant group has more political and economic power and as a result, crimes against the marginalized tend to be punished more severely (Reiman & Leighton, 2012). Youth crime and violence increases if subgroups hold different values and the laws and norms of the majority group are used to control these other marginalized groups. This may result in more policing in neighbourhoods where these minority group members live and higher rates of minority youth can become involved in the justice system (Comack, 2012). Proponents of a conflict perspective argue that feelings of powerlessness, marginalization and oppression may contribute to higher levels of violence. Most youth
engage in minor criminal acts but only a small percentage are ever arrested, and supporters of the conflict proposition argue that these youth are overwhelmingly drawn from marginalized groups (Reiman & Leighton, 2012).

It has also been proposed that if a youth adopts a negative or pro-criminal identity they will be more likely to become involved in crime. This can occur when a youth has been formally labelled as an offender based on the delinquent acts they have committed. Being formally labeled as an offender causes others to look upon them negatively, and some scholars argue if the individual accepts this new label, he or she might act accordingly, which is called secondary deviance (Lemert, 1951). Some scholars contend that being labeled as a criminal increases the likelihood they will engage in further criminal behaviour (Hirschi, 1969; Jackson & Hay, 2013; Lilly, Cullen & Ball, 2007). Other researchers concluded that a strong family attachment at and around the time of criminal labelling decreases the chances of re-offending (Jackson & Hay, 2013).

Critics such as Ackers (1968) have indicated that the labelling theory tries to explain deviant behaviour and explain the reactions to the crimes an individual commits. Ackers challenges the notion that people are not deviant until they are actually given that label as this does not explain why those people committed crimes in the first place, or if they continue to offend if undetected (and are not labeled). Researchers have also criticized labelling theory because it does not adequately explain the process and structures that actually leads to deviant behaviour (Paternoster & Iovanni, 1989). Gove (1980) indicates the labelling effects of criminality may be due to differences in behaviour, which may affect future adult behaviour. Critics also believe that labeling theory does not take into account external influences or experiences such as
socioeconomic background or socialization when explaining criminal behaviours (Gove, 1980).

A fourth approach to explaining youth involvement in crime is differential association. Supporters of the differential association approach propose that deviant and lawful behaviour are learned in the same manner by the process of social interaction within one’s social group. Deviant behaviour is therefore learned through interaction in peer groups or from one’s family and this negative conduct flourishes if there is a lack of positive role models. Becoming deviant depends upon the frequency, duration and priority of contact with law-abiding and deviant groups (Sutherland, 1947). According to Rich (1981), schools can combat these conditions by ensuring students who come from deviant backgrounds or who associate with deviant individuals are surrounded by law abiding people and ensure these students can learn from these positive role models. In order to accomplish this undertaking, schools could also set up after school programs to provide students with alternatives to negative influences (Rich, 1981).

Although differential association was once a popular theoretical explanation for delinquency, empirical studies have produced mixed results when it comes to explaining crime. Researchers who studied the effects of deviant behaviour on peers have found that deviant youth do not have much of an influence on their friend’s behaviours (Kneckt, Snijders, Baerveldt, Steglich, & Raub, 2010). Research conducted in Korea also found that differential association theory did not explain bullying and the investigators did not find a significant relationship between associations with delinquent peers and bullying (Moon, Hwang, Hye-Won & McCluskey, 2011).
Psychological theories have also been used to explain school violence. In some cases, violence has been associated with students who have problems with mental health such as depression. Langman (2009) examined the histories of eight school shooters and found they fell into three categories. The first group was psychopathic shooters who feel no emotional connection to other people and did not express guilt or remorse for their actions. Psychotic shooters, by contrast, suffer from a break from reality and do not understand what they are doing. Finally, traumatized shooters experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse, which leads them to engage in school violence (Rocque, 2012).

The way individuals learn can also explain youth involvement in crime and violence. The social learning approach was first articulated by Bandura (1971) who focused on patterns of behaviour learned through direct experience, or observation of the behaviour of others. Learning, in Bandura’s model, is shaped by the rewards and punishments that follow our actions and behaviours. Social learning theories were extended by Akers (1973) who proposed that the probability of someone engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour increases when they associate with or are exposed to others who are involved in criminal behaviour. Criminal behaviour is then seen as desirable or justified in a situation, and especially for those who have received or expect more of a reward rather than punishment for engaging in those acts (Akers, 1998).

Social learning theory is an extension of differential association theory. Differential association focuses on the learning occurring after exposure to intimate groups. The more a person is exposed to criminal behaviour as the norm the chances of them becoming criminal themselves increases. Social learning theory includes learning
from intimate relationships but it also includes positive or negative reinforcement of these learned behaviours (Akers, 1968).

Social learning theory might explain why students engage in copycat acts of school violence because they witnessed similar acts either at school, on television or in video games. Social learning provides one possible explanation as to why there is an increase in school violence after a widely reported act of violence occurs (e.g., eight days after the Columbine tragedy, a copycat school shooting took place in Taber, Alberta). Social learning theory can also be used to explain the effect of peers on the behaviour of an individual: for example, in cases where two students convince each other to engage in a crime (Rocque, 2011, p. 309). Research conducted by Brauer and De Coster (2015) examined the influence of parents and peers to delinquency using social learning theory and control theories. They found that behaviour is learned through interaction with others and in particular closely-knit peer groups. They also reported that parental influence on delinquency is an unimportant factor in determining whether someone becomes delinquent. Brauer and De Coster (2015) also found that youth with parents who disapproved of delinquent behaviour had an increased chance of becoming delinquent. The researchers attributed this finding to youth who perceive their parents as controlling and therefore acting in ways that contradicted their parent’s beliefs in order to challenge or defy their parent’s expectations (Brauer & De Coster, 2015).

The theoretical approaches listed above can be used to explain school violence by taking into account an individual’s community, their family background, learned behaviour through social interaction, the degree to which youth are labeled, the impact of issues of race, class and gender (and how some social groups are marginalized), being
victimized and taking into account those suffering from mental illnesses. One limitation of theories of youth violence is that no single approach can fully explain why a student decides to become violent at school. Prior research has shown there are very few common traits of a student who becomes violent, and furthermore, these events rarely occur (Daniels & Bradley, 2011; O’Toole, 2000; Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski & Reddy, 2004). Whereas most studies show that violence tends to be concentrated in neighbourhoods with a high proportion of marginalized populations most school shooters are from suburban, middle-class neighbourhoods (Rocque, 2012).

The inability of a single approach to fully account for school shootings suggests that an interdisciplinary approach is used to understand this form of crime (Henry, 2009). Farnworth (1989), along with other theorists developed an explanation for crime using an interdisciplinary approach that integrates a number of theoretical approaches. Theoretical integration is defined by Farnworth (1989) as “the combination of two or more pre-existing theories, selected on the basis of their perceived commonalities, into a single reformulated theoretical model with greater comprehensiveness and exploratory value than any one of its component theories” (p. 95). Muschert (2007) observes “school shooting incidents need to be understood as resulting from a constellation of contributing causes, none of which is sufficient in itself to explain a shooting” (p. 68).

### 2.5 Risk Factors of Extreme School Violence

A number of strategies have been used to determine common characteristics of school shooters, including reviewing the traits of these individuals, as well as asking teachers, students, and parents for their opinions about the factors that contribute to school violence. Research conducted by Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski
and Reddy (2004) indicates there is no single accurate or useful profile of a school shooter. Behaviours shooters exhibited prior to an attack were considered by these researchers and they found nearly all of these individuals engaged in behaviours prior to their attacks that concerned at least one adult (Randazzo, Borum, Vossekuil, Fein, Modzeleski, & Pollack, 2005). Radazzo et al. (2005) indicate that the use of profiles for threat assessment may cause some potential school shooters to be overlooked because they do not fit a certain profile or share common characteristics of a school shooter (see also: Reddy, Borum, Berglund, Vossekuil, Fein, & Modzeleski, 2001).

Several researchers examined U.S. school shootings and the U.S. National Institute of Justice funded a study of school violence carried out by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education. In that study, Schuster (2009) examined 37 school shootings occurring between December 1974 and May 2000. Of these incidents, almost all of the shooters (95%) planned the attack, 93% behaved in a manner prior to the attack which caused concern for others, 81% told another person before the attack occurred, and 71% felt bullied, threatened or attacked by others (Schuster, 2009). Schuster also found that over two-thirds (69%) of these offenders obtained a gun from their home or from someone they knew prior to the attack, 63% had a history of weapon use, 24% had a history of drug and or alcohol abuse, 17% had a mental health problem or behavioural disorder, and the academic performance of these attackers ranged from failing to excellent (Schuster, 2009).

A follow-up study examined 88 shootings in U.S. public schools (kindergarten through to grade 12) that occurred between 2004 and 2014 (Lankford, 2015). Similar to the Schuster (2009) research, most (n=42) of these shootings occurred in cities or in
suburban schools (n=35), and two-thirds of these acts occurred at high schools. Most of the shooters were males under 20 years of age and about one-quarter of them had obtained their weapons from family members. The contributing factors that led to these shootings included disputes between the shooter and victim(s) (n=26) and gang activities (n=18). Lankford (2015) also reported that other contributing factors included bullying, depression and misplaced anger.

In addition to developing profiles of school shooters, Bliss, Emshoff, Buck, and Cook (2006) questioned parents about their perceptions of the causes of school violence. Respondents identified 19 possible causes of school violence and they believed that a lack of parental supervision and abusive/violent families were the leading factors contributing to school violence (see also Hirschi, 1969). Additional sources of violence were thought to be a lack of punishment for offenders, a lack of positive role models, access to firearms, substance use and bullying (Bliss et al., 2006). Although these parents identified factors that were similar to those listed by the Secret Service and Department of Education, the usefulness of their observations is limited as these respondents had no direct knowledge of school shooters.

Using a similar methodological approach, Thornton (2002) interviewed 80 students, 80 teachers and 12 administrative staff from four middle schools in a southern U.S. city about their perceptions of school violence. Two-fifths (40%) of the students interviewed stated that being “picked on” was a cause of violence in their schools. According to the researcher’s definition, being picked on included being the subject of gossip or ridicule and being bullied. The second most highly reported cause of school violence was anger and 15% of the respondents stated some students would suppress
their anger, which would ultimately explode into an act of violence. Nine percent of the students stated that a negative home life was another contributing factor to school violence (Thornton, 2002).

With respect to home and neighbourhood life, Zagar, Arbit, Sylvies and Busch (1990) found the chances of a male student committing murder was twice as high after they were exposed to negative life experiences such as family violence, abuse and/or belonging to a gang (see also: Shafii & Shafii, 2001). Living in high crime neighbourhoods and in troubled or violent home situations was also associated with a higher involvement in school violence. Thornton’s (2002) study, however, reveals that less than one-half (43%) of the teachers and 46% of administrators reported that a negative home life was the leading cause of school violence. Instead, they identified a lack of communication skills and anger management problems as factors contributing to school violence (Thornton, 2002).

Meadows (2007) identified eight risk factors that predispose adolescents to violence. The first risk factor is associated with biological and psychological factors and includes neurological, cognitive and psychiatric disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Oppositional Defiance Disorder (Meadows, 2007). A youth’s level of intelligence was also thought to be negatively related with a risk for violence. The third identified risk factor was early aggressive behaviours, such as a child’s inability to manage their anger and the fourth considered family characteristics such as inappropriate or inadequate child rearing practices, as well as neglect and abandonment. Exposure to violence and victimization within the home and/or community was the fifth risk factor. Exposure of youth to violence through television, the Internet, and violent
video games was the sixth risk factor, which was followed by how youth perceive conflict resolution in their community, and how some youngsters learned to use violence to respond to conflict. The final risk factor had to do with school composition: Overcrowding, high student to teacher ratios, poor academic performance and schools with a negative learning environment were identified as risk factors for violence (Meadows, 2007).

Altogether, previous research indicates that a number of conditions contribute to school violence. These risk factors can be divided into four categories. Firstly, the risk factors associated with youth violence are linked with family dynamics such as a lack of parental supervision or discipline and neglect (Johnson & Fisher, 2003). These researchers believe a lack of parental discipline and neglect are contributing causes of school violence as well as delinquent behaviours such as underage drinking, drug use, truancy and violence (Bennett-Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Fisher, 2003). For example, a youth’s family may have exhibited violence as a way to handle disputes and the youth eventually models those behaviours. O’Keefe (1997) surveyed 135 students from urban and suburban high schools in Los Angeles regarding their perceptions of violence in their homes and communities. She found that children displayed more violent behaviours if they were exposed to violence inside and outside the home.

The second category of risk factors for violence relates to school and peer dynamics. Being bullied by another student may lead to aggressive behaviours because the individual is unable to cope with the taunting or abuse. In two-thirds of the 37 school shootings between 1974 and 2000, the U.S. Secret Service (2000) reported that the attacker felt bullied, attacked, threatened, or persecuted before the incident. Research
conducted by Vossekuil et al. (2002) and Gerard et al. (2015) provided empirical support for those findings. Vossekuil et al. (2002) reported about three-quarters of the offenders felt bullied or persecuted by others. By contrast, over half of the respondents (54%) in the research carried out by Gerard et al. (2015) reported being bullied, abused or neglected. These findings suggest offenders are frequently subjected to bullying and victimization prior to their attacks. Research conducted in Finland also supports the notion of bullying in regards to school shooters; Bjorkquist (2015) found that in all three cases he studied the shooters were also victims of bullying at their schools.

Data from the International Youth Survey (IYS) reveals how a lack of commitment to school, poor grades and antisocial behaviour can also contribute to school violence (Statistics Canada, 2008). Analysis of the IYS also indicated truancy, lacking university aspirations and viewing the school as unsafe were all associated with a greater chance of engaging in property and violent crimes (Statistics Canada, 2008, p. 20). About 15% of youth in the sample indicated they had committed at least one of six illegal acts including theft, carrying a weapon, threatening someone with a weapon, participating in a group fight, or intentionally assaulting another person so badly the victim had to see a doctor. It was also found that in a typical Toronto school, between 6% and 27% of students engaged in violent crimes in the previous year (Statistics Canada, 2008). Almost two-thirds (63%) of those who were involved in violent delinquency also reported that their parents were low monitors. Results of this research indicated that students whose parents did not monitor their child’s friends and acquaintances were three times more likely to become involved in illegal activities (Statistics Canada, 2008). It was also found that respondents with a group of friends who were accepting of “illegal” behaviour were
over four times more likely to engage in crime than those without such a group of friends (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Individual level factors also contribute to school violence. With respect to individual level factors, youth spend a considerable amount of time watching television or playing video games, which are often violent in nature. Exposing youngsters who already have a violent predisposition to these influences can increase ideation about violence (Johnson & Fisher, 2003; Shafii & Shafii, 2001). A study by Lichter, Lichter and Amundson (1999, p. 53) examined the frequency with which violent images were portrayed in popular entertainment and they found these images were televised an average of 14 times per hour. Capozzoli and McVey (2000) speculated that violence portrayed by the news and entertainment media desensitizes people and normalizes its use (see also Denmark, 2005).

Community level factors might also contribute to rates of youth violence. Some youth are exposed to high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, which may become a normalized activity for their peers. Fenno (2013), for example, found that drug and alcohol use in a sample of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan high school students was several times the national average.

The availability of guns and other weapons has also been identified as a contributing factor to youth violence. U.S. gun control laws have been the subject of considerable debate among politicians and the public, particularly since the Sandy Hook School shooting in December 2012 that claimed 20 children and six adults. Firearm ownership in the U.S. is more prevalent than in Canada. In 2010, for example, there were about 7.6 million registered guns in Canada and almost two million gun owners in a
population of about 34 million persons (Davis, 2012). In the United States, by contrast, there were approximately 310 million firearms in circulation or almost one gun for every resident (Mays & Ruddell, 2015).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2003) investigated how students obtained firearms used in crimes that occurred in schools, such as homicide and/or acts of suicide. Information about the types of weapons used and their sources were collected through interviews with school and police officials and by reviewing police reports of incidents occurring between 1992 and 1999. Two hundred and eighteen student perpetrators, between the ages of 10-21 years (93.5% were male) were involved directly in a school-associated homicide or suicide. One hundred twenty-three (56.4%) of them used at least one firearm at the time of the event. Of those students 33 (26.8%) committed suicide, 85 (69.1%) perpetrated a homicide, and five (4.1%) were involved in a murder-suicide. The Centers for Disease Control (2003) also found that most of these students obtained guns from their homes (37.5%) with the next likely sources being a friend or relative (23.4%), an illegal purchase (7%) or stealing the firearm (5.5%).

Although there are fewer firearms per capita in Canada than in the U.S., they are never-the-less readily available. Butters, Sheptycki, Brochu and Erickson (2011) reported that 40% of the at-risk youth in Toronto they interviewed said they could obtain a gun if they wanted one within three hours although, in Montreal, only 27% felt they could obtain a firearm at the same time. Similar to the results reported by the Centers for Disease Control (2003) the Canadian students indicated they could buy a gun from a friend or relative, obtain one on the streets, purchase one from a drug dealer, or steal or trade for one.
Finally, an individual’s personality or psychological traits may be a contributing factor to violence. Factors such as mental health status, impulse control, drug and alcohol use, and early patterns of aggressive behaviour have been identified as correlates of aggressive and/or antisocial behaviour in school violence (Furlong, 2004). Herrenkohl, Lee and Hawkins (2012) identified a number of psychological variables associated with an increased risk for violence in their longitudinal study of a Seattle public school. The youth were assessed each year from the fifth grade until they were 16 years old, and then two years afterward. These scholars found that children exhibiting violent or criminal behaviour at an early age were at a greater risk for continuing violence in adolescence (Herrenkohl et al., 2012; McCann, 2002).

Herrenkohl et al. (2012) also found that behaviour in children aged 10 to 12 years could predict future behaviours. In a longitudinal study potential risk factors were measured in students at ages 10, 14, and 16 years. The researchers then determined if these youth were involved in violent acts, and it was found that there was a positive relationship between violence and antisocial behaviour, marihuana use, family conflict and problems in school (Herrenkohl et al., 2012, n.p.). Students who avoided alcohol and antisocial behavior at a younger age showed a decreased risk for violence as teenagers. Furthermore, youngsters who had high academic achievement, low exposure to marihuana, and no attention problems had a lower risk for violence from age 15 to 18 years (Herrenkohl et al., 2012, n.p.).

2.6 Threat Assessment Techniques

School shootings in Canada have been rare as compared to the United States. Nevertheless, the police and school personnel should always be prepared to respond to
critical incidents. One of the most effective preventative approaches is to conduct a threat assessment and then confront students exhibiting threatening behaviours. These assessments bring together educators, law enforcement, mental health professionals and other stakeholders to respond to threats made by students. Threat assessment, as defined by Sawyer and Cameron (2004), is a process of determining if a threat maker actually poses a risk to the target or targets that have been threatened.

According to Sawyer and Cameron (2004), an initial threat can come in many forms and the degree of risk first needs to be determined. For example, a high-level threat poses an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others because these threats are direct, specific and plausible, and steps have already been undertaken by the student to carry out an offence, such as obtaining a weapon (Cameron, 2003). A medium level threat, on the other hand, could be expressed by a student but may not be entirely realistic. The threat may have been idealized by the student who is in the process of planning the attack, such as having identified a date and time. There may also be a specific statement that is conveyed, such as the student stating “I’m serious” or “I really mean it.”

Students expressing low-level threats generally pose a minimal risk to others and their threats are often vague with no real planning and are unlikely to occur. If the threat is imminent or assessed to be a high risk the police must be called immediately. By contrast, if the risk is not imminent the threat assessment team can be called into action to manage the student’s needs and the potential threat (Cameron, 2003).

The school shootings in Littleton, Colorado in 1999 led to research that attempted to find risk factors associated with these incidents. The U.S. Secret Service undertook this task as they had already developed their own threat assessment protocols, designed to
prevent and respond to attacks on public officials (Fein et al., 2004). In addition to schools, their approach to threat assessment has also been applied to workplace threats (Fein & Vossekuil, 2000). This research shed light on how threat assessments could be used to reduce violence in different settings.

Most researchers agree that there is no single profile or type of perpetrator of school violence. According to the threat assessment approach, violence is the product of an interaction between perpetrator, situation, target and setting (Cameron, 2003; Fein et al., 1995; Fein & Vossekuil, 2000; Vossekuil et al., 2004). Cameron (2003) found that serious threats made by Alberta students were more likely to occur within the first year after school shooting incidents. He also reports that students uttering these threats did not fit into any sort of profile, although most were males. These students came from all grade levels, and many expressed suicidal thoughts and suffered from “sub-clinical or atypical depression or other mental health disorders that have gone untreated” (Cameron, 2000, n.p.).

The second guiding principle underlying threat assessments is the distinction between uttering a threat and actually posing a threat (Randazzo et al., 2005). Making a threat does not always indicate a serious risk to the target, compared with those who plan harm without actually articulating a threat. Examples include a student who is found to be accessing bomb-making techniques or trying to obtain a firearm on the Internet (Randazzo et al., 2005). Vossekuil et al. (2002) found that nearly all school shooters had previously engaged in some sort of behaviour that had seriously concerned at least one adult in their lives. Most school shooters communicated their intentions to do harm in
various ways including writing notes, posting information on the Internet or making verbal threats to others (Cameron, 2003).

The final principle underlying threat assessment approaches is that targeted violence is neither random nor spontaneous. Targeted violence is often the result of an understandable and often discernible pattern of thinking and behaviour (Fein et al., 1995; Randazzo et al., 2005; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Consistent with that observation, most school shootings are planned events. Given these findings, a fact-based assessment process such as the threat assessment approach may be effective in preventing cases of school violence.

There are several different approaches to assessing a student’s risk of violence. The Virginia Model of Threat Assessment (VMTA), for example, differentiates between transient and substantive threats (Cornell et al., 2004). Transient threats are low-level threats that can often be resolved quickly. Substantive threats, on the other hand, are serious in nature and pose an on-going risk or danger to others (Cornell, 2006). Either type of threat requires a response from the school and the following paragraphs outline how these threats are addressed.

After identifying a threat the next step is to determine a course of action based on the behaviour of the student(s). If a student exhibits concerning behaviour but no real threat has been made, the team develops a plan of action and continues to monitor the situation. If the student’s behaviour is exceptional in nature (e.g., posting a drawing of himself shooting students in the school cafeteria) or an actual threat has been made, the team must call police to investigate since a criminal charge may be warranted (Cameron, 2003; Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, & Xitao, 2009). The VMTA does not require the entire
threat assessment team to confront the student. Instead, the initial contact is with the school principal who determines the level of threat and the next steps. School personnel may manage the issue internally, or if the threat is serious the entire team becomes involved (Cornell, 2009).

The threat assessment team described above utilizes a four-pronged assessment process. The four issues considered by the team include the personality of the student, family dynamics (e.g., their relationships with family members and whether the student has access to firearms), school dynamics—including the youth’s relationships with teachers and peers at school, their involvement in school activities—and last, social dynamics, which includes friendships, attitudes and the student’s decision making processes. In order to assess these characteristics, the student’s background information is gathered through interviews (Cameron, 2003; O’Toole, 2000).

An evaluation of the information obtained during the four-pronged approach ultimately determines an appropriate level of response. High-level threats necessitate immediate intervention by staff and law enforcement, whereas low-level threats may require police officers to interact with the student while school officials monitor the situation. Individuals carrying out threat assessments require experience conducting investigations, as well as professional training, to become part of the threat assessment teams.

In order to facilitate threat assessment interventions, there are various training programs offered throughout Canada that teach attendees how to recognize threats and manage the problem of students making threats in their schools. Research has revealed that most students involved in acts of extreme school violence at school had mentioned a
possible attack to their peers prior to an incident (Fein et al., 2004; Randazzo et al., 2005; Vossekuil et al., 2002). Therefore, students are encouraged to inform school staff when someone they know is making these types of threats, which may also prevent violent crimes, including school shootings.

Several researchers have examined the efficacy of the VMTA approach. One study compared schools that had adopted the VMTA to schools that had not. A sample of students from 95 schools were surveyed and respondents in schools where the assessments were used reported having a more positive school climate, with less teasing and bullying than schools that did not use assessments. Respondents who were in schools having adopted the threat assessment approach also reported that school staff were more caring and treated them with respect. As a result, students were more willing to seek help in a bullying situation or if threats of violence occurred. Schools that had implemented the VMTA also had fewer long-term suspensions (Cornell et al., 2009; Eisenbraun, 2007). There are some additional reasons for the positive outcomes reported in this study, including a strong emphasis on resolving student conflicts and intervening in cases of bullying before such incidents escalated. It may also be possible, however, that schools with low levels of bullying and more positive school climates adopted the threat assessment program while more dysfunctional schools did not use these approaches.

2.7 Confronting School Violence

Concern over school violence has resulted in a number of preventative measures adopted by schools in addition to the threat assessments described above. There is a growing presence of security guards and school resource officers in many American
schools (Robers, Zhang, Morgan, and Musu-Gillette, 2015). There are also a number of strategies that use technology to help ensure safety at schools, which includes installing metal detectors and closed-circuit cameras, and requiring students, staff, and visitors to wear identification. Various school-based practices, such as zero tolerance policies are also utilized and these strategies are described in this section.

When it comes to security measures, there is no national level report of what is occurring in Canada, but in the U.S., a growing number of schools are using these measures. The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) compiles annual reports based on information drawn from a variety of sources, including surveys of students, teachers and principals. During the 2013-2014 school year, 70% of U.S. students between the ages of 12 and 18 years reported having a police or security presence in their schools (Robers et al., 2015). During the same school year over one-half of students (52%) reported that locker checks were carried out and over one-quarter (26%) were required to wear badges or picture identification while at school. Eleven percent of students reported having to pass through metal detectors at their schools and almost two-thirds (64%) said that security cameras were used to monitor the school (Robers et al., 2015).

Research conducted in two mid-Atlantic U.S. schools increases our understanding of how students experience high-security schools and how their experiences inform their perceptions about safety (Bracy, 2011). Two schools, approximately 20 miles apart, were compared: one school had a predominantly white (75%), middle-class student population and only 11% of the students were from low-income families, whereas the comparison school had a much higher percentage (41%) of students from low-income families. The
comparison school was also more racially diverse and slightly over one-third (36%) of the students were White, 50% were African-American, and 11% were Latina/Latino. At the time of the study, both schools used similar security strategies, including employing full-time SROs (Bracy, 2011, pp. 372-373). The researchers conducted 26 interviews and that sample included all of the administrators, the SRO, all disciplinary staff, as well as five teachers, ten students, and five parents from each school.

Interviews with students in Bracy’s (2011) comparative study revealed that security strategies employed by schools may have very little to do with a student’s perceptions of safety. Students at both schools reported that adding security measures such as metal detectors are not really necessary and in some instances create an inconvenience having few crime prevention benefits. Students reported they do not believe SROs increase safety and do not see the need for security measures such as metal detectors or surveillance cameras. These types of security measures are commonplace in U.S. schools and have come to be expected, whether they are necessary or not (Bracy, 2011).

However, it has also been argued that some safety measures increase student fear. For example, Gastic (2010) found that students in schools with metal detectors felt significantly less safe than students in schools without these measures. Not surprisingly, students attending schools with higher rates of violence felt less safe at school than those attending schools with lower levels of violence. Gastic (2010) believes these perceptions of fear may be shaped by the use of metal detectors and similar security measures. Students may also be sensitive to what their friends and family are saying about having security measures in schools. Although metal detectors can be an effective tool in
keeping weapons out of schools, students and their families need to be informed about why these measures are being used including decreasing risk and contributing to positive feelings of safety at school (Gastic, 2010).

Closed circuit television cameras are used in some schools to increase the safety of students and staff, to protect school property from vandalism and/or theft, and maintain student discipline (Roher, 2010). For example, video surveillance is used in all Regina Catholic schools. In order to obtain approval for video surveillance a school’s principal and the Superintendent of Facilities must provide a rationale explaining why a video camera is required in a specific location. Less intrusive measures must also be taken into consideration prior to seeking approval to install a camera. The Director of Education then makes the final decision on whether or not the camera is installed. To make sure everyone is aware of the use of the camera(s), signs must be posted within the schools. Cameras are used for a variety of reasons, which includes promoting safety, protection of property, maintaining order and discipline and to detect and deter criminal behaviour (Regina Catholic School Board, 2015). The use of covert or hidden cameras in Regina Catholic schools is also allowed with permission from the Director of Education in exceptional circumstances and as long as the use falls within the scope of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act SS 1990-1991).

Some are concerned that the use of video surveillance reduces the privacy of individuals. Critics argue that a student’s right to privacy outweighs a school’s safety and security, but a growing number of schools are introducing policies to enhance the use of video surveillance (Roher, 2010). Although security measures such as surveillance
and metal detectors are becoming more commonly used in schools, educational leaders also rely upon policies and practices that attempt to reduce disruptive or antisocial behaviours and crime.

2.8 Zero Tolerance Policies

One of the most controversial school violence reduction strategies is the zero tolerance policy (ZTP). These policies originated in the 1990s in the U.S. and had their origins in the ‘get tough on drugs and crime’ era. ZTP refers to school policies that impose severe punishments for all offences and the underlying argument is that such policies treat everyone equally (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Winton, 2012). Some school policy makers in the 1990s believed that ZTP measures kept schools safe by deterring and reducing school violence by showing that violent behaviour would not be tolerated (Skiba & Losen, 2015). ZTP are controversial because many researchers believe these practices are ineffective and do more harm than good (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Gastic, 2010). Skiba and Peterson (1999) observe “there are few incidents of serious violence and many incidents of minor disruption, policies that set harsh consequences indiscriminately will capture a few incidents of serious violence and many incidents of minor disruption” (p. 6). Consistent with that observation, there are numerous news accounts of youth who innocently bring items to school with no intent to cause harm and are expelled. A Pennsylvania kindergarten student, for instance, was suspended for brandishing a pink Hello Kitty gun (Rubinkam, 2013). Furthermore, an eight-year-old was suspended from school for pretending his finger was a gun in a game of cops and robbers (Cavellos, 2014).
Opponents of ZTP argue this practice does more harm than good because the education of suspended or expelled students is disrupted. In addition, expelled students receive few due process protections as they are assumed to be guilty (Henault, 2001; Winton, 2012). A number of scholars have also linked zero tolerance policies with a phenomenon they call the “school to prison pipeline.” They argue that ZTP criminalizes some acting-out behaviours and result in pushing some students into the youth justice system rather than managing their behaviour in the schools (Daly, Hildenbrand, Haney-Caron, Goldstein, Galloway & DeMatteo, 2016). Labelling theorists would argue that students who are punished using ZTP policies might assume the label of a criminal. Once a student is labeled it is difficult to overcome that stigma and may cause teachers and staff to treat that student differently (Cassidy & Jackson, 2005)

A national task force was established in the U.S. to examine data related to ZTP practices and the outcomes of students suspended as a result of these policies (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). These investigators also examined research pertaining to the effects of ZTP with respect to child development, the relationships between the education and justice systems, as well as outcomes for students, families and communities. The task force produced five key findings: First, although the public thought that school violence was at a crisis level and getting worse, a review of crime statistics reveals few incidents of lethal violence had actually occurred. Second, the task force could find no evidence that ZTP increased the consistency of school discipline. Third, the removal of students who violate school rules did not automatically result in a more satisfactory school climate. Fourth, the swift and certain punishments that are the foundation of the zero tolerance approach resulted in a higher dropout rate
and a higher percentage of students who failed to graduate on time. Finally, the researchers found that while parents wanted harsh punishments for students who jeopardize their children’s safety, they reacted negatively when a student’s education was restricted or compromised. An analysis of the data also showed that many students regard suspension as ineffective and unfair (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Based on the research findings, the task force recommended that ZTP be modified to: (a) use greater flexibility by taking school context and teacher expertise into account; (b) train all staff in appropriate means of handling each type of infraction; (c) ensure that school discipline or school violence prevention strategies are having a beneficial impact on student behaviour and school safety; (d) reserve disciplinary removals for the most serious and severe behaviours; (e) introduce measures that can improve school climate and a sense of school community and belongingness; and; (f) improve communication between schools, parents, police, and justice system and health professionals in order to develop programs for at-risk youth (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008, p. 857). Other alternatives to zero tolerance policies include universal crime preventative programs and providing early and on-going support for youth at risk (Winton, 2012).

In contrast to ZTP, Ontario enacted legislation in 2007 to abolish mandatory school expulsions (see: An Act to Amend the Education Act in Respect of Behaviour, Discipline and Safety). Instead of expelling students they are now suspended until their principal conducts an investigation into an incident and recommends a solution to the school board. Mitigating factors must also be considered and these factors include
whether an incident was the result of a student being harassed, the impact of a suspension on the student’s education, and their age. Alternative programs were also introduced to ensure that suspended and expelled youth can continue to access their education. In addition, there is a growing emphasis on early interventions carried out by school-based psychologists, social workers and youth workers (Winton, 2012).

Although some policymakers still believe that ZTP is an essential tool, several scholars argue these approaches are adopted in response to public anxiety, fears and frustrations rather than based on sound research (Findlay, 2008; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). As noted in Chapter 1, the media can inflame public fear and anxiety, and zero tolerance policies were created to reassure the public that school violence is being handled forcefully, decisively, and firmly (Findlay, 2008). The belief that students need to take more responsibility for their actions is a key argument of ZTP supporters. Although these practices have been criticized, zero tolerance policies are intended to set high standards and send a clear message to students that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated (Findlay, 2008). Despite these beliefs, these policies have not been widely adopted in Canada.

2.9 School Resource Officers

School Resource Officers (SRO) are working in most large urban high schools as well as schools in many RCMP jurisdictions across Canada (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015). SROs carry out a number of school-related duties including law enforcement, teaching classes, counseling and crime prevention, and they also act as positive role models. Evaluations of the SRO Program in Toronto were completed in the 2009 and 2011 school years. These evaluations measured the perceptions of safety in
schools, perceptions of the police and the SRO program, and student comfort with, and willingness to report crime and victimization to the police. Forty-six schools participated in the evaluation and a class from each grade was selected to take part in a survey (Toronto Police Service, 2011).

In terms of the outcomes of the evaluation, a total of 3,553 students completed the 2009 survey while 1,449 students completed the 2011 survey (Toronto Police Service, 2011). A key finding was that about 90% of them reported feeling safe in their schools. A greater proportion of students who talked with their SRO reported their schools were safe (93%) as compared to students who never spoke to their SRO (89%). By contrast, 70% of the students who did not feel safe in school felt that having police officers in their schools was a bad idea. In terms of victimization, 16% of respondents in the 2009 survey reported being victimized but that proportion had dropped to 9% in the 2011 survey. Of these crimes, only a small proportion was reported to the SRO (19% in 2009 and 35% in 2011). Students who had previously talked to an SRO about a problem were more likely to report a crime than students who had never interacted with them. In the two years between the two surveys there was an overall decrease in the number of offences taking place within a 200-meter radius of the school, including a 57% decrease in weapons-related offences. Over two-thirds (68%) of the students in 2009 survey and 65% in 2011 believed the relationship between the police and students were good or excellent. In the 2011 survey, 75% of the students believed that having an SRO in their school was a good idea (Toronto Police Service, 2011).

There are critics who argue that deploying police officers in schools is a poor use of resources given that youth crime rates have been dropping. Gottfredson (2011),
however, contends that schools should continue to use SROs because these officers are effective in maintaining school safety and they foster increased trust with students, who are then more likely to report crimes to them. The presence of police in schools also provides readily available first responders in the case of emergencies and they can help school administrators determine if students are breaking the law (Gottfredson, 2011).

Some critics believe that SROs criminalize student behaviours by moving problematic students into the youth justice system rather than disciplining them at school (Theriot, 2009, p. 280). Theriot (2009) reports that having a SRO in a school increased the rate of arrests for disorderly conduct charges by over 100% in the schools he studied. However, it was also found that assault and weapons-related arrests in schools with a SRO decreased arrest rates by 52% and 73% respectively (Theriot, 2009, p. 285). According to Gottfredson (2011) having at least one, full-time SRO resulted in a higher percentage of offences being reported to the police. For example, the presence of an officer in the school is associated with more than doubling the rate of referrals to law enforcement for simple assault without a weapon (Gottfredson, 2011, p. 636). It was also found that schools with SROs had harsher responses (e.g., more arrests or referrals to juvenile courts). Moreover, schools with SROs were found to have a 12.3% higher rate of reporting non-serious violent crime to law enforcement than schools without SROs (Gottfredson, 2011, p. 640).

Although the Theriot (2009) and Gottfredson (2011) studies reveal that SROs may refer more students for less serious offences, other scholars have produced contradictory findings. Fisher and Hennessy (2015), for example, conducted a meta-analysis of studies on SROs and they found a relationship between having a SRO in
school and a higher use of suspensions, but deploying a SRO did not result in a greater number of students being expelled. In terms of criminalizing students involved in school-related incidents, May, Barranco, Stokes, Robertson, and Haynes (2015) examined the referrals of students to youth court and they found SROs were less likely than patrol officers to refer juveniles to court for minor offences. Altogether, these mixed findings suggest that further research be carried out on this issue.

2.10 Safety Plans and Staff Preparedness

Winicki (2010) developed a survey that solicited information about preparedness for school violence from school staff, and many of the questions in the survey instrument used in this thesis research were taken from that instrument. She solicited responses from 110 administrators, teachers, and school staff using an online survey including school counsellors, a social worker, school psychologists, language pathologists, the school nurse, secretaries, and paraprofessionals. Of those surveys, only 35 were returned (a response rate of 32%). With respect to school safety plans and violence reduction programs Winicki (2010) hypothesized that staff members lacked professional knowledge, had not received appropriate training, and did not have the confidence to respond to incidents of school violence. The survey results confirmed those three hypotheses. Further, the results of the survey show that school staff members were generally unprepared to deal with violent acts occurring at their school.

Most participants in Winicki’s (2010) study agreed that having a trained crisis intervention team available to assist with issues of violence is important. Yet, a majority of the staff is not involved in violence reduction strategies. While nearly 90% of Winicki’s respondents said their school has a safety plan, only 40% of the participants
indicated knowing the steps involved in the plan, while almost one-half (49%) of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they actually knew the appropriate responses in the plan. Additionally, about one-third of participants (32%) strongly disagreed that they were confident enough to carry out the plan. These findings suggest that if a violent act were to occur, a majority of the school staff in the study would feel unprepared to handle the situation or carry out the school’s safety plan. Winicki’s (2010) findings suggest that steps need to be taken to ensure the safety of the staff and students through better preparedness. If school staff members do not have the appropriate knowledge and skills, it could lead to more serious injuries in the event of an act of extreme school violence.

2.11 Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, a number of theoretical propositions and risk factors associated with youth violence were described. A review of the literature revealed how a youth’s behaviour may be influenced by biological, social, psychological, emotional, developmental, and environmental factors. However, no single explanation was identified to help school staff predict when acts of serious violence might occur or who might be involved, which makes it very difficult to prevent such tragedies. In order to reduce violence, school administrators have introduced a number of strategies including threat assessments, which are used to confront threats of school violence. This approach brings a multidisciplinary team together to gather information, assess the situation and follow through with an appropriate plan before an incident occurs. As Cameron (2002, n.p.) states “It is far better to assess threat makers than to assess victims in the aftermath.” Furthermore, a number of school based violence reduction and prevention techniques
such as zero-tolerance policies, school resource officers, and the use of safety measures such as metal detectors were described. Finally, the use of school safety plans and the effectiveness of implementing these plans were illustrated.

One of the greatest challenges identified regarding safe school plans was providing the training staff members need in their use and ensuring that policies set out in these plans are followed in crisis situations. The literature underscored the importance of teachers and staff members needing to be prepared for acts of school violence because should such crimes occur, they are unpredictable and lives can be saved if preventative plans are correctly implemented.

In the chapters that follow, the manner in which this research was carried out is described and, after analyzing the survey results, the four research questions are addressed. A key question is whether teachers and other school staff members feel prepared to manage acts of school violence. The researcher hypothesized that most school staff members participating in the survey have not received the appropriate or adequate level of training to manage extreme acts of school violence. Moreover, prior to conducting the study, it was thought that most teachers and staff would be unfamiliar with school policies and procedures related to school violence including threat assessment processes and strategies implemented by their school divisions to prevent school violence.
CHAPTER THREE
Data and Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to collect information about the extent of school violence in Canadian schools and examine the perceptions of teachers and school staff members in regards to their preparedness to deal with school violence. The responses from 223 Canadian teachers and school staff members were collected using an online survey that was available from August 17, 2015, to November 2, 2015. Some of the items in the survey instrument had been used in prior research and were designed to obtain perceptions about the prevalence of school violence, the effectiveness of student supervision, familiarity with school safety plans, and whether respondents have received training about school safety.

Surveys are a cost effective way to obtain results from a large number of potential respondents, and findings from a sample population can sometimes be generalized to the larger population (Bouma & Ling, 2004). In the case of the current research, it was not possible to infer assumptions about the larger population of teachers and school staff members across Canada due to the low numbers of responses. However, the results, which are reported in Chapter 4, do shed light on how teachers feel about school violence, as well as their perceptions about their preparedness for school violence, and how to use strategies that might prevent these acts. In the sections that follow, the data collection strategies used in this research are outlined, as are the methods used to interpret the data collected in the surveys.
3.2 Methodology

This research was carried out using an online survey. One goal of using a survey is to obtain as much information as possible from a large group of participants. Online surveys are also effective in obtaining information from people who may otherwise be difficult to access such as potential respondents in other provinces or those from rural or remote locations. Online surveys also enable respondents to remain anonymous and potential respondents are therefore considered to be free to express their attitudes and concerns without feeling intimidated, which may be more difficult to obtain via other methods of inquiry, such as face to face interviews. Any number of variables can be collected in a survey; and surveys offer efficiencies regarding the time required to develop and administer them (Glaslow, 2005). A further advantage, specific to online surveys, is that they are relatively inexpensive to administer. Prior research shows that the likelihood of the survey being completed via the Internet is greater than a comparable paper survey (Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009, p. 476). Online surveys also require less data entry time, can be distributed in an instant, and returned expediently. Kaplowitz, Hadlock, and Levine (2004) found that the response rate for mail and web surveys was about the same when the web surveys were preceded with an advance email notification.

In order to analyze the data the researcher first used descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the sample and the survey results. A number of these variables were subsequently recoded to increase the number of variables to analyze. For example, the postal codes provided by the respondents were coded to separate the responses based on provinces, thus allowing the researcher to do a comparative analysis
of Saskatchewan respondents compared to respondents from the other provinces and territories.

With respect to the analyses, the four research questions are answered in separate sections and these included a supplementary series of analyses that evaluated whether there was a statistically significant difference between Saskatchewan and the rest of the nation. Although a comparative analysis was not included as a formal research question the investigator is based in Saskatchewan and had an interest in these differences. A number of supplementary analyses were also completed to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the variables of interest, such as the confidence of respondents in carrying out the school’s safety plan and their demographic characteristics (such as staff with fewer than five years of experience compared with those with more years on the job).

3.3 Survey Development

As noted in the literature review, many of the survey items were previously used for Winicki’s (2010) Master of Education thesis, although the number of respondents in that study (n=35) limits its usefulness as a comparative benchmark. The survey instrument, which is available as Appendix A, was comprised of the following sections:

a) perceptions of safety,

b) prevalence of violence (including assaults and acts of incivility such as bullying),

c) likelihood of future violence,

d) factors associated with student misconduct (e.g., supervision and monitoring of student activities),

e) knowledge of the respondent’s school safety plan,
f) whether the respondent has received training related to the safety plan,
g) whether police officers or other security personnel are employed “on campus,”
h) policies related to violence reduction, such as zero tolerance for weapons or threat reporting systems, and
i) demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their age, gender, and ethnocultural status.

The survey instrument utilized Likert-type (survey items that provided respondents with a choice of either three or five options (e.g., from strongly agree to strongly disagree) (see Likert, 1932).

In order to answer the four research questions posed in this thesis, a number of survey items were added from the School Survey on Crime and Safety for Principals (National Center for Justice Statistics, 2010). Survey items taken from the U.S. research included questions soliciting information about the involvement of security and police resources, strategies to increase student and staff safety, current school practices and programs relating to crime and discipline, and the strategies used to reduce crime, disorder, and violence. A number of questions were also developed by the researcher to collect information on bullying and cyberbullying. Finally, questions involving school characteristics and respondent demographics allowed the researcher to classify the responses into groups based on descriptive items such as gender, age, or school location and size. After the survey instrument was developed, it was reviewed by University of Regina Research Ethics Board on July 7, 2015, and the research was approved (see Appendix E).
Prior to the administration of the survey, a draft was posted online using SurveyMonkey, a Web-based service that hosts online surveys (see: http://www.surveymonkey.com). Once posted, the survey was pre-tested by three teachers to ensure the survey was working properly and the questions were easily understood by the respondents. Based on the feedback of the three teachers, several of the questions were rewritten to clarify the wording and examples were added to several survey items. In addition, several mistakes on the website were corrected prior to the survey being made available to potential respondents.

3.4 Survey Administration

Although a number of school boards in Saskatchewan were invited to participate in this study prior to the end of the 2014-2015 school year none of them was willing to participate. That outcome is not surprising given that the survey might have uncovered deficiencies in teacher preparedness or a need to develop stronger violence prevention programs. As a result, a national-level study was conducted using an online methodology.

To obtain a national sample, the researcher placed advertisements on several websites and publications frequented by Canadian educators. An online advertisement was purchased in the Canadian Education Association Canada Online Bulletin in their August 24, 2015 issue. The survey was also advertised in the September 2015 print edition of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation Bulletin, which is a monthly publication. Although the Bulletin’s readers are primarily Saskatchewan educators the newsletter can also be accessed by anyone with an Internet access.

Advertisements about the survey were also placed on Facebook to increase the numbers of responses from across Canada. Information about the survey was included in
the news feeds of 13,103 users who indicated they were an Assistant Teacher, Substitute Teacher, Teacher or Head Teacher. Those advertisements ran from October 13, 2015 until November 13, 2015 and they attracted 179 visits to the website. The researcher also received approval from the administrators of the Saskatchewan Teachers-Resources and Ideas Exchange Facebook page to post an advertisement and link to the survey on their page. The group consists of 3,701 members from across Saskatchewan. Lastly, the researcher also utilized her Facebook page to create a snowball effect whereby friends would pass the survey link on to other people who were potential respondents.

SurveyMonkey was used to administer the survey: this service is commonly used by researchers and is user-friendly to potential respondents. Schoenherr, Ellram, and Tate (2015) report that over 30 million people participate in SurveyMonkey research every month. The results of the survey questions were collected online and then downloaded as an Excel file. These responses were then converted into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, a program widely used in social science research. Prior to any other analyses, descriptive statistics for each survey item were first recorded. To answer the four research questions posed in Chapter 1, the investigator compared the results of based on a number of organizational (e.g., such as school size and location) and demographic characteristics (e.g., number of years teaching).

A number of potential limitations in carrying out this study were identified. The manner of survey administration and the modest numbers of responses (n=223 cases) precludes a fully representative national sample. Moreover, the method of recruiting potential subjects—an online approach—may have inadvertently excluded teachers who have limited access to the Internet. Despite those limitations, the number of respondents,
did provide the researcher with enough information to provide some interesting and thought-provoking results that might be the catalyst for future research.

3.5 Data Analyses

Any discussion of the methodology used in a study should acknowledge that the analytical methods a researcher uses to carry out their analysis of quantitative data may shape the results that are obtained. In this case, the low number of cases and the nature of the survey data restrict the types of analyses that can be conducted. The survey data, for example, were primarily interval level and thus could not be used in regression analyses. As a result, in addition to basic descriptive statistics, three methods of analyses were used: (a) chi-square analyses, (b) t-tests and (c) Analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to examine the data.

3.6 Summary and Conclusions

The current research surveyed Canadian teachers about the prevalence of violence at their schools and the strategies used to prevent violence and reduce injuries in the event that such acts occur. Many of the questions on the survey instrument were previously used in school safety research, and the online approach was utilized to increase response rates and include school staff from across the nation. Potential respondents were solicited using advertisements in online forums frequented by teachers and in a print publication distributed to Saskatchewan teachers. Consistent with the results reported by Winicki (2010) it was hypothesized that school staff members would have incomplete knowledge of safety plans and may lack the confidence to respond to acts of serious school violence. It was further hypothesized that teachers would require further training in order to increase their understanding of these plans and build their
confidence. Chapter four answers the four research questions posed in the introductory chapter as well as presenting the findings from a number of supplementary analyses.
CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the results of a series of analyses using descriptive and inferential statistics (chi-square, t-tests, and analysis of variance) to answer the four research questions. As a result, the findings address issues about the prevalence and possibility of violence, familiarity with school safety plans, violence prevention initiatives implemented by the respondent’s schools and whether respondents felt they had received enough training on violence prevention. In addition a number of supplementary analyses were conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the Saskatchewan and non-Saskatchewan respondents. Another series of supplementary analyses were carried out to determine whether factors such as the age of the respondent, the school population and type of school influenced the perceptions of the respondents.

4.2 Findings

Altogether a total of 223 individuals participated in the survey although not every respondent provided a response to every question. The demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 4.1. Most respondents were female (87.3%), were aged between 25 and 44 years (71%), and identified with the White ethnocultural group (88.4%), while Aboriginal persons accounted for 6.4% of the sample. Most respondents were full-time teachers (76.2%) and worked in public school systems (74.9%). With respect to the characteristics of the schools, 41.6% of the respondents worked within elementary schools, followed closely by mixed schools (elementary and middle schools
combined) (33.5%), and high schools (19.1%). In terms of the size of the school where they were employed, only 6.3% of the respondents reported working in schools of fewer than 100 students while two-fifths of the respondents (40%) worked in a school with 101 to 250 students followed closely by respondents who worked in schools with 400 or more students (34.9%). Finally, over two-thirds of the respondents indicated the schools they work in were located in low crime areas (68.6%).

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n=223)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic group identity</td>
<td>First Nation</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Categories (years)</td>
<td>Up to 24</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in the school</td>
<td>Part-time teacher</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time teacher</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff member</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of School</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle or Junior High School</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of School</td>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separate School</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment</td>
<td>Less than 100</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>101 to 250</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>251-400</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>400+</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime level in School area</td>
<td>High levels of crime</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate levels of crime</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low levels of crime</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tables that follow provide descriptive statistics for the four research questions presented in Chapter 1. Although not related to these questions, one unexpected finding was that all 223 respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they felt safe at school. In addition, while not part of the formal research questions, the respondents who provided information about their province of residence were divided into Saskatchewan (n=103) and non-Saskatchewan participants (n=33) to add a comparative element to the study. One limitation is that not all respondents provided a postal code, so the sample size was attenuated. Of the non-Saskatchewan respondents, there were participants from seven other provinces.

4.3 Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of Canadian teachers about the prevalence and possibility of extreme violence in their schools?

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 present the findings about the perceptions of respondents about the possibility of violence in their schools and the prevalence of disorder and violent behaviour in their schools. Table 4.2 indicates the responses to the survey item “To what extent do you agree with the following statement: There is a high likelihood of an assault that leads to a serious injury happening at my school within the next year.” Four-fifths (80.7%) of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that there would be an assault that led to a serious injury at their school within the next year. When the results from the Saskatchewan and non-Saskatchewan samples were compared, the results were very similar, with 48.5% of the Saskatchewan respondents and 51.5% from the other provinces strongly agreeing with that statement. Chi-square analyses revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the Saskatchewan and non-Saskatchewan respondents. The means of these groups were also compared using a t-test,
and that analysis revealed there was a non-significant difference between the two groups $(p = .881)$.

### Table 4.2 Perceptions of Respondents about the Prevalence and Possibility of Violence in their Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Strongly agree %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree %</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree %</th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All (n=202)</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 presents the results of eight questions related to school disorder, bullying, and violence. One limitation of these analyses is that fewer respondents provided answers to these questions (n=136). Altogether, most respondents reported that threats, minor violence, bringing weapons to school or bullying were not serious problems in their schools. Most participants (96.3%) agreed that students bringing weapons to school was a minor problem or not a problem. Student bullying is an issue at many schools and the respondents were almost evenly split about the seriousness of this problem. Over half (56.6%) said it was a minor problem while 38.8% indicate that it is a very big problem or fairly big problem. Although there were some differences in the perceptions of the seriousness of these eight behaviours between the Saskatchewan and non-Saskatchewan respondents, chi-square analyses and t-tests did not reveal any statistically significant differences between these groups.

69
Table 4.3 Perceptions about Problems in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Very Big Problem %</th>
<th>Fairly Big Problem %</th>
<th>Minor Problem %</th>
<th>Not a Problem at all %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student use of verbal threats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student use of minor physical violence (e.g., pushing/shoving, slapping) that does not lead to a visible injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student use of serious physical violence (e.g., punching, kicking, or using a weapon) that leads to a visible injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students bringing weapons (e.g., knives or firearms) to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student cyberbullying (using electronic communication to bully another person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of student connection to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=135)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students vandalizing school property</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=134)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=102)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of comparisons were also carried out to determine whether school characteristics such as total student enrollment influenced the perceptions of the respondents. To facilitate these analyses school enrollment was coded into two
categories (1 to 250 students and 251 or more students). The results of the t-tests showed that respondents working in the smaller schools were more likely to report that students would bring weapons to school compared to those working in schools with more than 250 students (the means were 3.70 and 3.53 respectively) and that difference was statistically significant ($p = .043$). Respondents from larger schools, by contrast, thought that insufficient supervision was a greater problem in their schools compared with those from smaller schools (the means were 3.35 and 3.08 respectively) and that difference was statistically significant ($p = .033$).

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also utilized to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between each of the nine variables listed in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 and the four classifications of schools (elementary, middle or junior high, high school and mixed). Not surprisingly, respondents from elementary schools were the least likely to perceive cyber bullying as a problem and the analyses revealed that difference was statistically significant ($p = .000$). Respondents from the middle schools were more likely to report that their students lacked a connection to their school and that difference was also statistically significant ($p = .032$).

4.4 Research Question 2: Are Canadian teachers familiar with their school’s safety plans?

School safety plans are intended to reduce or prevent violence and the second research question examined the respondent’s familiarity with their schools plans. Most participants (87.5%) reported working in a school that had a safety plan in place while 5.1% reported working in schools that had no plan, and 7.4% were unsure if their school had a plan (see Table 4.5). Saskatchewan respondents were less likely (86.4%) to report
having a plan contrasted against their out-of-province colleagues (90.9%) although chi-square analysis revealed that the difference was not statistically significant.

Most respondents (90.4%) strongly agreed that it is important for schools to have safety plans. Furthermore, most respondents strongly or somewhat agreed (92.6%) that they understand the steps in their safety plan and were confident they could carry out the plan in an emergency. To determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the Saskatchewan and non-Saskatchewan respondents regarding familiarity with the safety plan, a series of chi-square analyses were conducted, and they did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Strongly Agree %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree %</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree %</th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think it is important for my school to have a school safety plan in case a violent act occurs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=136)</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good understanding of the steps involved in the safety plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=121)</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=31)</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=90)</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident in my abilities to carry out the plan if a violent act occurs at my school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=120)</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=31)</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=89)</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparisons were also carried out on the three variables from Table 4.4 with respect to school enrollment. To facilitate analyses of these results, enrollment was coded into two categories (1 to 250 students and 251 or more students). The results of the t-tests showed no statistically significant difference between school enrollment and the belief that schools should have a safety plan in place ($p = .493$), having a good
understanding of the safety plan ($p = .535$), and feelings of confidence in utilizing the safety plan ($p = .854$). Analysis of variance was also used to examine if there was a difference between the three variables listed in Table 4.4 and the four school types (elementary, middle or junior high, high school and mixed). These analyses revealed there were no statistically significant differences between the four school types in regards to the importance of safety plan ($p = .725$), having a good understanding of the plan ($p = .463$) and the confidence of the respondents to carry out the plan ($p = .634$).

4.5 Research Question 3: What steps does the respondent’s school take to prevent violence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5 School Safety Plans: Presence and Staff/Student Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school has a safety plan in case of a violence related emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=186)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has drilled the students and staff in the use of the plan in the last two years for school shootings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has drilled the students and staff in the use of the plan in the last two years for hostage takings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has drilled the students and staff in the use of the plan in the last two years for bomb threats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=89)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question three, which relates to violence prevention, was answered in two ways. First, respondents were asked about the training given to school staff and
students. Second, they were also asked about a number of safety related initiatives, such as the presence of video cameras in their schools. The results in Table 4.5 show the policy and training related steps taken to prevent school violence. Three survey items solicited information about whether the respondent’s school provides training, including whether emergency drills take place. Furthermore, the respondents were asked whether they had the appropriate training to confront violent situations and if they had the knowledge to effectively deal with violent situations.

Most of the participants (87.5%) indicated that their schools have a safety plan in place in case of a violence related emergency. With respect to specific threats, most respondents indicated that their schools have drilled the students and staff in the use of the plan for school shootings (66.7%) while fewer schools carried out drills for bomb threats (42.1%) or hostage takings (31.4%). Chi-square analysis revealed there were no statistically significant differences between the respondents from Saskatchewan and their counterparts from other provinces.

Comparisons were also carried out to analyze preparedness for emergencies with respect to school enrollment. To analyze the results, school enrollment was coded into two categories (1 to 250 students and 251 or more students). The results of the t-tests revealed there was a statistically significant difference between school enrollment and schools having a safety plan. Respondents in schools with more than 250 students were more likely to have a plan in place in case of a violence related emergency (the mean was 1.10 compared to 1.14 for the larger schools) and that difference was statistically significant ($p = .001$).

ANOVA was also utilized to determine if there was a statistically significant
difference between each of the three variables related to preparedness listed in Table 4.5 based on the four types of schools (elementary, middle or junior high, high school and mixed). This series of analyses revealed that a greater number of respondents from elementary schools reported that their school had a safety plan in place and this result is statistically significant ($p = .045$). There was no statistically significant association between the remaining variables and school type.

Table 4.6 reveals the steps the participant’s school takes to prevent violence. Three-fifths of participants (61.4%) indicated that students know how to report a potential incident if they become aware of acts of planned violence and over three-quarters (75.6%) of the respondents worked in schools that had zero tolerance policies regarding weapon possession at school. Security measures were less commonly encountered and about one-third (34.7%) of the participants indicated that cameras and metal detectors were used at their schools. Furthermore, only 10.9% of the schools have a security or police presence at their schools. Over one-half (52%) of the participants indicated that there were no trained crisis intervention teams at their schools or were unsure if their schools deployed these teams. Most participants (56.1%) indicated their schools did not have an anonymous threat reporting system and only 10.9% of the respondents indicated their schools require school identification badges for all staff and visitors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>Unsure %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security devices (e.g., camera, metal detectors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=176)</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of school security personnel or police officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=175)</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students know where to report their awareness of weapons or violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=176)</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero tolerance for weapon possession at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=176)</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained crisis intervention team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=175)</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an anonymous threat reporting system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=173)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=102)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School identification badges for all staff and visitors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=175)</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=32)</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=103)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparisons were carried out to compare the seven violence prevention variables from Table 4.6 with respect to school enrollment. Utilizing the same strategy as the prior analyses, school enrollment was coded into two small and large schools (1 to 250 students and 251 or more students). The results of t-tests showed a statistically significant difference between school size and whether schools deployed security and police personnel. Respondents from schools with more than 250 students were more
likely to report that security or police personnel were employed at their schools (the mean for respondents employed in the smaller schools was 1.83 compared to 2.04 for their larger counterparts) and that difference was statistically significant ($p = .000$).

Respondents from schools with more than 250 students also reported being more likely to use anonymous threat reporting systems as compared to respondents from schools with fewer than 250 students (the mean was 2.41 and 2.23 respectively) and that difference was also statistically significant ($p = .038$).

ANOVA was also used to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in violence prevention strategies based on the type of school of the respondents worked within. About one-third (34.7%) of respondents worked in schools that do not use security cameras or similar devices; however, respondents from high schools were more apt to report their schools used these security measures when compared to the three other types of schools, and those differences were statistically significant ($p = .001$). Only a small percentage of the respondents worked in schools that deploy security and police personnel (10.9%); however, these personnel were utilized most often in high schools and these differences were statistically significant ($p = .000$). School identification badges for staff and visitors were not typically used in the schools where participants worked, however, respondents employed in middle or junior high schools were more likely to report their workplaces required these badges and these results were statistically significant ($p = .003$).

Saskatchewan respondents were more likely to report working in schools that deploy trained crisis intervention teams (54.4%) as compared to non-Saskatchewan respondents (31.3%). Chi-square analyses reveal this was a statistically significant
difference ($\chi^2 = 8.528$, $df = 2$, $p = .014$). T-tests revealed that respondents from the

Saskatchewan schools were less likely to report their schools use security devices, such as closed circuit televisions ($p = .002$), deploy security and police personnel ($p = .036$), or require staff and students to wear identification badges ($p = .005$), but were more likely to have trained crisis teams available in the event of a tragedy ($p = .008$) and require staff and students to wear identification badges ($p = .005$).

**Table 4.7 Violence Prevention Training and Student Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Strongly Agree %</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree %</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree %</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree %</th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training students in anger management techniques</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=171)</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=99)</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training students in conflict management techniques</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=170)</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=98)</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counsellors available to help students with issues related to violence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=170)</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=33)</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=98)</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many schools try to reduce student misconduct by offering training or supports for students that prevents violence. Table 4.7 indicates that 59.1% of the respondents indicated they either strongly agree or somewhat agree that training students in anger management techniques are used at their schools. More than two-thirds (68.9%) of the respondents agreed that training students in conflict management and peer mediation is one of the measures their school utilizes to prevent violence. A majority of participants
strongly agreed or agreed (84.1%) that having counselors available to help students with issues related to violence was desirable.

Comparisons were carried out to examine the responses to the three violence prevention variables from Table 4.7 with respect to school enrollment. Similar to the strategy undertaken in the previous research question, school enrollment was coded into two categories (1 to 250 students and 251 or more students) and a t-test was conducted. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between school size and training students in anger management techniques ($p = .318$), training students in conflict resolution and peer mediation techniques ($p = .169$) and having counselors available to help students with issues related to violence ($p = .429$). The size of the school and violence prevention strategies was also examined using analysis of variance. These tests revealed there were no significant differences in these three violence prevention strategies and school type (e.g., elementary through high schools).

4.6 Research Question 4: Do teachers feel they receive enough training on school safety?

It is important to have training and exercises that prepare students and staff for active shooter incidents because of increases in active shooter threats and the swiftness in which the incidents unfold (Blair & Schweit, 2014). In regards to the participants receiving the appropriate training to deal with violent situations at schools, the results presented in Table 4 shows that respondents had less agreement than in previous issues. For example, 44% strongly agree or somewhat agree they had received enough training on school safety while about the same proportion (42.3%) somewhat and/or strongly disagree they had received enough training and 13.6% were neutral on this issue. About
one-half of the respondents (48.3%) strongly or somewhat agree that they had the knowledge to effectively deal with violent situations at schools while 37.5% somewhat or strongly disagree with this statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.8</th>
<th>Staff Training on Violence Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have received appropriate training to deal with violent situations at work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=177)</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=31)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=101)</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the knowledge to effectively deal with violent situations at school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (n=176)</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sask. (n=31)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask. (n=100)</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saskatchewan respondents had slightly higher levels of agreement with these responses than their non-Saskatchewan respondents. When chi-square analyses were carried out to investigate these differences, however, there was no statistically significant difference between Saskatchewan respondents and non-Saskatchewan respondents with respect to receiving the appropriate training to deal with violent situations \( (p = .384) \) or having the knowledge to effectively deal with violent situations at school \( (p = .402) \). It was also hypothesized that there would be statistically significant differences based on age (which is a proxy indicator for years of teaching experience) and school enrollment, although chi-square analyses, analysis of variance, and t-tests did not reveal any statistically significant relationships.

4.7 Summary: Research Questions

Altogether, four research questions were posed in Chapter 1. To answer these questions, an online survey was posted and the results from 223 respondents were
analyzed. Descriptive statistics were first reported and additional statistical tests, including chi-square, t-tests and ANOVA were conducted to further investigate the relationships between the variables. The following paragraphs summarize the key findings related to these questions.

The first research question assessed the perceptions of Canadian teachers and school staff about the prevalence and possibility of extreme violence in their schools. All 232 respondents reported feeling safe in their schools although 80.7% of them agreed with the statement that there is a high likelihood of an assault that leads to a serious injury occurring at their school in the next year. With respect to less serious incidents, over one-quarter of respondents (25.8%) reported that verbal threats and minor physical violence (e.g., pushing/shoving/slapping) were very big or fairly big problems at their schools, whereas 34.1% of respondents believed serious physical violence that results in a visible injury was a problem in their schools. Over one-third (36.8%) of respondents believed that bullying was a very big or fairly big problem in their schools while almost one-half of respondents (48.6%) believed that cyberbullying was a very big or fairly big problem. Few respondents (3.7%), however, believed that students bringing weapons to school was a significant problem. The responses to these questions are very similar between the Saskatchewan respondents and those from the other provinces.

The results from research question one show minor assaults and more serious acts of violence (that result in visible injuries) are considered very big or fairly big problems in one-quarter to one-third of schools. Furthermore, acts of incivility such as bullying and cyberbullying are considered very big or fairly big problems in one-third to one-half of the respondent’s schools. These are important findings as prior research has shown that
these acts can have long-term negative consequences on the victims and may lead to the victims using violence to retaliate (Goldbaum et al., 2003; Mahady-Wilton et al., 2000).

The second research question addressed the issue of familiarity with the respondent’s school safety plans. Although most of the respondents knew that their schools have a safety plan in place in case of a violence-related emergency 7.4% were unsure if their school had a plan, and 5.1% of respondents worked in schools that lacked a safety plan. Most respondents agreed they have a good understanding of the steps involved in the safety plan (92.6%). Furthermore, about two-thirds of the respondents felt confident in their abilities to carry out the plan if a violent act should occur at their school. About two-thirds (67%) of the respondents indicated their schools have drilled students and staff to carry out the plan for school shootings, however over one-half of the respondents (53.5%) indicated they have not participated in drills related to hostage takings and 45.3% have not practiced for bomb threats in the last two years.

Based on these results, it is apparent that the respondents who have safety plans at their schools are familiar with the plans, have an understanding of them and are confident in their abilities if they need to active their plans. The fact that 7.4% of the respondents were not aware whether their school had a plan, however, suggests that further training is required. Moreover, 5.1% of respondents worked in schools that had no safety plan and they were more likely to work in schools with more than 250 students or elementary schools.

The third research question examined the steps the respondent’s schools take to prevent violence. Two different strategies were examined: Violence prevention strategies such as using technology to reduce crime and providing training and supports
to students to reduce violence. With respect to violence prevention strategies, about one-third of respondents (34.7%) reported their schools used security devices such as cameras or metal detectors, while fewer (10.9%) worked in schools with security personnel or police officers. When it came to violence prevention policies, most respondents (75.6%) worked in schools with zero tolerance policies for weapon possession and 61.4% believe students know how to make a report if they are aware of weapons or acts of planned violence. Almost one-half (48%) of respondents indicated that their schools had trained crisis intervention teams. Fewer respondents, however, said that their school had an anonymous threat reporting system (5.8%) or used school identification badges (10.9%).

Further examination of these violence prevention strategies using t-tests revealed that respondents working in schools with more than 250 students were more likely to report having security officers and/or police personnel or anonymous threat reporting systems in their schools. Furthermore, respondents working in high schools were more likely to use security cameras while those working in middle schools were most likely to report using school identification badges. Those inferential tests also reveal that Saskatchewan respondents were more likely to work in schools with crisis intervention teams and utilize electronic notification systems compared to those working in schools in other provinces.

The second strategy addressed in research question three is the use of providing training and supports to students to reduce their involvement in violence. Most respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that their school offered training in anger management (59.1%), conflict management techniques (68.9%), or made counselors available to help students deal with issues related to violence (83.5%). Regarding these
three issues, t-tests and ANOVA did not reveal any statistically significant differences between responses from Saskatchewan respondents and their counterparts from other provinces nor did they show any significant differences between these strategies and school enrollment.

The fourth research question examined the perceptions of the respondents about their knowledge and training to respond to acts of school violence. Only 44% of the respondents felt they have received the appropriate amount of training to deal with violent situations at schools while almost one-half of the respondents (48.3%) agreed they have the knowledge to effectively deal with violent situations. Examination of these results using t-tests and chi-square analyses reveal that there were no statistically significant differences between Saskatchewan respondents and those from the rest of the nation.

Table 4.9 summarizes the main findings from the statistical tests in terms of school enrollment, the type of school (e.g., whether elementary, middle, mixed or high schools), and whether the respondent was from Saskatchewan or another province. With respect to school enrollment, respondents from schools with 250 or fewer students were more likely to report that students would bring weapons to school, less likely to report insufficient supervision was a problem, less likely to have a safety plan in place, and less likely to have security personnel or a police officer on site.
Table 4.9 Summary of Supplementary Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>School Enrollment</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Sask. Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring weapons to school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient supervision</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School should have safety plan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good understanding of plan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of confidence in utilizing plan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe plan in place at school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of security or police at school</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous threat reporting system</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training students in anger management</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training students in conflict resolution</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has counsellors available</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the appropriate training</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the knowledge to deal with situation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber bullying is a problem</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student lack of connection to school</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill students (school shooting, bombs, hostage)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security devices at school</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School identification badges</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained crisis teams</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1. X indicates a statistical significant relationship ($p < .05$)
2. - indicates a non-significant relationship ($p \geq .05$)
When it came to the type of school that employed the respondent, the analyses revealed that respondents in elementary schools were less likely to believe that cyberbullying was a problem in their school. Respondents from elementary schools also report that their schools were more likely to have a safety plan in place. By contrast, respondents from middle schools were the most likely to report that their students lacked connection to the school, and were more likely to report using identification badges. High schools were more likely to use security devices such as cameras, deploy police officers or security personnel within the facility.

Respondents from the Saskatchewan schools were less likely to report their schools use security devices, such as cameras, deploy security and police personnel, or require students to wear identification badges. Saskatchewan respondents were, however, more likely to report having trained crisis intervention teams available in case of a tragedy. Saskatchewan respondents were also more likely to report that their schools had an anonymous threat reporting system.

4.8 Summary and Conclusions

The study analyzed school staff preparedness for school violence and their ability to respond effectively to school violence, answering the four research questions posed in Chapter One. In addition to providing responses to the research questions, a comparative analysis was carried out that analyzed the responses of Saskatchewan (n=103) and non-Saskatchewan (n=33) respondents. Moreover, a series of supplementary analyses was conducted to determine whether enrollment, the type of school (e.g., elementary and high schools) or whether the respondent was from Saskatchewan or another province influenced the findings. Consistent with expectations some violence prevention
strategies, such as having school resource officers or security personnel on site or using security devices such as cameras were more common in larger schools and high schools. Moreover, when compared with respondents from other provinces, Saskatchewan respondents reported being more likely to work in schools with trained crisis intervention teams although fewer Saskatchewan schools deployed safety measures such as closed circuit video systems, identification badges for staff and visitors or had a security or police presence at their schools. The implications of these findings for policy, practice, and further research are discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

Implications for Practice and Further Research

5.1 Introduction

The main goal of this research was to determine if Canadian teachers and other school staff believed they have received the appropriate or adequate training to manage acts of school violence. This study examined teacher and school staff perceptions about school violence in their schools, their feelings of safety, school planning, school drills and practices, and perceptions of their preparedness and confidence in understanding and executing safety plans. A total of 223 participants from across the nation completed the staff preparedness for school violence survey online. Their responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis, analysis of variance, and t-tests. This chapter provides a discussion of how these results can be used to implement more effective violence prevention programs, describes the limitations of the study, and identifies issues for future research.

5.2 Implications for Increasing School Safety

School administrators are required to provide a safe environment for their students and staff and they want the public to feel reassured about the safety of these places (Furlong et al., 2005). Based on the results of the survey, most respondents report that their schools have taken a number of steps to improve safety, including developing and implementing safety plans and providing training to school staff in violence reduction strategies. In addition, the results of this survey also show that many schools have introduced specific violence prevention strategies including as installing cameras and deploying security personnel and police officers. Moreover, most respondents
reported that their schools provided anger management and other training to reduce the likelihood of violence.

Although there have been school shootings in the United States since 1764, they have been relatively rare events in Canada. Before the shooting in La Loche, Saskatchewan in January 2016, there had not been an act of fatal youth violence in schools since the murder of Jordan Manners in 2007 in Toronto. Although these acts are rare, the results of this research suggest some school staff members need to be better prepared through training and practice so that they can respond more effectively to acts of school violence. Teachers and school staff are the first line of defence when violent crimes occur in schools. According to the survey results, police and security are present in about 11% of the respondent’s schools and staff in those facilities would have to wait until police respond if an act of violence occurs in their school. As a result, teachers and school staff have to make quick and informed decisions to increase the safety of their students and colleagues (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2009).

There are a number of ways to reduce the threat of school violence, including developing violence prevention programs to help prevent violence from occurring in the first place. The results of this study show that 5.1% of respondents worked in schools with no safety plan and another 7.4% were unsure if their schools had a plan. Furthermore, even though these plans exist, only about two-thirds of respondents had participated in a drill in the previous two years. Moreover, only about one-half of the respondents strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the plan, or felt confident in their ability to carry out the plan.

Given those results, several essential first steps are to ensure that safe plans are
implemented in every school and if they already exist are updated on a regular basis. Schools must also ensure that all personnel including substitute teachers and new staff members have the knowledge to implement these plans. This training, in turn, must be supplemented with age appropriate drills for students, as well as scenario-based training for school staff members and all personnel such as law enforcement officials who would respond to these events. Students will look for guidance and direction from teachers and staff in a time of crisis and therefore should be able to put the plan into action if the need should ever arise (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2009).

The results of this study suggest that the solutions to the problems of youth violence and school shootings are not the sole problem of schools and other agencies must participate in any crime reduction programs. There are various crime prevention initiatives in schools across Canada. Four school divisions in Saskatoon, for example, partner with the Saskatoon Police Service and Saskatoon Fire and Protective Services to reduce the possibility of violent acts. These agencies regularly review safety plans and ensure staff members are responding to emergencies in the schools in an effective and efficient manner (Saskatoon and Area Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol, 2013). Parents are also informed about safe locations if students need to be picked up in case of an emergency. Saskatoon schools and the University of Saskatchewan have also developed a protocol which promotes information sharing about all Saskatoon public and separate school students who might pose a risk of violence toward themselves or others (Saskatoon and Area Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol, 2013). This protocol utilizes a multidisciplinary approach to prevent school violence and encourages partnerships with various local agencies including the
Saskatoon Police Service, the Saskatoon Health Region and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Community partners work together to develop threat assessment protocols as well as ongoing development in violence threat risk assessment training and program review. Analysis of U.S. school shootings found there were always signs students were having difficulties prior to the incident occurring, such as mentioning to someone that they were planning an attack (Borque, 2011 p. 309; Vossekuil et al., 2002, p.11). Teachers, staff, students, and parents who have the skills and knowledge to detect these potential violent acts may prevent them from occurring in the first place. If students know where to report their awareness of weapons or violence attacks in schools could be prevented.

The results of this study show that only 61.4% of respondents believed that students in their schools knew where to report their awareness of weapons or violence. Moreover, only 5.8% of respondents worked in schools where an anonymous threat reporting system was present, and another 38.2% were unsure if these systems are used in their school. As a result, one step that schools could take is to ensure that all students are aware of how to report a concern about violence, and this could include anonymous threat reporting systems.

Increasing security measures in schools may also improve school safety. Installing video cameras, requiring identification badges to be worn by everybody on campus, and an increased police presence may also prevent school crime. The results of this research show that these practices were not widely used in the schools where the respondents worked: only 10.9% of schools had a police or security officer presence while 34.7% of schools had security devices such as cameras and 10.9% of schools
require identification badges. Most schools, however, had zero tolerance policies for weapon possession at school.

There is, however, insufficient data to determine whether these measures are effective, as well as their true costs and benefits. Some scholars, for example, argue that these measures are detrimental to a student’s perception of safety (Gastic, 2010). Gastic contents that exposing students to security measures such as metal detectors and an increased police presence may contribute to feelings of fear. As a result, this is one area where more research could inform the use of introducing security measures such as cameras or security personnel.

Other less intrusive methods could also be used to increase school safety (Rocque, 2012). Introducing school-based bullying prevention and peer support programs will help reduce the risk of violence. As noted above, many respondents in this study report that their schools already have anger management, conflict management, or counsellors available to help students. These programs, however, should be available in every Canadian school.

There is no single factor leading to school violence; rather it is a multitude of factors, which contributes to extreme school violence. While educators and the police cannot control issues such as poverty or poor parental supervision, they can implement interventions to reduce bullying and other incivilities that reduce the quality of life for students. For example, over one-quarter of the respondents in this study believed that verbal threats and acts such as pushing/shoving or slapping is a very big or fairly big problem in their schools. A higher proportion of respondents (34.1%) reported that acts of serious violence such as punching, kicking or using a weapon that resulted in a visible
injury was a very big or fairly big problem in their schools. Last, over one-third (36.8%) of respondents thought that bully was a very big or fairly big problem in their schools and 48.6% believed cyberbullying posed a similar problem. To increase the quality of life for all students, and to reduce the likelihood of a violent act in retaliation for these acts, one key solution is to respond to the initial acts and prevent further escalation.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Although the sample size was ample for analysis, the responses were not equally distributed amongst the provinces and several provinces were not represented or only represented by one or two survey responses. For this reason, generalizations could not be made about any particular province or the entire nation. The results reflected a very small proportion of Canadian teachers and school staff. Most of the respondents were from Saskatchewan and therefore a series of supplementary analyses was conducted that compared their results with respondents from the rest of the country. For the most part, the results of these two samples were very similar, although Saskatchewan respondents reported having more trained crisis intervention teams in their schools although fewer Saskatchewan schools used safety measures such as closed circuit video systems, identification badges for staff and visitors or had a security or police presence at their schools.

There are a number of limitations associated with the recruitment strategy used in this study. The recruitment of potential respondents was limited by the small number of advertisements that were placed in the online and print publications. As a result, a large number of Canadian teachers and school staff were not exposed to the presence of the research. Moreover, many potential respondents were not alerted by the Facebook news
feed advertisements and therefore may never have had an opportunity to participate. Lastly, as participation in the study was promoted through social media, it was impossible to determine if the respondents were teachers or school staff and it is possible that some respondents were not employed within schools.

5.4 Implications for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research emerged from the outcomes of this study. Given the findings, it may be fruitful to collect more comprehensive information regarding the type of training teachers and school staff members actually receive regarding their preparation to respond to school violence. Research could also be conducted in a single province to determine overall preparedness in the province and comparing both private and publically funded schools.

In addition to survey research, qualitative researchers could ask school stakeholders and students about their experiences with school violence, including bullying, and obtain their suggestions about violence reduction strategies. Qualitative inquiries can provide a rich source of information for issues related to antisocial behaviour and “minor” acts of school violence that might never be officially reported to school staff. Research could also be conducted with students to determine if they have received adequate education and training to prepare them to follow through with safety plans. Students could also be asked about their education on anger management, conflict resolution and peer mediation skills, as well as their feelings of safety at school. Research could also be conducted in schools where serious acts of violence have occurred to determine the effectiveness of responses by the school staff and the agencies that responded to the crime, such as the police.
5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to determine staff preparedness for school violence in Canada. The study started with an extensive literature review which provided a working definition of school violence, placed school shootings within the context of youth violence, and described the history of school violence. The literature review also provided descriptions of theories that attempt to explain school shootings, including the risk factors associated with school violence.

Altogether, the key findings of the study were that all of the respondents felt safe at school, verbal abuse, bullying, and violence were very big or fairly big problems. While most schools had introduced safety plans, some respondents reported their workplaces had no plan while others were unsure if their school had such a plan. Only 44% of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that they had the appropriate training to deal with violent situations, while 48.3% strongly or somewhat agreed they have the knowledge to deal with violent situations. It is possible that training and participating in drills can increase their knowledge and confidence. While a majority of respondents worked in schools that drilled students and staff in school shooter incidents in the prior two years, hostage taking and bomb threat drills are less likely to occur.

In light of these findings, a number of additional recommendations can be made to promote school safety. These recommendations include providing more regular training to staff, and in particular to new employees, so that they fully understand their role in school safety plans and to better ensure they can follow through with the plan. School administrators have the responsibility of ensuring that all students and staff are safe and that all the necessary precautions are used to prevent incidents of school
violence from occurring (Regina Public Schools, 2015). There is a wide range of prevention methods schools utilize throughout the country but all have the same goal to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and staff. While each of these school safety strategies has costs and benefits, they should only be introduced if research finds these interventions are effective.
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Appendix A. School Division Policies on Student Safety

Education is a provincial responsibility and each province has established its priorities for Kindergarten to Grade 12 instruction. Saskatchewan is used as an example to describe the nature of these policies. Saskatchewan’s Education Act, 1995 (hereafter “the Act”) is used to demonstrate how the school system attempts to reduce the risks of violence. The Act and regulations provide the framework for education to students and sets out the duties and responsibilities of principals, teachers and administrators for education in Saskatchewan. The following section describes several strategies that can be used to address students who are difficult-to-manage.

The Act stipulates that every person between the ages of six and 22 years of age has the right to a public education and describes the discipline procedures for Saskatchewan schools. According to Section 152(1) of the Act, every pupil is subject to the general discipline of the school but corporal punishment cannot be used. Moreover, each Board of Education is responsible for making provisions to confront problems arising in the relationship between a pupil and the school. In situations where a pupil’s educational development or the well-being of other students is at risk a principal can refer the matter to a committee for resolution and decision on matters of attendance, studies, deportment, personal relationships in the school or attitude towards the school (See Section 153(2) of the Act, p. 87).

In such cases, the student’s parent is then immediately notified and has the opportunity to consult with the committee in any study or investigation conducted. According to Section 154(1) of the Act, a principal may suspend a pupil from school for overt opposition to authority of serious misconduct, which must be immediately reported
to the parents. Principals may suspend a pupil for a longer period if the pupil has
“displayed overt opposition to authority; refused to conform to the rules of the school;
been irregular in attendance at school; habitually neglected his or her duties; wilfully
destroyed school property; used profane or improper language; or engaged in any other
type of gross misconduct” (see Section 154(2), p. 88).

A Board of Education may suspend the pupil from all or any of the schools in the
school division for a period of not greater than one year after the Board has conducted an
investigation and is satisfied, based on the investigation, that the pupil has acted in a
manner that warrants suspension for a period greater than 10 school days (Section 154 of
the Act, p.88). According to Section 193(1) of the Act no pupil shall “bring explosives,
firearms or other dangerous instruments weapons or materials to the school premises” (p.
111) and “No person shall allow a pupil to bring explosives, firearms or other dangerous
instruments, weapons or materials to the school premises” (p. 111).

School Discipline

Saskatchewan has 28 publicly-funded school divisions: 19 public school
divisions, eight Catholic School divisions and one Francophone school division. Each of
these entities has their own administrative policies and procedures regarding student
discipline and ways to manage problem students. For example, the South East
Cornerstone School Division Administrative Procedures include provisions for code of
conduct, discipline procedures, provisions for bullying and harassment, dangerous
weapons and illegal substances, unusual threats and student assessment procedures
(South East Cornerstone, 2011)

According to Section 2.3 of the South East Cornerstone School Division
Administrative Procedures on bullying and harassment the staff members are to provide a clear message that bullying and harassment are not tolerated and will respond in a firm but fair manner when this type of behaviour occurs. The principal will investigate each incident and keep all parties informed of the investigation. The school division’s discipline procedures will be implemented depending on the outcome of the investigation of the incident. Discipline should be corrective and not punitive and any further incidents will be graduated in the range of disciplinary responses (South East Cornerstone, 2011).

According to Section 3 of the Administrative Procedures, unless the principal grants special permission, dangerous weapons such as firearms or other dangerous instruments are not allowed on school property or during any school related activity. Students who do not abide by this policy will be subject to reprimand, suspension, expulsion or other forms of discipline. The threat assessment protocol will be enacted and police will be called. New employees must be made aware of these procedures as these threats puts the safety of employees and students at risk (South East Cornerstone, 2011).

According to Section 7 of the Administrative Protocol, students must be given fair notice before searches of lockers are conducted, this is completed by providing a letter to each student at the beginning of the school year and an announcement made at the beginning of the school year. A letter is also sent to parents advising them of the fair notice to the students. If the principal or teacher determines that there is reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence has been or is about to be committed and the search of the student or property will provide evidence in these matters, a search can proceed. The search can commence immediately if there is reason to believe that the safety of any
student or staff member is in question, all other cases the student should be present and asked if they will consent to the search. If the student does not provide consent for a search, the police will be contacted. Police officers must perform all intrusive searches on the school premises, and searches initiated by the police must be authorized by a warrant, coincide with an arrest of a student, or if the principal initiated the search (South East Cornerstone, 2011).
Appendix B. Violence Prevention Strategies

Most Saskatchewan school divisions have some manner of violence prevention and emergency response plans and strategies. To shed light on these practices, the following pages highlight the approach that the Regina Public School Division (RPS) has developed. The RPS is one of the largest school divisions in Saskatchewan serving more than 20,000 students in 41 public elementary schools, nine public high schools and three faith-based, associate schools (Regina Public School Division, 2007). With respect to school safety plans, all employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the evacuation and facility protocols. Protocols range from relatively simple requirements such as requiring identification badges when visiting schools. All RPS schools, for example, are required to implement a visitor’s identification system that is used during school hours and that also includes third party tenants (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

Critical Incident Response

According to the Regina Public School Division (2007) Administrative Procedure 170, critical incidents at schools within the Division are identified and categorized into three levels of response: Level 1 responses do not require the evacuation of securing of the building. Examples include extreme weather and medical emergencies. Level 2 responses involve a specific facility or potential groups of facilities that require notification and or support from the division emergency response team. This may require evacuation or securing of facilities or assistance from an external agency such as EMS, police or fire. An example might include a serious act of violence at a single school (e.g., a youth commits suicide or is involved in shooting). Level 3 responses are widespread
disasters or situations that will involve interaction with the City of Regina Emergencies Measures and the division emergency response team. This level may include major disasters, disease or civil unrest (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

According to Regina Public School Division (2007), schools utilize site-specific emergency response plans (SERP) using guidelines set out in procedures and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Guide. Site Emergency Response Teams (SERTs) will respond to critical incidents utilizing the SERP. These teams are trained to handle critical incidents in schools. Under the leadership of the Director or their designate, a Division Emergency Response Team (DERT) will be established which may include participation from Facilities Operations, Instruction and School Services, Division Services, Communications, Business Affairs, and Information Technology Services. The DERT is responsible for developing and maintaining a system-wide response plan to support individual SERPs. They are responsible for completing an annual review of SERPs, developing and recommending procedures, contingency plans, training, that ensure the safety of all people in the Regina Public School Division. DERTs also prepare, maintain and recommend a budget for emergency preparedness programs (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

A designated area onsite and offsite for each facility is predetermined in case of school evacuation. Plans are in place, which includes exit routes with maps, assigned Marshals, a designated person responsible for signalling an all-clear, and to ensure all staff and students are accounted for staging areas are designated for each site. When the school is in a secure the building mode all exterior doors are locked and blinds or curtains are pulled based on the nature of the emergency. Everyone in the secure building must
stay away from the glass or doors where possible and attendance is taken in each room and relayed to the Designated Management Centre. Radios, televisions, computers and cellular phones are not to be used and all staff must wait until they are given directions from the SERT. In certain situations, regular school activities can continue in school lockdown mode or they can be directed to remain in the room they are secured in which includes not releasing anyone for the bathroom or lockers, depending on the emergency. In other cases, staff and students may be told to relocate to a different location outside of the school again depending on the emergency (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

The principal or designate will work together with the Occupational Health and Safety Committee to ensure a written Site Emergency Response Plan is developed, practiced and monitored on an annual basis according to the school calendar. Practice drills are required six times per year for evacuation/fire drills and four times per year for Secure the Facility/Code White Drills. Secure the facility is a situation when all school activities are stopped and all the occupants are locked in designated areas. The Principal or Designate is responsible for ensure staff members are informed of Site Emergency Response Plans and their specific roles and responsibilities in ensure the plan works (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

According to the Regina Public School Division (2007) Administrative Procedure 172 for securing the facility procedures, a designated area onsite and offsite for each facility is predetermined in case of a school evacuation. Plans are in place, which includes exit routes with maps, assigned Marshals, a designated person responsible for signalling an all clear, and staging areas for each site with a process to ensure all students and staff are accounted for. When the school is in a secure the building mode all exterior
doors are locked and blinds or curtains are pulled based on the nature of the emergency. Everyone in the secure building must stay away from the glass or doors where possible and attendance is taken in each room and relayed to the Designated Management Centre. Radios, Televisions, computers and cellular phones are not to be used and all staff must wait until they are given directions from the SERT. In certain situations, regular school activities can continue in school lock down mode or they can be directed to remain in the room they are secured in which includes not releasing anyone for the bathroom or lockers, depending on the emergency. In other cases staff and students may be told to relocate to a different location outside of the school again depending on the emergency (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

**Potential Threats**

According to the Administrative Procedure 380 a threat is defined by the Regina Public School Division as “written or oral communication or action that implicitly or explicitly states or demonstrates a wish or intent to damage, injure or cause life-threatening harm to oneself or another individual”. Threats that are deemed low risk is when the student shows little evidence of intention to follow through with the threat. As well, there is minimal evidence of planning or having the means to follow through with the threat. Periodic monitoring of the student may be utilized.

Threats are deemed to be a moderate risk when there is evidence of some planning, intent or they have access to firearms or other means in executing their plan. School officials must regularly monitor moderate risk students as well as health professionals and any other agency to ensure no additional issues arise.

A student that is deemed a high-risk threat has clear evidence that they wish to
harm others. Students, who are deemed high-risk, have plans in place and have access to the means for carrying out the threat. Intensive monitoring and supervision are required for these students and parents and police are notified. Notification to the potential victims may also be required; as well immediate action by the school is necessary to ensure the safety of students and staff (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

Information that is important for the principal or designate to have in determining the likelihood of a student actually following through with a threat in the moderate and high-level risk categories includes the following: history of violence, history of legal troubles, mental health issues, social environment, family, community and school dynamics, personality types, Group affiliation/gang involvement and substance abuse. Threat assessment procedures are utilized in Regina Public Schools, and each school establishes their own Threat Assessment Committee. According to the Administrative Procedure 380, the threat assessment process goes through a gathering and assessing information about people who have the motive, intentions, ability or the means to attack student and/or staff and has the goal of preventing an attack on an identified target. The Threat Assessment Committee will consist of Vice-Principal, School Resource Officer, Youth Worker, Superintendent, Guidance Counsellor, School Psychologist, School Social Worker/School Counsellor, Consultant, and Supervisor. This Committee will determine the immediate action and outcomes for the student. Any staff member or student reports to the Principal or designate when information becomes available that someone may pose a threat to the school (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

Bullying

The review of the literature shows that bullying sometimes results in extreme
violence when the individuals being victimized harm the people who are bullying them. As a result, the Regina Public School Division has policy and procedures regarding bullying. Regina Public School Division states “bullying behaviour shall not be tolerated and shall be dealt with in a serious and timely manner” (Regina Public School Board, 2007). Bullying is defined by the School Division as an assertion of power through aggression, abuse and social manipulation (Regina Public School Board, 2007).

According to Administrative Procedures 381, bullying behaviour includes threats of intimidation, threats of or actual, physical violence; the use of language, conduct or symbols which are understood to convey hatred, contempt of prejudice. Physical bullying or assault includes pushing or shoving or other harmful physical acts and also includes property damage and threatening looks. Bullying may also include unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive language name calling or demeaning jokes. Cyber bullying is the use technologies such as e-mails or cell phone to convey deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour that is meant to harm another individual (Regina Public School Division, 2007).

It is the responsibility of students to report bullying behaviour they observe to any staff member. Parents are asked to report bullying behaviour they suspect their child is perpetrator or if they suspect their child is bullied. Staff members then report the information to the Principal and follow procedures appropriate to their roles. Bullies will be separated and given the opportunity to speak and dealt with individually based on maturity level, level of harm, circumstances, past behaviour and the relationship of the parties involved. A resolution will be determined and monitored to ensure the behaviours do not continue. If however, the behaviours continue formal procedures will be followed.
The student’s parents will be notified and the incidents will be recorded with a plan of action and strategies to be undertaken by the school, parents/guardians and students involved. Suspensions and Expulsions will be considered (Regina Public School Division, 2007).
Appendix C. Survey Instrument

Staff Preparedness for School Violence Survey

* For those working in more than one school, please use the school where you work the most hours.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel safe at my school.
   - Strongly agree  - Somewhat agree  - Neither agree nor disagree  - Somewhat disagree  - Strongly disagree

2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: There is a high likelihood of an assault that leads to a serious injury happening at my school within the next year.
   - Strongly agree  - Somewhat agree  - Neither agree nor disagree  - Somewhat disagree  - Strongly disagree

3. To what extent are the following problems within your school?
   a. Student use of verbal threats.
      - Very big problem  - Fairly big problem  - Minor problem  - Not a problem at all
   b. Student use of minor physical violence (e.g., pushing/shoving, slapping) that does not lead to a visible injury.
      - Very big problem  - Fairly big problem  - Minor problem  - Not a problem at all
   c. Student use of serious physical violence (e.g., punching, kicking, or using a weapon) that leads to a visible injury.
      - Very big problem  - Fairly big problem  - Minor problem  - Not a problem at all
   d. Students bringing weapons (e.g., knives or firearms) to school
      - Very big problem  - Fairly big problem  - Minor problem  - Not a problem at all
   e. Student bullying (Using force, threats or coercion to abuse or intimidate others)
f. Student cyber bullying (Using electronic communication to bully another person)  
   ☐ Very big problem ☐ Fairly big problem ☐ Minor problem ☐ Not a problem at all

g. Lack of student connection to school  
   ☐ Very big problem ☐ Fairly big problem ☐ Minor problem ☐ Not a problem at all

h. Students vandalizing school property  
   ☐ Very big problem ☐ Fairly big problem ☐ Minor problem ☐ Not a problem at all

i. Insufficient supervision of students before or after school  
   ☐ Very big problem ☐ Fairly big problem ☐ Minor problem ☐ Not a problem at all

j. Inadequate supervision of students during transition times (breaks, recess, lunch)  
   ☐ Very big problem ☐ Fairly big problem ☐ Minor problem ☐ Not a problem at all

k. Insufficient monitoring of students on school grounds  
   ☐ Very big problem ☐ Fairly big problem ☐ Minor problem ☐ Not a problem at all

4. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I think it is important for my school to have a school safety plan in case a violent act occurs.  
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

5. My school has a safety plan in place in case of a violence related emergency.  
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

6. **If you answered “YES” to Question 5 (a plan is in place at my school) please answer Questions 6 and 7.**  
   **If you answered “NO” or “UNSURE” to Question 5 please go to Question 8.**

a. I have a good understanding of the steps involved in the safety plan.  
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

b. I feel confident in my abilities to carry out the plan if a violent act occurs at my school.
school.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

7. If a safety plan is in place at my school, has the school drilled the students and staff in the use of this plan in the past two years for:

- School Shootings ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
- Hostage-Takings ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
- Bomb Threats ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your preparedness for acts of violence occurring at your school:

- I have received appropriate training to deal with violent situations at school.
  ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

- I have the knowledge to effectively deal with violent situations at school.
  ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

- I have the confidence to effectively handle violent situations at school.
  ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

9. Are security personnel (non-police officers) present in your school:

- The entire school day.
  ☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

- While students were arriving and leaving?
  ☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

- At selected school activities (e.g., athletic, social or other school events)
  ☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

10. Are police officers present in your school:
a. The entire school day.

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

b. While students were arriving and leaving?

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

c. At selected school activities (e.g., athletic, social or other school events)

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

11. If police officers are assigned to your school, do they participate in any of the following activities?

a. Security enforcement and patrol.

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

b. Maintaining school discipline.

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

c. Identifying problems in the school and proactively seeking solutions to those problems.

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

d. Training teachers and staff in school safety or crime prevention.

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

e. Teaching law related education course or training students (Alcohol or drug education, law classes, driver’s education).

☐ Always ☐ Very Often ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

12. Does your school use the following strategies to increase student and staff safety:

a. Security devices (e.g., camera, metal detectors).

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
b. Presence of school security personnel or police officers.
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

c. Students know where to report their awareness of weapons or violence.
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

d. Zero tolerance policy for weapon possession while at school.
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

e. Trained crisis intervention team available to assist with problems of violence.
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

f. Provide an electronic notification system that automatically notifies parents in case of a school-wide emergency.
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

g. Provide a structured anonymous threat reporting system (e.g., online submission, telephone hotline, or written submission via drop box).
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

h. School identification badges are used for all staff and visitors while at your school.
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

13. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your school’s initiatives to reduce violence:

a. Training students in anger management techniques.
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

b. Training students in conflict resolution and peer mediation.
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

c. Having counselors available to help students with issues related to violence.
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Strongly disagree
14. As of September 1, 2014 the total student enrolment at my school was:
   1. Less than 100 students
   2. 101 to 250 students
   3. 251 to 400 students
   4. Larger than 400 students

15. How would you describe levels of crime in the neighbourhood surrounding the school where you teach?
   1. High levels of crime
   2. Moderate levels of crime
   3. Low levels of crime

16. What best describes the school where you teach?
   1. Public school
   2. Separate school
   3. Other

17. What best describes the school where you teach?
   1. Elementary
   2. Middle or Junior High School
   3. High school
   4. Mixed

18. What are the first three characters of your school’s postal code (e.g., S0M; S4S)
    ________

19. What best describes your role in the school?
   1. Part-time teacher
   2. Full-time teacher
   3. Staff member
4. Administrator (e.g., Vice Principal, Principal)

20. In which of the following age categories does your current age fit?

   1. Up to 24 years
   2. 25 – 34
   3. 35 – 44
   4. 45 – 54
   5. 55 – 64
   6. 65 and older
   9. Prefer not to say

21. With which of the following groups do you most closely identify with?

   1. First Nation
   2. Métis
   3. Asian
   4. Arab
   5. East Indian
   6. Black
   7. Caucasian or White
   8. Other: (specify: ______________________)
   9. Prefer not to say

22. What is your gender?

   1. Male
   2. Female
   3. Other
   9. Prefer not to say
Appendix D. Toronto Catholic Schools Lockdown Procedures

The Toronto Catholic Schools lockdown procedures are initiated when the safety of the occupants of the school are in danger such as when an active shooter is on the premises. The Principal determines the course of action and will decide if a full lockdown of the school is necessary. Once the Principal initiates the response, 911 is called and information such as the nature of the incident is related to emergency response. The following is the procedure for initiating a lockdown response utilized by the Toronto Catholic Schools (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2013).

Initiating a Lockdown Response

Communication

1. Ring school bell - 3 sets of 3 rings.

2. Make a P.A. announcement stating:

   Our school is initiating a Lockdown response.
   Staff and students are to respond accordingly.

3. Inform all occupants, tenants and visitors (permit holders, daycare centres, etc.) that a Lockdown response has been initiated.

4. Ensure that exterior doors remain unlocked to allow access for Emergency personnel.

5. Once Emergency Services arrive, police personnel will create a Parent Staging Area where communication will be provided to the school community. Once a lockdown has been initiated, the school becomes an emergency site under the authority of the Toronto Police Service

Securing Persons
6. Students and staff outside school buildings and portables should move away from the buildings as quickly as possible, assemble at the school’s emergency evacuation location and remain there until further instructions are received.

7. Students / staff in classrooms, offices, portables, cafeteria, library, gym, etc., should close doors and lock if possible.

8. Students / staff in transition should enter the nearest room, close the door and lock if possible.

9. Windows and window coverings should be closed.

10. Interior glass panes should be covered wherever possible

11. Lights must be turned off.

12. Students / staff must move as far as possible from doors and windows. It may be necessary to use school furnishings to secure a room or to provide shelter.

13. All cell phones, electronic devices, televisions, radios and computers must be turned off.

14. Students / staff must remain silent.

15. Students / staff should lie on the floor if gunshots are heard.

16. Adults should remain calm and reassuring. Students should be aware that the Lockdown response may be in effect for an extensive period of time.

17. Students / staff are to remain in secured rooms until further instructions are received. Under no circumstances should anyone leave a secured area to access washrooms, lockers, etc.

18. Given the unique, and possibly rapidly changing dynamic of a lockdown situation, consideration must always be given to evacuating the site or to
relocating to another area in the building should a space become unsafe.

Individual discretion must be used to determine the best course of action.

19. Under no circumstances should anyone be allowed access once a space has been secured.

20. No calls should be made to the office. Be aware that active attackers may use the P.A. system to access potential victims.

21. In the event that an individual has information that may aid the police response, e.g., the location of an active attacker, a direct call to 911 should be made using a cell phone. This must be done as quietly as possible.

22. If possible and safe to do so, attendance should be taken when the lockdown has been lifted.

**Lifting the Lockdown Response**

Only police personnel determine when the incident is controlled and the danger has passed.

No individuals or groups can be released from a secured area until authorized by a police officer.

The principal and police personnel will determine any necessary instructions as required, e.g., revised bus schedules, dismissal procedures, etc.

Please note:

- Only authorized TCDSB personnel should speak to the media.
- TCDSB students should not be interviewed or photographed without parental permission.

**Follow-Up**

1. In consultation with the TCDSB Communications Department:
   - Update the school answering system message
   - Prepare a scripted response to be given to callers
   - Amend auto-attendant message if needed
• Prepare a letter for the school community to communicate the details of the incident and response
• Prepare a media information release

2. Schedule a meeting with staff to debrief the incident and response.
3. Arrange for TCDSB Crisis Response Team to provide support as needed.
Appendix E. University of Regina Research Ethics Board Approval – July 7, 2015

Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Janell Matt
Fairway Crescent
White City, SK S4L 0A7

DEPARTMENT
Justice Studies

REB# 2015-056

SUPERVISOR
Dr. Rick Ruddell

FUNDER(S)
Unfunded

TITLE
School Staff Preparedness for School Violence

APPROVAL OF
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review
Appendix A - Recruiting information for potential participants
Appendix B - Informed consent script (for the online survey)
Survey instrument

APPROVED ON
July 7, 2015

RENEWAL DATE
July 7, 2016

Full Board Meeting ☐
Delegated Review ☒

CERTIFICATION
The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: http://www.uregina.ca/research/faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/index.html

Dr. Larena Hoeber, Chair
University of Regina
Research Ethics Board

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