

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE DETACHMENT COMMANDERS'

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT YOUTH VIOLENCE AND

THE SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER PROGRAM

by

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ABSTRACT

This study provided an overview of youth violence and violence in schools. This study focused on how the police could play an active role in addressing violence in schools through the use of full time school liaison officer. The roles and duties of a school liaison officer were discussed to support the researcher's belief that a full time school liaison officer could prevent and reduce violence in schools. In addition, three Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachment Commanders were interviewed, through the use of a standard questionnaire, to determine their opinions, knowledge, and beliefs about violence in schools. The Detachment Commanders were asked to identify, based on the needs of the community they policed, what priority they placed on assigning a full time school liaison officer at their local high school and the expected benefits.

After the Detachment Commanders' interviews were completed, the data was analyzed and the common themes were identified and discussed. A full time school liaison officer can and does prevent violence in schools, and the benefits of having a full time school liaison officer were evident. Detachment Commanders agreed with the importance of having a full time school liaison officer but believed a full time school liaison officer would be ideal if such issues as police officer workloads, funding for police, community attitudes, and the availability of police resources were considered prior to allocating police personnel.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

I have been a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) since 1996. After leaving basic training in Regina, Saskatchewan, I was transferred to a small community in the central interior of British Columbia, and started my career as a general duty officer. Shortly after I arrived, I took up duties as a school liaison officer at one of the local high schools. It was a medium-sized high school with approximately 1100 hundred students. Several racial groups such as East Indians, Chinese, and Caucasians were present in the school. It is my opinion that there was also a clear distinction in social class amongst the student population.

Upon my arrival at the RCMP Detachment, detachment supervisors assigned each uniformed officer to either an elementary school or a high school to carry out school liaison officer duties. In some cases, officers were assigned to more than one school because each public school in the school district required a designated officer. At that time, each general duty officer was expected at the beginning of each school year to visit his/her school and meet with the school's administrators and teachers. The officer was expected to introduce himself/herself as the school's liaison officer and offer his/her service for any school-related issues. The officer was also asked to mingle with the students in an attempt to, ideally, gain the friendship, trust, and respect of the students.

The detachment supervisors encouraged each officer to accommodate each school's requests. At that time, when it came to providing police service to the schools, the Detachment was very service-orientated. The detachment supervisors expected that each uniformed officer would visit or contact his or her designated school at least once a month. Moreover, each officer was expected to log each visit or contact with their school

in an operation file. This way, the detachment supervisors were able to monitor the frequency and nature of police service provided to every school in the community.

In hindsight, I can best describe the school liaison officer program in this community as something that was informal but a required duty for each uniformed officer. The service provided to each school varied as some officers were more suited or perhaps more motivated to carry out this kind of duty than were others. As well, requests for police service varied between schools.

The duties I carried out as school liaison officer varied. Usually, the school administrator from my school would contact me and ask for assistance in dealing with a school-related problem. The most common request from the school was to investigate incidents that could not be dealt with by the school. Therefore, I investigated various offences and issues at the request of my school including assaults, school act violations, bullying and intimidation incidents, drug possessions, threats, and thefts. The school also contacted me on occasion to take part in proactive and more enjoyable activities like attending school plays, participating in floor hockey and basketball games, and attending graduation ceremonies, all of which fostered a better relationship between students and police officers. It allowed students to see police officers outside their structured police duties.

While I was working this particular duty, I had to resolve several issues that occurred inside the school. Even though I would have been more effective in a full time capacity, unfortunately I was assigned to this school duty part time. Consequently, I can say that my role and commitment to this program was limited by the fact that I had my regular policing duties to carry out.

Historically, the RCMP from its inception was created to enforce the laws of government, and the RCMP was set up to be reactionary not proactive. This has changed and the RCMP and its members are now expected to be proactive in dealing with problems and conflicts. I know from my experience that a police officer provides leadership within the school, and as a last resort, the police officer is an extension of the judicial system. The police officer not only enforces the laws of the country but is required to be an innovative problem solver when school-related issues arise. In this manner, the police officer demonstrates leadership in the school community by solving school-related problems without using the full extent of the law. In retrospect, I think that an officer assigned to this duty full time would be instrumental in preventing some school-related issues from becoming potentially violent.

The horrific events in Tabor, Alberta, (Let's Take Back Our Schools, 1999, ¶ 1), and Columbine, Colorado, (As Many As 25 Dead in Colorado School Attack, 1999, ¶ 1), have once again brought violence in schools to the public's attention. The level of violence demonstrated in these two separate incidents showed all citizens of each country that violence in schools is a serious problem; therefore, definable, workable, and attainable solutions are needed. School violence is not limited to one country, state, or province. Recent events in British Columbia have demonstrated that a proactive approach has to be adopted to reduce and combat this problem. For example, a high school student in Surrey, B.C. was recently stabbed with a knife near the school property, and a North Vancouver high school student was stabbed in the chest by a fellow student who had been harassing and bullying the victim prior to the incident. Statistics show that school aged children in British Columbia are committing violent crimes. According to

Statistics Canada, recent B.C. Police and Crime Summary Statistics show that in 1995, “694 violent crimes were committed by children under 12 and 14,024 by youths 12-17 years of age” (General Canada Stats, 1995, ¶ 2). The severity of the problem cannot be underestimated. The Summary Statistics also showed that “even a few years later, in 1998, among violent crimes, youths charged with homicide increased 3.2% and assault .9%” (The Daily, 1999, ¶ 28). Too often citizens of this province downplay youth violence. An overall increase in youth violence or the level of violence may have a direct impact on the number of violent acts committed on school property or associated with a school activity.

During the last few years, the media has been quick to scrutinize the school system and the police when reporting incidents of violence committed by students on school property; in fact, the media does a good job of inflating the public’s perception of violence in schools even when it is difficult to quantify public perception or personal belief. Therefore, it is understandable to find out that the general public is very disturbed when they hear about a sixteen year old student stabbed outside a high school in Surrey, B.C., or a Calgary high school student stabbed and killed inside his school. In 2000, one of the most disturbing incidents took place in Abbotsford, B.C., when a 14-year-old girl committed suicide as a result of being bullied by three other girls at her school. These types of incidents will continue to cause a great concern for every community and nearly all citizens of this province and, without question, these types of incidents continue to alarm students, parents, and teachers. In general, violence in schools continues to be a major issue to address for the school and police communities. The logical question that most school boards and administrators are asking is what can be done to approach this very real problem. The stabbing incident seems to be an extreme incident but violence

in schools entails several activities that may, to some degree, be a daily occurrence inside some schools: assault, threats, intimidation, extortion and bullying. If these activities go unreported or unchecked, the potential for violence exists and can escalate into something more serious.

From my experience, I discovered that a school liaison officer was a great asset to the school and school district. The school liaison officer position allowed the police community to build strong relationships with both the students and teachers. When required, the police officer worked very closely with teachers, administrators, and students. In some cases, a team approach was used to solve present and potential problems and conflicts.

The safety of the students, whether it is inside the school or on school property, continues to be the primary concern for all parties. The school continues to be a place in the community where parents expect their children to be safe. Many people believe that violence in schools is a problem and is unacceptable; therefore, the role of police in a school environment is critical to addressing this problem. It cannot be minimized into a fringe program or job as this limits its overall effectiveness. Instead, the role of the police needs to be refined, developed, and utilized. The police officer is a valuable resource to the school environment; he/she is a resource that can provide assistance in combatting and preventing violence in schools. I believe that a police officer working inside the school can anticipate and reduce incidents of violence. For example, a police officer can address, in an effective manner, problems such as assaults, threats, bullying, intimidation, and extortion. The police officer can address these types of complaints and, in some situations, provide guidance so that there is an appropriate and workable solution. However, from my experience, Detachment Commanders did not assign a full

time school liaison officer. The purpose of this study was to determine if Detachment Commanders believe that having a police officer assigned to a school on a full-time basis provides benefits to the school and community.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

In Canada, limited information exists on the topic of violence amongst youths. However, the information that does exist is very informative. In 1993, an independent study on school violence was conducted to identify the public's perception about school violence in British Columbia. The study concluded that "66% of the people surveyed stated that violence in B.C. schools was a 'serious' or 'very serious' problem" (Crime and Safety - Profile of Youth, 1993, ¶ 16). This number should be alarming to police officers, teachers, parents, and school administrators. If 66% of the population surveyed believed that school violence is a "serious" or "very serious" problem, then the incidents of violence reported has created this perception in the general public. Unfortunately, a clear definition was not available as to what constituted a "serious" or "very serious" problem. Unless a clear definition is provided by the study, the issue of violence in schools can be minimized by the various stakeholders.

Although school violence has been described by some as a "serious" or "very serious" problem, statistical information provides further insight into this issue. On average, youths represent approximately 25% of all persons charged with criminal code offences in British Columbia. According to General Canada Stats (1995), "there has been an increase of 5% for the period of 1987-1996. Youths charged with violent offences increased by 156% from 1240 in 1987 to 3171 in 1996" (¶ 4). This information provides a disturbing picture. From a statistical perspective, it appears that the problem is escalating. However, no explanation was provided to explain why there

was such a dramatic increase in violent offences. If only the numbers are analysed, it is very easy to conclude that there is a growing problem in this province. The media's coverage of this issue continues to demonstrate the seriousness of this problem. In addition, it should be noted that youth violence does not equate to school violence. Nevertheless, it is my belief that youth violence will manifest itself in the school community.

If the general public's perception is important in analysing school violence, teachers' opinions about violence in schools should also be discussed. In 1993, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation conducted a survey and gathered information from a sample of more than 700 teachers on various areas that included perceptions of violence in B.C. public schools. The survey showed that,

- (a) teachers view violence in their schools as being a moderately serious issue, but teachers in secondary schools consistently attach a higher degree of seriousness to the problem; (b) most teachers perceive there to be violence amongst students although they do not see the problem as having a "high" serious rating, but teachers at the secondary level attach greater importance to the issue;
- (c) about 44 percent of teachers overall believe that racism plays a role in the violence that occurs at school, close to 60 percent of teachers at the secondary level hold this view; (d) about 35 percent of teachers see gang behaviour as a factor fostering violence, but amongst secondary teachers, this perception jumps to 55 percent; (e) teachers view poverty as a major element engendering school violence, and intermediate level and female teachers subscribe to this view most strongly; and (f) a similarly small majority of secondary teachers feel that measures to date have been effective in countering and preventing violence at

school, but larger percentages of teachers at the primary and intermediate levels feel this way. (Malcolmson, 1994, ¶ 2)

A closer examination of this survey shows that the researcher did not make a distinction between different teachers' perception and their location in the province. This survey also discusses issues that are outside the scope of this research. It is very unlikely that this research will provide an explanation as to why racism and gang behaviour may result in school violence. Nevertheless, in 1993, there was a perception held by school teachers in this province that school violence does exist. Malcolmson's research explained that teachers viewed violence in their schools as a moderately serious problem, but teachers from the secondary school level attached a higher degree of seriousness to violence in schools than primary and intermediate level teachers. Given the reported increases in violence in the general youth population, it is likely that teachers may also have become more aware of this issue.

The mere presence of a school liaison officer should be beneficial to the school and community; the school liaison officer's role in the school is an avenue of prevention that has not been completely explored by the police community. It is my belief that police officers around the country see police presence within the community as a proactive measure in reducing incidents of crime. This would likely be more prevalent in rural communities policed by small rural police detachments. For example, the community can develop a sense of security, whether it is real or perceived, when police presence is visible. It becomes a common occurrence to see police officers out in the community deterring crime as the local citizens go about their daily activities. This would not be any different in a school environment. Whether it is a large-sized secondary school in urban British Columbia or middle-sized secondary school in rural British

Columbia, the physical presence of a police officer on school property would provide a sense of security to students and teachers and have the ability to reduce violence in schools. Mathews' research (1995) supports this perception that

the presence of a police officer in a school created an atmosphere of safety. It was evident from his research that students supported the presence of police in schools. They felt that a police presence created a sense of safety and security. They felt that police were an important part of what needed to be done to keep schools safe. (p. 13)

The students' comments provide some insight into a student's perception of police presence. It shows, to some degree, that the police create a sense of security within the school; it is a sense of security that can be created and maintained.

Based on my policing experience, it is my belief that the police can play a significant role in reducing and reacting to violence in schools. Police officers have the opportunity to develop stronger relationships with the students within the school community and thus create the foundation to prevent and reduce violence in schools. Traditionally, police officers carry out a reactive role in addressing problems that surface within the school. If trust and communication can be developed among all parties, positive and constructive relationships will develop. Once this happens, the officer, school administrator, teachers, and students can work together to address violence in schools; therefore, a proactive team approach will be developed. This type of approach is inclusive of all parties and will allow the administrators, teachers, students, and police officers to solve conflicts when they arise.

A proactive team approach has worked before in most communities where the police play a leading role in addressing a community problem. In some communities,

certain locations such as parks, parking lots, and streets become trouble spots for public intoxication, excessive noise, and underage drinking. Within a short period of time, the citizens of that community demand that the problems be addressed and, if possible, be eliminated, and usually the police are required to resolve them. Like most community problems such as the one described above, the police need to enter into a partnership with city officials and citizens to approach this problem in order to find a workable and attainable solution. Historically, police departments, including the RCMP, have created and developed specialized projects and enforcement units to address these types of problems that could not be resolved through traditional police methods. With the support of the community and some local businesses, the police utilized additional resources and new avenues of policing such as mountain bikes to carry out policing duties. Since problem spots such as parks are not accessible to police cars, the police community has developed police mountain bicycle patrols to address these “hot spots” in the community. Here again, the community and the police have identified a problem and devised a plan to solve the problem. Police bicycle patrols may not root out the entire problem but it is a proactive step where the community collaborated with the police to resolve an identified problem.

How can the police help in reducing school violence?

When addressing violence in schools, what service or skills can the police officer provide to a school? In Kingston, Ontario, Canada, the Kingston Police Department has a defined set of duties for each school liaison officer. There are several duties that foster an environment in the school community to reduce school violence. The duties of a Kingston Police Department School Officer can be described as follows:

(a) joint problem solving regarding student/staff needs; (b) classroom presentations and instruction when available; (c) student mediation, round table discussions; (d) responding to serious incidents when available; (e) presentations to parent councils and other groups; (f) telephone consultations, reporting of minor incidents, when police are not immediately required; and (g) participation in school events when available. (Kingston Police, 1997, ¶ 6)

Each defined duty for a Kingston Police Department school liaison officer contributes to developing a better relationship between the police community, students, and teachers.

Logically, when a police officer is engaged in these duties full time, it creates a framework that is proactive in solving school-related problems, not reactive in addressing violence in schools.

The school liaison officer program has been active in British Columbia since the early 1970s. The goals of the program have been clearly defined. Lalonde (1993) stated that the standard School Liaison Officer program in British Columbia focuses on the following goals: “(a) crime prevention through education; (b) promotion of the police as an accessible public service; (c) breaking down barriers between youth and police; and (d) criminal investigations and enforcement” (p. 4). These goals are similar to the ones listed for the Kingston Police Department. Both contain overall goals and related duties that pursue a better relationship between the police and students.

A closer examination of the school liaison officer program in British Columbia shows that differences do exist within the province. According to Lalonde (1993), some smaller municipalities cannot afford the luxury of a resident program such as Delta, Vancouver, or Richmond now have. They must rely on one or more officers to be the crime prevention person. Typically, this individual, or unit, is

responsible for such programs as Block Watch, school liaison, business liaison, media liaison and any other crime prevention or community relations duties. (pp. 6-7)

There is an obvious difference in the way the school liaison officer program is delivered by the larger police departments when compared to my experiences in a small community. It appears that the size of the community may impact on the how the school liaison officer program is delivered from one community to another. However, in a small community, the school liaison officer is expected to carry the exact same duties that other municipalities such as Richmond and Vancouver are carrying out with full time school liaison officers. Lalonde (1993) stated,

Richmond and Vancouver have chosen to provide a complete service to the school community. The police officer has an office in his/her assigned secondary school and reports there for duty at the start of each day. Presentations are conducted for all grades and the officers make themselves available and accessible to all students in less formal methods. Students come into contact with the officers in the hall, in the cafeteria at lunch, or in an extracurricular activity. School liaison officers have coached or become involved in an assortment of school teams, plays, field trips, student council and other activities. The student is afforded an opportunity to see the school liaison officer in all facets of his/her role as a police officer and at the same time, as an individual. (p. 7)

This delivery of police service to the school community, in my opinion, is superior to providing this service on a part-time basis. I believe my regular duties limited my effectiveness in preventing and reducing violence in schools. In fact, I was unable to commit all my energy into this duty. The differences in police resources from one

community to another may be, but is not limited to, the reason why some municipalities find it easier to allocate police officers to school duties.

In some schools in British Columbia, members of the RCMP take part in teaching Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE). Again, this is a preventative program that focuses on reducing drug use and violence. DARE is very similar to one of the expected duties of a Kingston Police Department school liaison officer. In Kingston, a School Liaison Officer is required to do presentations and provide instruction to students, and this duty is similar to what Lalonde (1993) argued a school liaison officer is expected of in British Columbia. It is apparent that a school liaison officer should take part in crime prevention through education. Even though DARE's effectiveness has been debated, many officers assigned to teach DARE believe it does have impact in reducing violence. Due to the availability of officers trained to teach this course, DARE is not offered in every community in this province. As well, the DARE course may only be offered to a limited number of students in one particular city. Having said that, DARE continues to be a program that is supported by the police, the school system, and the community.

Gabor (1995) conducted a study in which he interviewed several police officers across the country and obtained their views about the police's role in schools. Gabor concluded that the police liaison officer is more than a security guard, and he stated active involvement with the school is required from the police officer. According to Gabor, the following was expected and required from the police officer: "(a) lectures; (b) [have] an office in or near the school; (c) participation in recreational activities; (d) enforcement; (e) bridging the gap between youth and the police; and (f) solving problems, rather than merely arresting young people" (p. 8).

In view of Gabor's findings, it is understandable that these duties for the officer surfaced from this study. All the duties listed by the police officers, in addition to reducing school violence, facilitated a better relationship with the police and students. Whether it is my experience, Lalonde's research, or Gabor's study, the common message is that the school liaison officer, by virtue of his/her duties, develops positive relationships with students and, if possible, becomes a permanent part of the school environment with an overall goal of reducing violence. It is imperative that the police officer makes every effort to develop positive relationships with students; therefore, it is vital that mutual respect develops. Mathews (1995) supported this belief through his research. He stated, "Students, police, and educators, all emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining rapport between the liaison officer and students. They felt that this was the most crucial element in any school-based police program" (p. 22). It is not surprising that all stakeholders within the school community feel that the relationship between the liaison officers and students is paramount in the success of a school-based program.

In Gabor's (1995) study, the officers placed a large emphasis on having an office in or near the school. The proximity of the police officer does play a role in a school setting when addressing violence in schools. As stated earlier, the mere presence of a police officer inside a school can reduce school violence. If a police officer has an office in the school, the police officer would be able to conduct his or her school duties and relevant paper work from the school instead of returning to his or her respective detachment or station. This would increase the amount of time that a police officer spent in the school and would afford the officer more opportunity to interact with students.

By providing educational activities, the police officer plays a significant role in educating students about activities that are directly or indirectly associated to violence. The police officer can explain the law to students, and in general, teach students of all ages what constitutes an assault as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada. If the police officer takes the time to provide educational activities, he/she may increase the student's knowledge about illegal activities like, assaults, intimidation, extortion, threats, and robbery. If a student is taught that taking a fellow student's backpack by force constitutes a robbery as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada, the student may not take part in this activity, or the student could deter other students from taking part in this activity.

Does a school liaison officer reduce violence in a school?

Gabor (1995) argued that there are benefits to having a school liaison officer. According to Gabor, "the benefits are tangible. There were some anecdotes about reductions in violence and weapons infractions stemming from active liaison work" (p. 8). The officers also made various suggestions as to why a school liaison officer is helpful in reducing violence. The officers provided several examples. One of the most profound examples was that the police officer's presence inside the school increased the amount of information received from the students about illegal activities.

Most police officers realize that information received from any source about illegal activities taking place is crucial to good police work. As with any other type of police investigation, if the information is received in advance, the incident can often be prevented. Officers have prevented numerous crimes based on information received from the general public or associates of culprits. The school example would not be any different. For instance, if a student passed on information to a school liaison officer

about a fight that would be occurring after school or that a student was carrying a weapon inside the school, these problems or incidents could be stopped or prevented. If one violent act is prevented from taking place on school grounds, then the school liaison officer has contributed in a measurable way in reducing school violence. For example, police in Boston received information following the Columbine, Colorado incident, that a “copy cat” style massacre was about to take place in the Boston area. The incident was prevented and the culprits were arrested. Additional research supports this possibility. Mathews (1995) found,

students were starting to come forward more to report violent incidents because they saw the “system” could work for them. They also now appeared to be a little more willing to take the risk to provide information to teachers, administrators, and the police about past or anticipated incidents of crime, violence, or gang/group fights on or off school property. (p. 18)

It is reasonable to think that this will take place when a positive and trusting relationship develops between the school liaison officer and students. As a result of this relationship, the students are comfortable enough to approach the school liaison officer and pass on information of past or future violent crime. It is also possible that the students are passing on information to the police officer because they believe that something will actually be done, or it is possible that the accessibility of the school liaison officer on school property makes it easier for the student to approach the officer with information.

Lalonde (1993) stated that school liaison officers do investigate incidents in schools but are not limited to that. Lalonde argued that, “through student contacts in the hallways and classrooms, school liaison officers are also in a unique position as Peace Officers to educate students in order to help prevent some of these crimes from

occurring” (p. 10). If a school liaison officer can educate students about bullying and intimidation, he/she may then prevent some students from taking part in this activity. Without the school liaison officer, this type of anti-bullying or intimidation education may not otherwise exist in the school. Crime prevention and education are common themes amongst the different researchers.

Other evidence does exist to support that the police are having a positive impact on school related violence. Mathews (1995) found,

Anecdotal evidence was offered which suggested that current school/police partnerships were having a positive impact on violence. Educators reported that they valued the relationship they had with the school liaison and other officers.

Though satisfied with their current partnerships, it was evident school administrators wanted more supports and services from police. (p. 17)

Even though school liaison officers were having a positive impact on violence, the school administrators in Mathews’ study reflected that additional support and services were required from the police. This may not be possible for all police departments or detachments due to limited police resources; nevertheless, police officers are perceived to be combatting violence in schools.

Gabor (1995) surveyed 250 police services across the country and received 149 responses and concluded that “about 80% of the respondents nationwide felt that there was more violence in the schools now than 10 years ago. Almost a third of the respondents felt it was much worse. None thought things were getting better” (p. 12). The police community has identified a problem, and it would be reasonable to assume that school violence is more of a problem today than ever before. The perception of police officers working school liaison duties and all other officers working with youth cannot be

underestimated. These officers' opinions cannot be dismissed. The crime statistics in each police officer's community may not be the statistical average for the rest of the country. After the incident at Tabor, Alberta, the police officers in that community may now truly believe that school violence is a significant problem.

The Surrey RCMP Detachment, which is the largest detachment in the RCMP, was included in this study, but the rural detachments covered by the RCMP were not included. For that reason, rural detachments/police services were not asked about school violence and the school liaison officer and about his/her duties. It is conceivable that these small rural detachments also encounter incidents of school violence. The incident in Tabor, Alberta, a small community policed by the RCMP, is the best example where school violence cannot be categorized as a "big city" phenomena. Also, this researcher's experience in a small community can attest to that. The police community, regardless of the size of the detachment, has an equal responsibility to take a proactive role in reducing school violence.

In general, the police services that were asked to take part in Gabor's (1995) study concluded that they would prefer to remain in an advisory capacity and respond to incidents. Only 30% of the police services wished to assign officers full time to schools. The resources available to these police departments may have a significant impact on the way they view the need for a school liaison officer. Since policing costs continue to be a big burden for most cities, resources may be allocated to other sections and duties within the police service instead of assigning a full time school liaison officer. Even smaller communities in British Columbia face resource availability problems. The detachment commanders are forced to make tough decisions as to where to allocate police resources. Gabor, who looked at the larger police services, stated that "three-quarters of the police

felt that resources were adequate to respond to incidents, and respondents from the largest cities and West Coast were most likely to consider their resources were least adequate to support a full-time police presence" (p. 19). Gabor concluded that the larger police services and departments do feel they have inadequate resources to assign a full time school liaison officer; however, the research (Gabor, 1995; Lalonde, 1993; Mathews 1995;) shows that assigning a school liaison officer will reduce violence in the schools. Realistically, the resource problem would be magnified for the smaller services and detachments in the province. Some Detachment Commanders within the RCMP may not have the police personnel to assign a full time school liaison officer even if they believe that a full time officer does have an impact on school violence.

Because the availability of police personnel affects the survival of police programs, decisions need to be made by Detachment Commanders to prioritize these programs. In general, Detachment Commanders are responsible for allocating resources that are available to the detachment, and they are required to identify what need exists for such programs in their community. A Detachment Commander would have to reveal what emphasis he/she places on the School Liaison Officer program compared to the other services provided by the detachment. The Detachment Commander is obligated to respond to community concerns and to identify problems within the community in order to adopt a collective approach with city officials to resolve community and policing problems. Therefore, some in the police community may believe that police resources should always be allocated to increase or assist the general duty or uniformed sections ahead of any other program.

Typically, Detachment Commanders are responsible for the overall administrative and operational requirements of their respective detachments. In particular, the

Detachment Commander is responsible for the overall allocation of police resources. Based on the number of police officers available within the community, the Detachment Commander has to decide how many police officers will be allocated to general duty (uniform work), municipal traffic, highway patrol, and specialized sections such as Serious Crime, Drugs, Sex Crimes, and Robbery. In addition to these duties, proactive duties are still assigned to officers. These duties would include Community Policing, Media Liaison, School Officer Liaison Program, and Bike Patrol.

The deployment of resources is dependent on the availability of officers and demands of the community. In some communities within British Columbia, a Detachment Commander does not have the luxury of specialized sections. For example, a Detachment Commander, within the terminology used by the RCMP, could be responsible either for a detachment with two police officers or for a detachment with more than 400 officers. Because there is a significant difference in the number of police officers available across detachments, each Detachment Commander has to decide where police resources are best allocated. Violence in schools is only one issue within the police community. Routinely, a police officer investigates various types of criminal code offences: robberies, assaults, sex assaults, frauds, mischiefs, impaired driving, extortion, break and enters, and thefts. Therefore, the Detachment Commander has to establish where, when and under what circumstances violence in schools is a problem that should be addressed by the police. It has to be prioritized with all other issues and other investigations.

The purpose of this study is to determine if Detachment Commanders believe a full time school liaison officer has the potential to reduce and prevent violence in schools. Due to my past experience as school liaison officer, I believe that there is a need

for this type of study. This study will answer several questions. First of all, this study will reveal how Detachment Commanders feel about the need for full time school liaison officer and how the presence of an officer in the school will reduce violence. If examples from the larger centres can be used, the school liaison officer can play a major role in the reduction of school violence. It is then probable that Detachment Commanders in this part of the province may feel the same way. Secondly, due to the availability of limited police resources, this study will show the importance or priority a Detachment Commander places on such a program. It would not be surprising if one of the Detachment Commanders believes that police resources should be focussed on “front line policing” and not inside a school. Thirdly, the overall attitude will be apparent. It will reveal whether the police community believes that violence in schools is a legitimate problem that should be addressed in this proactive manner.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Sampling

I proposed a twofold research question to Detachment Commanders who were selected for this study. I identified three Detachment Commanders and asked them to take part in my research. I telephoned and then approached three Detachment Commanders who were known to me, and who I thought felt were comfortable enough to take part in this study. Therefore, I realized that the selection process of the three Detachment Commanders has limited my research. I could have selected three Detachment Commanders at random but it was doubtful that three would take part in this study unless they were familiar with me and the purpose of the study. As well, for convenience, it was better for me to approach Detachment Commanders who were known to me. I advised them that I had obtained permission to conduct this research

from the legal branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well as the Commanding Officer of this region. Detachment Commanders from larger detachments were not considered as they usually had additional resources for such programs and thus would most likely provide similar data as uncovered by Gabor's (1995) study.

The Detachment Commanders selected were in charge of three different detachments within the province of British Columbia. The size of the detachments ranged from 10 members to more than 50 members in strength. Detachment Commander's rank within the RCMP can range from Corporal to a Commissioned rank of Chief Superintendent, all of which are peace officers as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada.

For the purpose of this research, Detachment Commanders are in positions of power and have influence on community issues and programs. Whether it is directly or indirectly, Detachment Commanders can influence how community issues and programs are addressed and delivered. Therefore, Detachment Commanders can provide valuable insight, from a police perspective, on violence in schools in addition to providing strategies to address and combat this problem. The school liaison officer program is available to most police departments to implement and utilize.

Procedure

I planned on interviewing three Detachment Commanders. Prior to the commencement of this study, I contacted the RCMP's legal department and submitted my written proposal asking permission to conduct this study. Once approved at that point, my request was then forwarded to the Commanding Officer of this province for approval. Next, I received written permission from the Commanding Officer to conduct this study. I did not anticipate any problems since this study would be beneficial to both

the school system and the RCMP. Once I cleared that obstacle, I contacted the Detachment Commanders by telephone and arranged to meet with them at their respective detachments. When this was accomplished, I travelled to each detachment and met with the Detachment Commander. The meeting and interview took place in a private room.

I advised the Detachment Commanders that my role as researcher was primarily as an interviewer. I advised each Detachment Commander that I expected the interview to be approximately one hour in duration. I ensured that the anonymity of the Detachment Commanders was maintained, and prior to and during the interviews I encouraged the Detachment Commanders to speak freely and openly about their feelings and experiences regarding school violence and the school liaison officer program. I explained to the participants that once the interviews were completed that I would prepare a written report which explained each Detachment Commanders' opinions and beliefs about school violence and the school liaison officer program. I tried to capture the overall attitudes and themes of the interviews conducted.

I spent some time explaining to each Detachment Commander that the interviews would be audio taped to ensure clarity and accuracy. In addition, the Detachment Commanders were advised that they were required to sign an Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) agreeing to take part in the study. The purpose of the consent form was to explain to each participant that his or her participation was voluntary, and the participant understood that he or she can withdraw from study at any time. Once this was completed, I spent some time explaining the Information Sheet (Appendix B) to the Detachment Commander. The Information Sheet explained to the Detachment Commander the research study and the purpose for the study. I also took time to explain

the confidentiality issues. I assured each Detachment Commander that their anonymity would be guaranteed. I advised each Detachment Commander that all identifiers in the final report would be stripped and that the Detachment Commander had the opportunity to read both the transcription and summary report of their interview and my interpretations in order that deletions or additions could be made. This way, the Detachment Commander was assured that his/her confidentiality was maintained, and that the research report accurately reflected his/her comments.

If requested by the Detachment Commander, a copy of the Informed Consent Form and Information sheet was left with the Detachment Commander. After the interview, I thanked each Detachment Commander for taking the time to take part in my study.

Instrument

For this study, interviews as the instrument for collecting data were critical since it allowed me to analyse individual experience, beliefs, and opinions expressed by Detachment Commanders. Without interviews, it would have been difficult for any researcher to accurately describe and analyse a person's perspective. The detailed information that was required by this research could have only been obtained through interviews. Patton (1987) supports this belief and states,

We interview to learn about things we cannot directly observe. We cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. (p. 109)

As result of being a trained police officer, I have conducted hundreds of audio-taped interviews and thus have the skills to do this kind of research. I independently asked each Detachment Commander several questions regarding his/her opinions, beliefs, experience, and knowledge about violence in schools and the school liaison officer program.

As a part of this research, I conducted standardized open-ended interviews. I asked a set of open-ended questions from a prepared questionnaire (Appendix C) which was carefully worded to ensure each Detachment Commander went through the same sequence and same questions. According to Patton (1987), "the standardized, open-ended interview is used when it is important to minimize variation in the questions posed to interviewees" (pp. 112-113). In this manner, I maintained some consistency in the research question and the secondary questions. The secondary questions differed because they were generated as a result of a previous response provided by a Detachment Commander that required more information. Also, where required, I had the freedom to probe for in-depth answers if I found that the responses were unclear or evasive. Consequently, with a structured format, interviewer bias was reduced.

I made every effort not to ask questions where the Detachment Commander could have answered by either saying yes or no. I tried to explore why and under what circumstances Detachment Commanders have developed their present beliefs, opinions, and knowledge about violence in schools and the school liaison officer program. I asked well-organized, open-ended questions that allowed each Detachment Commander an opportunity to provide an answer with as much information as possible. For example, I asked the Detachment Commanders, "In your experience as a police officer, you must have encountered many situations in which violence amongst youths was a factor. Can

you describe for me the circumstances surrounding this or these experiences?" After listening to the response, I explored deeper by probing with additional questions. For example, I then asked, "What was your opinion of that event?" "How did you feel about it?" "What could the community do to prevent it?" "What could the RCMP do to prevent it?" Subsequently, I asked each Detachment Commander, "What programs exist in your community that addressed violence and violence in schools?" Again, where possible, I had the freedom to probe each response. Each interview varied in duration and some of the content covered.

The standardized open-ended interview made data analysis easier because it allowed me to locate each Detachment Commander's answer to the same question rather quickly. I was able to organize questions and answers that were similar and thus was able to identify and analyse themes discovered.

I realized that I did have a personal bias on this research subject, and I realized that I knew the Detachment Commanders prior to the interviews. I ensured that I did not let these two factors affect the way the interviews were conducted. I remained neutral during the interviews. I was a good listener and I did not pass judgement on the Detachment Commanders' replies. In fact, I was told a lot about this issue. I did not react in any manner that showed the Detachment Commanders that I either favoured or disfavoured the content provided.

When the interviews were completed, the audio tapes were transcribed into a statement format. The audio tapes and transcripts remain with the researcher until the degree is approved or longer if required by the University of Northern British Columbia.

Analysis of data and interpretation

I analysed the data by identifying the common themes. I identified the common experiences, knowledge, and beliefs presented by the Detachment Commanders and then organized the data into categories, patterns, and themes. This allowed me to identify and explain the themes and patterns in the data as they related to my research question and to explain any differences in opinion that surfaced among the three different Detachment Commanders. This research, however, cannot overcome the differences that may contribute to a Detachment Commander's attitude and opinion. First of all, each Detachment Commander represented a different community; secondly, each Detachment Commander faced, to some degree, demands from the community for more policing service; thirdly, each Detachment Commander had to allocate police resources that best serves his/her community.

For this study, the information provided by each Detachment Commander was organized and analysed in a case study format. The information provided by Detachment Commanders was gathered and written out in a detailed format - a case record (Appendix D, E, and F). The data provided by the Detachment Commanders was organized into topical headings that were relevant to this study. This process is explained best by Patton (1987):

Once the case data have been accumulated, the first task in case analysis is to write a case record. The case record pulls together and organizes the voluminous case data into a comprehensive, primary resource package. The case record includes all the major information that will be used in doing the case analysis and case study. Information is edited, redundancies are sorted out, parts are fitted together, and the case record is organized for ready access either chronologically

and/or topically. The case record must be complete but manageable; it should include all the information needed for subsequent analysis, but it is organized at a level beyond that of the raw case data. (pp. 147-148)

When the data was organized in this manner, it was easier for me to better identify and understand the opinions, beliefs, and knowledge of each Detachment Commander, and since the data was organized topically, I had an easier time comparing and contrasting the three different case records.

For the purpose of this research, I refer to each Detachment Commander hereinafter by their pseudonyms, Detachment Commander Smith, Detachment Commander Davis, and Detachment Commander James.

Limitations of the Design

There are limitations to this research. The Detachment Commanders' opinions and beliefs are based on their police experience and community requirements. For example, it is foreseeable that some Detachment Commanders in this province would not view school violence as a problem that requires additional police intervention. Their attitudes could be derived from their experience as a police officer or directly attributed to the overall attitude of the community. If a community does not believe that violence in schools is a problem, a Detachment Commander could reflect the same attitude in the interview. In short, the researcher should understand that each Detachment Commander interviewed will represent a different community; therefore, the Detachment Commander's opinions and attitudes could be guided by community beliefs. It is also fair to conclude that this study cannot be used as a guide to show the overall attitude of all Detachment Commanders in the province of British Columbia. There are too many variables that act upon violence in schools. Some communities, based on the

demographics of the student population, may not consider violence in schools to be a legitimate issue requiring police intervention.

In this study, only three Detachment Commanders were questioned. It is unknown if other Detachment Commanders representing other small communities in the province would provide the same factors as to incidents of violence as the three who were interviewed.

Chapter 4 - Results of the Study

Violence Amongst Youths

When I asked Detachment Commanders Smith, Davis, and James to provide an example of what they perceived to be violence amongst youths, they were able to recall various events during their careers. Detachment Commander James stated that when he started his policing career an assault was an assault. There was no distinction between an assault committed on school property or elsewhere in the community. Detachment Commander Smith viewed violence amongst youths in a different context. Detachment Commander Smith equated schools as a place where youth violence can take place. In particular, Detachment Commander Smith described schools as a place where fights take place between students for various reasons. Detachment Commander Davis recalled an extreme example where he was involved in investigating a shooting death of a young person at house party. The Detachment Commanders did not definitively put violence amongst youths in a school context, but it appeared that Detachment Commanders did acknowledge youth violence as something that was common during their policing careers. Only one example directly connected violence amongst youths to a school environment. The shooting incident described by Detachment Commander Davis was

removed from the school environment and involved youths, but the incident was still extremely violent in nature.

I then asked these police officers to think back to a time where they dealt directly with youth violence and to describe the incident. Detachment Commander Smith stated that the victim is very important and recalled an incident in which the victim was beat up at school. "The best thing that I can remember about it is taking him home to his parents and trying to assure him that the law would protect him and, the other young chap that did the assaulting to him, would be prosecuted. I guess the other thing that I can recall is, how it affected this young person's life, how he no longer wanted to go back to school, wanted to change schools, wanted to be home schooled, and was just so frightened that he didn't want to go back to that school." Detachment Commander Smith's response demonstrated the importance of the victim when dealing with violence amongst youths. Detachment Commander Smith explained in detail of what was done after the incident to appease the victim and the family, and he recalled how the victim was advised of about what would happen next. This example also depicted how violence at school can have a significant negative impact on the victim and demonstrated the important role the police can play in addressing the concerns of the victim after the violence at school.

Detachment Commander James also referred to the victim and described how he would deal with youth violence. Detachment Commander James stated, "But you'd be there trying to address the concerns of the victim and trying to gather evidence, taking statements whether charges are warranted." When Detachment Commander James was asked to clarify what was meant by the "concerns of the victim," he stated the victim would be asked if they wanted charges or if they need medical attention. The police are obligated to address the needs of the victim.

Detachment Commander Davis, who discussed the shooting at the house party, also described how the victim was very important in investigating the incident. "Well, you would've seen me, again, dealing with the incident and trying to investigate it and find out why it happened. Speaking with the victim and, the case I described, we could speak with witnesses and, but if it was an incident where, just an assault against another youth, you'd be talking, I'd be talking with the victim and then going back to the accused or the suspect and finding out-trying to get both sides of the story and then trying to deal effectively with it." Even though Detachment Commander Davis made reference to the victim, an explanation was not provided as to other assistance that would be provided to the victim. Detachment Commander Davis was cognizant to the fact that the researcher was a police officer; therefore, he may have omitted providing this information because it is obvious to other police officers that one of the first things an officer addresses is the health and safety of the victim after the incident. This would include arranging medical attention and any counselling needs that may surface immediately after the incident.

Prevention

When I asked the Detachment Commanders what would prevent violent acts from being committed, they placed some importance on how the school system could do more to prevent some of these incidents from taking place. For example, Detachment Commander Smith stated that things could be done in school to deal with violence: a bullying prevention program and an educational system that teach students how a victim of violence and bullying would feel. If these programs are taught to students, the students would have the opportunity to learn about bullying and some of the negative effects of being a victim of violence. Moreover, Detachment Commander James stated that better education in the schools is required to deal with those issues to assist in the prevention of

violence. Detachment Commander James believed that CAPP (Career And Professional Planning) classes were doing some of the things that would prevent violence in schools. According to Detachment Commander James, "They have courses in schools nowadays that deal with interacting with people and that. Perhaps, you know, things like that back then would've been beneficial, to reduce [violence]." Clearly, if school courses are in place to teach students topics such as anger management, conflict resolution, and problem solving, the students have the opportunity to develop their interpersonal skills so that they can work through problems instead of resorting to violence. The school community has a big responsibility in teaching students mutual respect for peers, communication skills, and citizenship skills, all of which have the potential to reduce incidents of violence. The Detachment Commanders, in general terms, reflected that anti-bullying program and CAPP are proactive measures within the school system that could prevent violence in schools.

One Detachment Commander discussed how the police's interaction in the school community could prevent violence in schools. In particular, he stated that more involvement by the police in the school system could prevent violence in schools. Of the three Detachment Commanders, only one made a reference to the police's actual involvement in reducing violence in schools, and nowhere else did the police's actions and responsibility regarding school safety surface as factors to address this problem or discussing the prevention of violence in schools. In general, the Detachment Commanders cited more examples of what the school community could do internally to prevent violence in schools. The police were only mentioned in terms of becoming more involved with the school.

Factors affecting the incidents of school violence

When I asked the Detachment Commanders which factors affect the incidents of violence at school, a common theme emerged. Detachment Commander Smith explained that, in most cases, some students just have a bad experience with another student and thus try to resolve their problems through fighting. Two out of the three Detachment Commanders felt that drugs were a factor in incidents in violence, but the Detachment Commanders that cited drugs as a factor in incidents of violence did not provide any evidence to support their positions. Detachment Commander Smith clarified his response: "A lot of these fights that do happen in the parking lot, some of them are related to, to drugs." However, it is fair to assume that each Detachment Commander based their response on their personal experience and knowledge about drug use in the school. Only one of the three Detachment Commanders stated that alcohol was a factor.

The size of the community and the incidents of violence

According to Detachment Commanders Smith, Davis and James, the size of the community does affect the incidents of violence. The prevailing attitude amongst the Detachment Commanders is that smaller communities have less violence. Detachment Commander James stated, "I think the smaller the community, really, the less violence, because people are closer together. Kids have grown up with each other and gone through school together. The bigger the city, the less personal the contact with people. In big cities there are different schools which creates a lot of rivalry. It's not uncommon for schools to visit each other and fight. Nobody knows each other so they don't care. They can beat up somebody. Chances are they won't get caught because the kid who gets beat up doesn't know who did it." Detachment Commander James believed students in large communities have less personal contact with each other and there is no sense of

togetherness that exists between the student populous. In comparison, the schools and the students in the smaller communities have more social contact: they all know each other and have grown up together. Detachment Commander Davis summarized this problem by stating, "I think the larger the community, the more incidents of violence you do get. And in the smaller communities it's more isolated for the serious incidents of violence." These "big city" factors may contribute to some of the Detachment Commanders' attitudes.

Rivalry between schools can be a source for school problems. Larger communities will have more high schools and thus this creates a greater potential for disputes between schools. This belief was supported by Detachment Commander Smith who recalled a situation in a community that he had previously policed. There were ongoing conflicts between the two different high schools in one community. Detachment Commander Smith stated, "The larger communities have inter-school rivalries. There were two high schools and some things happened, as result of kids from one school fighting kids from other schools." He further clarified the reasons for why more school conflicts exist in larger communities, and stated, "I think when you get a bigger community, too, you get a bigger mix of racial groups, social-economic groups that are in conflict." This response requires further discussion, as it appears that this response is based only on the opinion of this Detachment Commander. Some factors such as race, social class, gang activity, maybe more prevalent in larger communities.

Programs

The interviews revealed that several programs do exist to address violence in schools. Each Detachment Commander described programs that are being utilized in their respective communities. The description of formal programs are those that exist in

several communities with the same name and function. The informal programs are those that are developed by a particular detachment or community to address some issue within that community. The following programs, whether formal or informal, were mentioned: Drug Abuse And Resistance Education (DARE), Police and Teacher patrol, Community Justice Program (CJP), Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR), Anti-bullying program, and the School Liaison Program.

Detachment Commanders did discuss other formal programs that exist in their respective communities. The Community Justice Program (CJP), as described Detachment Commander James, has been initiated by the school board to address incidents that occur at school. Detachment Commander James stated, "The schools here have had a bit of Community Justice within the schools. If the [students] get fighting, they'll sit down in a forum to deal with it." According to James, the CJP has been introduced by the community and is separate from the policing world. In some cases, the police will get involved in this process when required, but the problem is usually dealt with by the school and other stakeholders. The police play a small role in this program. Detachment Commander James stated, "They will sit the people down themselves instead of just one going to the principal's office. They'll sit down and resolve it and try to come to a solution. The school district here is a little bit different. Most administrators and the higher-ups, a lot of the teachers have had training in the 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' and they use that in the schools here."

Detachment Commander James felt that this process was working since people involved will get the opportunity to understand each other and resolve the problem. As well, the students have the chance in this program to take ownership of the problem, which could be anything from an argument, little school fight, or a general conflict. This is the best

example where a proactive team approach is used to address an incident that occurred at school. This process would involve the offender, the victim, the teachers, the administrator, possibly a school counsellor and, if required, the police.

Detachment Commander Smith described another formal program that is in use in his community. The Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) program should be considered another problem solving tool that addressed violence in schools. Detachment Commander Smith stated, "I've been involved in different types of problem solving, but ADR is one common to the Force. If a situation were to happen, everyone would gather in a room somewhere and try to solve this problem for both the offender and the victim. If nothing else, solve it to the satisfaction of the victim and ensure that it doesn't happen again. Basically, a process where everybody can sit together and talk about what happened and how they all felt as a result of the action. All would agree upon restitution on part of the offender, and as a result future situations like that would be prevented." The ADR program serves the same purpose of the Community Justice Program as described by Detachment Commander James. The similarities are identifiable. Both programs address the problem and take action to ensure that the negative behaviour does not happen again. As well, the ADR and the CJP focus on stakeholders outside the realm of the police to resolve the problem or conflict. The programs are effective because they both involve all stakeholders. Lastly, the police once again could play an active role in the ADR program if required by the primary stakeholders.

Each Detachment Commander described the school liaison officer program that existed in their community. The school liaison officer program appeared to be informal but something that has existed for some time. All three Detachment Commanders outlined the duties of officers assigned to this particular job. Detachment Commander

James stated, "In late August, early September, we re-do the list . . . so that in September when school starts, the school has a liaison officer assigned Members, in the first month, are to attend the school, meet the principal and make themselves known to the principal that they are the liaison officer for the year. Any problems, concerns, [the principals] are to call them. The members are also to attend the school at least once a month. Touch base, either just to have a walk around the playground, have lunch, give a talk, whatever, they're to attend once a month." Detachment Commander James described the program as it exists in his community, and he detailed the required duties of each officer assigned as a school liaison officer. The officer is to make himself/herself known to the school and is expected to assist the school when required and when possible. He also emphasised that an officer assigned to school liaison duties represents the local detachment.

Detachment Commander Smith described the school liaison officer program in his community as follows: "Officers are assigned to the various schools and, our actual policy, indicates that they have to have some contact with the school at least once every two months. So it can be anything from, stopping by and having coffee with the teaching staff, talking to the principal about any programs that the school would like to have. We have the DARE program here and one of the Constables got the Student Crimestoppers program going in the high school so he is quite involved with that." The manner in which the School Liaison program is described seems consistent from one detachment to another detachment. However, neither of these two Detachment Commanders described their programs as something that was formal. Both of these Detachment Commanders stated that members would be assigned to schools to attend in addition to carrying out their regular policing duties.

The Detachment Commanders demonstrated their knowledge of the school liaison officer program by describing their personal experiences with the program. Their description of the school liaison officer program varied from either formal, informal, or semiformal. One Detachment Commander provided significant detail in describing the program and how the program was monitored. According to Detachment Commander Davis, "The first [detachment], I think it was eighteen members at the time so we didn't have a designated school liaison member. Every member was involved in it. I don't think we had specific schools assigned to each member, either. [Detachment], when I was there for three years, we again, just [had] three members, no specific position for it but, the three of us would share the schools. Then in [Detachment] was the first time that there was more of a formalized system for me where you had a file, an operational file with a monthly diary date to put your documentation down to show what school, well, you were assigned a school so you would have to record what you did on a monthly basis. But there wasn't a school liaison position that time. It was, they had the Community Policing Officer and, which you could use as a resource but for the most part it was the watch members looking after the schools and quite often the two of us would get together and, go do a school talk together and then we would go to that other member's school and same thing. Increase our visibility, I guess, more than anything else." The general sentiment was that a police operational file would document the police's involvement in school related issues. In any case, the operation file held by each detachment for each school should show all activities of the police including criminal code investigations, school talks, visits, and visits attributed to another program such as DARE and Student Crimestoppers.

An operational file will allow the Detachment Commander to review what service the police provided to that particular school. However, some schools will require more service and thus more activity will be documented for one school than another, and some police officers are more prone to get involved in school liaison work than others. Again, a marked difference may appear in the level of service provided when operational files are examined. Furthermore, even though the Detachment Commanders described the program, there was no clear distinction between which programs and services were carried out by officers in full-time or part time assignments. For instance, each Detachment Commander interviewed described the school liaison officer program as what appeared to be a part-time duty. The only reference to a full time duty was the community policing position, but that job entailed more than school liaison work. Unlike the school liaison position, the community policing position usually requires the officer to look after other programs such as Neighbourhood Watch, Crimestoppers, Citizens on Patrol, and Speed Watch.

Improvement of the school liaison program

When Detachment Commanders Smith, Davis, and James answered the question about improving the school liaison program, a general consensus emerged. Each Detachment Commander described their present school liaison officer program and alluded to the fact that a full time officer assigned this duty would be beneficial and more effective. Detachment Commander Davis stated, "Well, I think if we had more members and, what I would most likely do is have somebody assigned full-time to a school liaison position." Detachment Commander Davis further clarified what the expectations would be for this full-time school liaison officer. He said in part, "I would expect them to be the coordinator. I wouldn't expect them to take on the responsibility for twenty-five

different schools but I would expect them to oversee the whole program, take on one or two schools themselves, spending a designated amount of time at each school and then monitoring the performance of the other members to make sure that they're doing their part. I expect all the policemen to be involved. I think it's every policeman's responsibility to be approachable and to jump in where you can talk to kids."

Detachment Commander Davis not only described what would be expected from a full time school liaison officer but what is expected, in general, from the remainder of the officers working school duties in his community. He explained that the school liaison officer would look after the entire school liaison officer program in addition to being assigned to one or two schools.

Detachment Commander Smith described how the school liaison officer program could be improved. He stated, "I can recall doing those jobs as a young constable and finding it very, like, I guess I can remember being, wanting to be a policeman rather than going to school and talking to kids. I've progressed through my career in policing. I have a better understanding of how important those contacts with the youth are and I guess the ideal situation is if we had enough funding to support a full-time school liaison officer I think that would be ideal where a person could do that, five days a week."

Detachment Commander Smith stated that the ideal situation for his community was to have a full time school liaison officer to deal with school issues. It appeared that Detachment Commander Smith placed greater importance to school liaison officer duty now than he did earlier in his career. Detachment Commander Smith also described how important it is for police to have contact with youths. According to Matthews (1995), it is important that the school liaison officer and students establish and maintain a rapport with students. Detachment Commander James stated, "It could be better. I don't think

that the members put the time into it that could be put into it . . . I like to see proper funding so let's say I could have another Community Policing officer and have them doing that with the members . . . But I think if we were able to dedicate our resources for the schools and that it would be better off than what we've got now." According to Detachment Commander James, there would be benefits to having a full time officer, but he believed that the funding limited his ability to improve the school liaison officer program. In particular, Detachment Commander James stated that a Community Policing officer or school liaison officer would make the program better since officers involved would be dedicated to that job. The school liaison officers would be interested in doing that job and would not be doing that job in between other duties.

In general, each Detachment Commander believed that the program could be improved if a full-time school liaison officer existed. Detachment Commanders did acknowledge the importance of having a school liaison officer. Detachment Commander Davis had already formulated what would be expected of full time school liaison officer if he had the luxury of more resources. He outlined his expectations of this officer at his detachment. After examining the responses of the Detachment Commanders, it was very easy to infer that a full time school liaison officer did not exist in their respective communities.

The priority for having a full time school liaison officer

When I asked Detachment Commanders Smith, Davis, and James what level of priority they place on having a full time school liaison officer assigned to a high school, the responses provided significant insight into how each Detachment Commander viewed this priority in relation to other issues and concerns within their respective communities. As discussed earlier in this paper, the Detachment Commanders are

responsible for the overall quality of police service provided to their respective community. The Detachment Commanders have to prioritize their detachment's resources and programs and the manner in which they are to be utilized. Detachment Commander Davis stated, "I'm fairly new to [Detachment], . . . I know there's a wide range of issues here and it's a very busy Detachment. I think we're running in [ordinal number] position in the province for caseload per member. I think we need a school liaison position; it would be to our advantage. I think we need more than just that here. So it's not my highest priority, but there's a lot of serious crime here." Detachment Commander Davis discussed how the detachment's workload affected what priority was placed on having a full time school liaison officer. Davis stated that they have a relatively high case load per officer and in addition to a school liaison officer position his detachment would need more resources. Usually, this would mean that the detachment requires additional officers to assist with other duties and investigations. As well, he stated that a school liaison position would be an advantage but no definitive answer was given as to what priority would be placed on this position. When Detachment Commander Davis was asked if police resources were a non-issue, would a full time school liaison officer still be a priority. Detachment Commander Davis stated there would be somebody assigned to the school liaison position full time.

Detachment Commander Smith was more supportive and placed a higher priority on having a full time school liaison officer in the community. Detachment Commander Smith thought that a full time school liaison officer would be productive. He stated, "Our workload here is moderate so we're not plagued with drug problems or gang problems, so I think our school liaison program is a pretty high priority for us. One of our business plans we've put in last year was to get an extra person on our establishment

so that we could have a full-time community policing school liaison officer, but of course with the Province being in the poor financial state that it is in, manpower's so short. We weren't supported for that, but it's a pretty high priority for me as a Detachment Commander because I feel that, if we did have a school liaison officer a lot of our petty crime that happens in the community would be either totally prevented or he or she could assist in solving a lot of that crime." Detachment Commander Smith described the detachment's workload as being moderate. He equated this predicament as something that would be more conducive for a full time school liaison officer who could then be proactive in addressing incidents of crime within a school context. With this approach, Detachment Commander Smith believed that the school liaison officer would prevent some incidents from happening in addition to solving a lot of crime. Even though Smith made reference to crime, he did not specify if violent crime was something that could be prevented.

In contrast, Detachment Commander James declared that a full time school liaison officer may not have enough work to do in his community. James explained: "I don't think there's a demand at our high school. It's not that big, there wouldn't be that much work for them either all the time . . . But if we had a second Community Policing guy, maybe he could set up and be at the high school two hours on a Monday morning, or three hours, and work that into his schedule because they'd have that flexibility." Detachment Commander James specified that a second Community Policing officer would be able to carry out some of the school liaison officer's duties in a regular manner by visiting the school regularly on a particular day of the week. This would be better than a part-time presence, and it would be better than a school liaison officer that is assigned to the school on a part time basis or when the officer's services are required. In

this case, the Detachment Commander James believed that not enough demand existed in the school community to justify a full time school liaison officer. Detachment Commander James did not specify if the actual priority or decision to have a full time school liaison officer was based on his perception of the officer's potential workload or if his opinion was directed by the needs of the community.

Reduction of violence in schools

When the Detachment Commanders were asked how violence can be reduced in schools, the responses varied from better training for teachers to deal with violence in schools to more policemen in the schools for more education and prevention. Detachment Commander James stated, "I think a very proactive teaching staff and maybe some teaching or workshops for the teachers [would] better prepare them for how to deal with violence in schools. [This would be] in addition to more involvement by the police [in the school] and more education for the students to deal with violence." James provided a brief explanation as to what would be required from each stakeholder to reduce violence in schools. Detachment Commander James, in a certain way, described the solution to this problem as something that could be resolved if the teachers, students, and police all play a proactive role. In comparison, Detachment Commander Smith explained what he believed police could do to reduce violence in schools: "I think the police are and need to be leaders in the programs that reduce violence like the anti-bullying program, but I think the more the police are around the schools, and the more we can talk to the youth . . . Maybe not so much threaten them with the courts but to talk to them about the effects that violence has on the victims and what it's like to be the person that is small for their age and always gets kicked around or pushed around in school." In this instance, the police officer, as described Detachment Commander Smith,

is a mediator and problem solver. The police officer is not only physically around the school but is actively talking to kids about violence and bullying. By using this approach, the police officer would have the potential to reduce incidents of violence.

Detachment Commander Davis reflected how the police had a bigger role to play in reducing violence at school. He placed a greater importance on the police's role to reduce violence in schools. Detachment Commander Davis described it this way: "I think having more policemen in the schools, not for enforcement [but] for more education and prevention. I just think seeing us there would prevent violence. As an example, going back to [Detachment], when we were able to patrol past the school at lunch time there were no fights. And the police presence would prevent it. I know we can't be there all the time but, I think, if we could be in the schools more often, though, we could get to know who the trouble makers are and even build some rapport with them. Not to throw them in jail and throw away the key but to go up and talk to these kids and find out why they're fighting. And if they know we're only a short phone call away and if they know . . . we know who they are then, I think that would have some affect on and reduce the incidents of violence." Detachment Commander Davis believed that the police play an active role in reducing violence in schools. He explained in detail how the police's presence in the school environment would prevent violence and by doing so he described school liaison officer activities that have been discussed by other researchers.

Detachment Commander Davis' sentiment mirrored previous police and school related research that asserts that police presence can deter crime. Gabor (1995; see also, Matthews, 1995) revealed that there were benefits to having a full time school liaison officer. Gabor (1995) stated that the police officer was required to be active within the school to take part in school activities and to bridge the gap between youth and the

police, and by doing so, the school liaison officer received an increased amount of information about illegal activities taking place. The acquisition of information about illegal activities would be a natural outcome of police presence and thus have the potential reduce violence. Detachment Commander Davis comments were a true description of both Gabor's and Matthews' research; Davis described that police presence in the schools would not entirely be for the sole purpose of enforcement of laws but instead to build rapport with students and prevent problems before they turn into incidents of violence.

Detachment Commander James stated that violence could be reduced through proper education in substance abuse, communication skills, and understanding of others. He stated, "Through education in general and how to treat people. Through Community Justice Programs that address those things, get people to communicate and come to a resolution." James expressed that the criminal court system would not resolve the problem any better than the parties involved resolving their differences. He further explained, "There are other ways to handle it by sitting them down, by talking, having them apologize to each other or whatever. They're being held accountable then for their actions. They go to Criminal Court, they don't have to say anything. They don't have to admit to it, if they're found guilty, so what. You know they don't care. Through the Community Justice Forums, [and other programs], they have to admit to what they've done, take responsibility and be willing to change. So I think going that route, and not letting it go off just as a couple kids arguing, you don't want it to escalate." It can be argued that Community Justice Forums and other programs take into consideration that the offender of a violent crime and victim have to resolve their differences. This type of problem solving would better facilitate communication

between the different parties involved. Also, this process promotes communication and understanding why something happened unlike what takes place in the court system. The end result would be that future violent acts in school may be prevented by using a systemized approach, as in the case of the Community Justice Forums, to address incidents of violence.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Concerns of the victim and violence amongst youths

Each Detachment Commander made a reference to the victim when they were asked to describe an incident where they dealt with youth violence. Regardless, if the police service were provided in a school context or treated as a typical complaint, the victim was always paramount in how the police addressed the complaint. On occasion, the victim, the victim's family, and the school system requested to resolve the incident internally without intervention from the police.

Police leadership in schools

Detachment Commanders described how the school liaison officer can help the school community in several ways: being available to assist students, by being a leader, by receiving information on criminal activities, by deterring crime, and by providing lectures on the law, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and by merely talking to kids. Furthermore, they described the school liaison officer as being proactive, developing positive relationships with students, and consequently preventing acts of violence. Detachment Commanders clearly stated that more police officers in the schools would assist in reducing violence in schools.

Community needs and values

The needs of the community were a major issue for the Detachment Commanders Smith, Davis, and James. Each Detachment Commander represented a different community; therefore, the policing needs of that community surfaced as an obstacle for implementing a full time school liaison officer. One Detachment Commander stated that a full time school liaison would be ideal but other priorities in the community would come first. Another Detachment Commander was concerned that full time school liaison officer may not have enough work to do.

The decision in how to allocate police resources becomes very difficult and complex for Detachment Commanders. In general, Detachment Commanders believed that a full time school liaison officer would be beneficial and productive, yet police officer workloads and the amount of crime in the community did factor into the decision to assign a full time school liaison officer. Therefore, it became apparent that it was difficult for the Detachment Commanders to gauge exactly when and under what circumstances they would implement a full time school liaison officer.

The values of each community could have impacted on how the community's Detachment Commander answered questions about priority and the assigning of a full time school liaison officer. In some school districts, the school administration may be more protective about their duties and thus minimize the need for a full time school liaison officer; in particular, some school administrators may not want to give up their authority to deal with school related issues that are under the jurisdiction of the School Act. They may not want the police involved but may recommend that police resources should be used to combat "real crime," not teenage squabbles in high school. This may

influence a Detachment Commander's decision to assign a full time school liaison officer.

Factors affecting the incidents of school violence

The Detachment Commanders placed some emphasis on drugs and alcohol as being factors affecting the incidents of school violence, but no statistical information existed in other research that supports their positions. Limited research existed that outlined the perceptions of teachers in British Columbia about violence in schools, but nothing existed from a student's perspective that detailed factors affecting incidents of school violence. Nevertheless, the beliefs and opinions of the Detachment Commanders cannot be discounted because they have considered years of policing experience to formulate their perceptions.

It is my opinion that limited records exist, either by the police department or the school district, that identifies what factors or motives were involved for each violent act committed on school property. As well, police records will only provide information as to the type of incident and the severity of the violent act that has been committed and reported by the school system. In the best case scenario, a police investigator may have listed the motive for the incident in the investigational file, but in general, police records may be vague in describing the exact motive for the assault or the reported incident.

I believe that violence in schools is a significant problem, but I cannot readily conclude what factors affect the incidents of violence in schools. The issue is debatable and some in police and educational circles may see it as being controversial. Is it truly okay to talk to young students about how racial tension and poverty may cause violence in schools? More research is required to accurately describe what possible factors exist within a school community that contribute to violence.

The size of the community and the incidents of violence

The prevailing attitude amongst the Detachment Commanders is that smaller communities have less violence. Based on the interviews conducted it appeared that Detachment Commanders associated such issues as ethnicity and socioeconomic status and the mix of these groups with conflicts that are more prevalent in larger communities. These issues require further discussion to determine if and how they are considered factors in violence and common to larger communities.

I believe that certain ethnic and socio-economic groups are prominent in some schools in this province. The question that must be answered is whether this possibility is strictly isolated to larger communities or can it exist in smaller communities, and whether some schools are differentiated from other schools based on ethnic and socio-economic groups. I can think of several communities and schools within those communities that can be described this way. In the larger cities, a student's social class and economic class can be very distinguishable by merely describing the student's school and the general neighbourhood of the school. The location and proximity of some schools within certain communities can identify a student's ethnicity and socio-economic background. Usually, as described by the Detachment Commanders, this scenario is minimized in smaller communities. Nevertheless, there needs to be a clarification as to how ethnicity and socio-economic groups are isolated from other groups or schools and how these issues are connected to violence in schools. Unfortunately, this issue requires additional research and is not within the scope of this study.

In review, the Detachment Commanders stated that the size of the community does affect the incidents of violence. On the surface, the Detachment Commanders

explained that larger communities are more prone to serious violence than smaller communities. The Detachment Commanders cited reasons why violence in schools is more common in large communities. The reasons that surfaced include: personal contact, school rivalries, racial and social-economic groups. One of the Detachment Commanders made a short reference about how violence in small communities is more isolated. However, none of the Detachment Commanders provided an example where a significant violent incident occurred in a small community.

Programs

The Detachment Commanders openly discussed several programs and initiatives that could be utilized by the school community to take advantage of the service offered by the police. In particular, the police could take part in several programs that promote the development of partnerships with teachers, students, school administrators, and the community in addressing violence in schools. Detachment Commanders saw benefits in such programs like Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR), Community Justice Programs (CJP), Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), Anti-bullying education, CAPP, Teacher and Police Officer school yard patrol, and the School Liaison Officer program. According to the Detachment Commanders, each one of the above noted programs had the potential to reduce incidents of violence. In general terms, Detachment Commanders did reveal that full time school liaison officer would be very worthwhile and beneficial, but a full time school liaison officer position is problematic because there are other policing demands from the community.

Some of the programs are only offered in selected communities. It is difficult to determine if some of the programs emerged from the Detachment Commander's initiative, or the programs emerged as a direct result of a community need. From this

research, one Detachment Commander strongly believed in the benefits of the DARE program that existed in his community. However, DARE is a formal program that is not offered in every community.

The teacher and police officer school yard patrol program appears to be an informal program that has been designed by a particular detachment or implemented by one Detachment Commander. This program probably would not exist in most communities within this province. If it does exist, it may be called something else. In addition, programs like student Crimestoppers, ADR, and CJP are not available in each community.

Program such as ADR and CJP appeared to have dealt with school associated conflicts like arguments, a school fight, harassment, and bullying in an extremely effective manner. To properly address school related problems these programs required involvement from all stakeholders: the offender, the victim, the teachers, the administrator, possibly a school counsellor, and, if required, the police. The stakeholders would have to identify the problem and attempt to resolve it to the satisfaction of all the parties involved. In this process, it appeared that the offender would have to acknowledge his or her wrongdoing and perhaps offer an apology to the victim. Consequently, this is the best example where a proactive team approach is used to address an incident that occurred at school, and by doing so, all the stakeholders have the opportunity to take ownership over violent acts committed in schools instead of minimizing their responsibilities.

In fairness to the Detachment Commanders, some programs were already in place prior to their arrival to the community, and some Detachment Commanders have not been at their community long enough to evaluate what new programs could be added or

what changes could be made to improve existing programs. Also, some of these programs could have been implemented to address an identifiable problem in the school community. If the community and the local detachment do not perceive or identify a problem in the school community, it is doubtful that either one would implement a new program. Furthermore, some school-related problems may not exist in every school.

It was clear from the interviews that Detachment Commanders believed that programs were in place to deal with issues and problems at schools. However, it is difficult to gauge if each Detachment Commander's community had an adequate number of programs to address violence in schools. None of the Detachment Commanders clarified if they either had enough or if there was a shortage of programs to address violence in schools in their respective communities. Detachment Commanders only discussed programs that existed.

Improvement of the school liaison officer program

During the interviews of the Detachment Commanders, some did discuss how the program could be improved in their respective communities. First of all, each Detachment Commander referred to improvement as something that was better than an officer assigned part time to carry out this duty. It was evident from the interviews that none of the communities had a full time school liaison officer. Instead, Detachment Commanders discussed improvements in terms of how a school liaison officer could spend more time at a school and how more duties could be assigned to that officer to enhance the overall program in their community. One Detachment Commander stated, if possible, that the school liaison officer in his community would be a coordinator that monitored the duties of other officers assigned to different schools. The expectations and

duties described by this Detachment Commander are more organized and formal compared to what is described for an officer assigned to school liaison duties part time.

The Detachment Commanders did not discuss how the program could be improved internally, and the Detachment Commanders did not specify what duties the school liaison officer needs to focus on to improve the overall effectiveness of the program. There was no mention of any particular duties that, from a Detachment Commander's perspective, needs to be defined, modified or developed by the school liaison officer.

The priority for having a full time school liaison officer

There are several factors that could have impacted on how a Detachment Commander described or prioritized the need for a full time school liaison officer. First of all, two out of the three Detachment Commanders were fairly new to their detachments. They had been there for a very short time. One Detachment Commander alluded to the fact of just arriving at the detachment. Therefore, as possible explanations, these Detachment Commanders may not have had the opportunity to properly assess the needs of the community. It would be reasonable to assume that these Detachment Commanders would need to meet and consult with the local school administrators and school board. This way, they would be able to better understand the concerns and major issues facing the school community. It would also allow the police to define to school officials how the police community could provide assistance. Secondly, a difference did exist in how the Detachment Commanders described the genuine need for a full time school liaison officer in the community. One Detachment Commander stated that there would not be enough work for a full time school liaison officer in his community, but he believed that a full time officer would be better than what they are

doing now. Another Detachment Commander stated that the workload for the officers at his detachment was moderate, but this Detachment Commander felt that having a full time school liaison officer was important. He explained that a full time school liaison officer would prevent crime in the school as well as actively assist in the investigations of incidents that do take place. Thirdly, Detachment Commanders did not clearly elaborate how they would prioritize the need for a full time school liaison officer; the comments about case load and other serious crime in the community, funding for additional officers, and genuine need in the community, were not defined to determine when and under what circumstances a Detachment Commander would support a full time school liaison officer. For example, Detachment Commanders did not state if a full time school liaison officer is a higher priority than an additional uniformed officer, highway patrol officer, serious crime investigator, or drug investigator, nor did any of the Detachment Commanders prioritize the need for a school liaison officer in comparison to other police duties. The priority for a full time school liaison officer was only described in general terms, but the Detachment Commanders did support the need for one. Two out of the three Detachment Commanders interviewed stated that a full time school liaison officer would prevent violence in schools in addition to conducting other duties in the school that would be beneficial to the police and school community.

Funding

There was a distinct reference to how funding is an obstacle in improving the school liaison officer program. If this response is examined closely, it is fair to assume that funding may have a direct impact on how communities deliver the school liaison officer program. Even if Detachment Commanders wanted to assign or placed a high priority on having a full time school liaison officer, their plans were curtailed by the

availability of officers and overall funding for such a program. Although the funding formula for RCMP Detachments is consistent throughout the province, some detachments with liaison officers have made that job a priority and budgeted for it instead of other police programs. Nevertheless, it seemed that funding played a significant factor in the decision-making process for each Detachment Commander.

I believe that the constant pressure to be accountable for police resources and spending of tax dollars, Detachment Commanders are in a difficult predicament when assigning police resources to various programs. The availability of funding is an issue that cannot be minimized; it is a reality that public officials including Detachment Commanders face daily.

I believe, based on the interviews conducted, if given the opportunity and if funding was irrelevant, each Detachment Commander would have a full time school liaison officer or community policing officer to deal with school related issues.

Conclusion

I can speak from experience that police officers do take part in several activities where police leadership takes place in an observable manner. By the very nature of a police officer's job and role in Canadian society, the police officer becomes an instant community leader in a school environment. The police officer is truly an authority figure that has the potential to influence youth behaviour in areas such as drug and alcohol abuse, the law, and violence.

Even after the completion of this study, I still strongly believe that the School Liaison Officer does play an active role in reducing violence in schools. The School Liaison Officer position is a very worthwhile duty and those officers around the province who are working this duty should attest to worthwhileness of the program. I have also

come to the realization that all programs, whether originating from the police or school system, require committed individuals and the appropriate level of funding to ensure their success. In short, the police, the community, and the school system have to support existing programs and future programs to be implemented. Otherwise, the programs are marginalised and their overall effectiveness hindered.

After the completion of this study, I understood that I underestimated some of the issues discussed by Detachment Commanders. First of all, because I did not have any experience in managing police detachments, I did not take into consideration the issue of funding when operating police programs. If the money and resources do not exist, Detachment Commanders are unable to allocate the necessary resources for a program as the school liaison officer program. Secondly, I failed to account for the validity of some perceptions held by Detachment Commanders on the issue of violent crime being a "big city" phenomena. I did not expect to find this issue to be a significant topic with Detachment Commanders. Finally, prior to the start of the study, I placed very little emphasis on community needs and values. I was surprised to discover that despite the concerns expressed in the media, some communities have more urgent priorities for the local police detachment than a full time school liaison officer. It is also possible that the community believes that violence in schools is not a significant problem.

Based on the interviews of Detachment Commanders, a full time school liaison officer can and does prevent violence in schools. The benefits of a full time school liaison officer were evident. Matthews' (1995) research supported this finding. He concluded that anecdotal evidence existed that school/police partnerships were having a positive impact on violence. However, Detachment Commanders agreed with the importance of having a full time school liaison officer but believed a full time school

liaison officer would be ideal if such issues as police officer workloads, funding for police, community attitudes, and the availability of police resources were considered prior to allocating police personnel.

Implications for future research

There are several areas where future research would be beneficial in addressing violence in schools. First of all, three Detachment Commanders were interviewed and thus only three viewpoints were gauged on violence in schools. More elaborate and extensive research may be required from numerous Detachment Commanders from all geographical areas of this province to provide a more accurate description of this issue.

The dynamics of violence in schools was not discussed or analysed in terms of urban or rural context. The Detachment Commanders who took part in this study made reference to the fact that they expect more violence in larger communities and violence in smaller communities is more isolated. Does more violent crime take place in larger communities than smaller communities? The researcher would have to determine from a statistical perspective if this assumption holds true.

Other than Malcolmson's (1994) research, very little is written about how race, gang activity, and social class contribute to violence in schools. More research is required in this area.

Government Funding

The availability of government funding may be an issue that requires additional research to better understand the prevention aspect of violence in schools. Logically, the future researcher would have to determine if more funding, either for the police or schools officials would equate to more programs for preventative measures and consequently reduce violence in schools.

Additional research with other stakeholders

Future research may require that teachers and students be interviewed about violence in schools. Their opinions, beliefs, and knowledge about this topic may be drastically different from what was discovered by this study. As well, it is my belief that students would provide a very concise and realistic description about the nature and frequency of violence taking place inside the school community. For the purpose of this study, the perceptions of British Columbia teachers were discussed. However, that study was completed in 1993 and more recent research may be different from what was discovered back then.

School liaison officers

Instead of interviewing Detachment Commanders in the province, it may be just as relevant to interview school liaison officers and ask them to discuss their experience about working with youths and violence in schools. The information discovered would truly be first hand. The school liaison officers would be able to provide examples where violence was prevented primarily based on the work of the officer. In addition, the school liaison officers could provide valuable insight in how police presence and involvement within the school community can deter crime and in particular violence.

A future researcher may also discover what training a School Liaison Officer requires to work with students on a full time basis. The researcher could interview School Liaison Officer and find out how the program could be improved. The researcher could answer several questions including whether School Liaison Officers need to know how to teach, public speak, and counsel.

Summary

In Canada, violence in school continues to be a problem. In a Canadian context, there is limited research on this problem and the role of the police when dealing with violence in schools. This study tried to determine if Detachment Commanders believe that if having a full time school liaison officer is beneficial to the school and community. Three RCMP Detachment Commanders were interviewed to obtain their opinions, beliefs, and knowledge about violence in schools and what the police could do to reduce it.

After the completion of this study, I discovered that the availability of police resources is a significant issue when analysing the role of the police in reducing violence in schools. In some communities police resources do not exist to assign a full time school liaison officer even if the local Detachment Commander felt such a duty is worthwhile and beneficial in reducing violence. Unfortunately, each community in this province has unique demands and expectations of the local police department. This further complicates any decision by police managers with regards to allocation of police resources.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. I, _____, agree to take part in this research study conducted by Mr. Sukhdev S. PARMAR, who is presently a student at the University of Northern British Columbia and a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
2. I understand that I'll be required to provide an audio taped statement about my opinions, beliefs, and knowledge about my experiences as a police officer.
3. I understand that my anonymity will be maintained and I have the opportunity to withdraw from this study at anytime. Furthermore, I understand that under no circumstances will my identity be provided to anyone within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the University of Northern British Columbia.
4. I will also be given the opportunity to review the final research project by Mr. Sukhdev S. PARMAR to check for clarity and accuracy prior to the project's submission to the University of Northern British Columbia.
5. I have read and received a copy of the attached information sheet
6. I understand that the research interviews will be recorded
7. Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study?
Yes No
8. Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
Yes No
9. Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time?
_____ Yes No
10. Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?
Yes No

This study was explained to me by Sukhdev Singh Parmar

I agree to take part in this study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Witness

Printed Name

Printed Name

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Signature of Investigator

Date

THE INFORMATION SHEET MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS CONSENT FORM
AND A COPY GIVEN TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.

(Participant)

(Researcher)

(Date)

Appendix B

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher:	Sukhdev Singh PARMAR
Address:	3236 St. Frances Crescent, Prince George, B.C.
Phone:	250-964-7536
Supervisor's Name:	Dr. Colin Chasteauneuf
Title of Project:	The police and the school liaison officer and what can be done to reduce violence in schools
Type of Project:	Class Project
Purpose of Project:	To determine what role the police can play in reducing violence in schools.
Potential benefits and risks:	This project is beneficial to educators, schools districts and any police department that utilizes any protocol to reduce violence in schools. There are no risks in this study.

The purpose of this research study is to determine if a full time school liaison officer has the potential to reduce and prevent violence in schools.

The respondents, police officers and Detachment Commanders, were chosen by the researcher. The researcher knew the respondents; therefore, the researcher felt comfortable to approach the respondents and ask them to take part in this study.

The respondents will be asked to participate in a formal interview. The interview will be audio taped to ensure for clarity and accuracy. The respondents will be asked questions about their experiences, knowledge, and beliefs about violence in schools and how the police can assist in reducing school violence.

Only the researcher, and if required the research supervisor, may have access to the transcribed statement of the responder. The final project will be available to the general public since it will be held by the University of Northern British Columbia. Anyone wishing to read this project will have the opportunity to do so through the university or by receiving a copy from the researcher.

The respondent will be advised that their participation in this study is voluntary, and the respondents will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The research study is beneficial to both the school community and the RCMP.

The potential risks from this research study are non-existent.

Anonymity will be guaranteed to each respondent. Throughout the entire project, all identifiers will be stripped and the respondent will remain anonymous.

The information gathered during this study will be stored with the researcher for five years. The audio tapes and transcribed statements will be locked in secured facility. The researcher will be the only person to possess a key to the lock. In addition, if possible, the audio tapes and transcribed statements will be retained until the Masters Degree has been approved. After which, the information gathered including the audio cassettes will be destroyed.

During this study, if additional information is required, it is recommended that Mr. Sukhdev Singh PARMAR be contacted at 250-964-7536.

A copy of the research results will be kept with the researcher, and the results will be stored at the University of Northern British Columbia.

The respondent will be allowed, at anytime, to receive a copy of his or her signed consent form.

Any complaints about the project should be directed to the Vice President Research, 250-960-5820.

Appendix C

Research Questionnaire

1. In your experience as a police officer, you may have encountered situations in the community in which violence amongst youths was a factor. Can you describe the circumstances surrounding the experiences?
2. If I had been there with you, what would I have seen you doing? What would I have heard you saying?
3. What was your opinion of that event?
4. How do you feel about that event?
5. Think back to a time in which you dealt directly with youth violence? If I had been there with you, what would I have seen you doing? What would I have heard you saying?
6. How was it resolved?
7. If the resolution was not entirely satisfactory, how should this have been resolved?
8. What would have prevented the incident from occurring?
9. In your experience now as a Detachment Commander, you may have encountered situations in the community in which violence amongst youths was a factor. Can you describe the circumstances surrounding the experiences?
10. What factors in the school (community) affect the incidents of violence?
11. In what ways does the size of the community affect incidents of violence?
12. Can you think of other factors that affect incidents of violence?
13. In your experience, you may have seen programs that addressed these problems?
14. What programs exist?
15. When did that program start?
16. How did that program come about?
17. Describe the officer's duties?
18. How many officers are assigned to this duty?

19. In your community what schools are involved? Highschool? Elementary?
20. How often do your police officers attend?
21. How many hours per week?
22. What are the schools' expectations?
23. Under what circumstances do the police officers get involved in investigating an incident reported by the school?
24. Do the officers have a mandate while conducting school duties?
25. In your community, is there a formal protocol between the police and the school to deal with incidents at school?
26. What type of school related incidents will the police get involved?
27. Are there any incidents where the police will not get involved?
28. Describe the school liaison officer program in your community.
29. How do you feel about your program?
30. How do you think the program could be improved?
31. How satisfied do you think the school is with the present program provided by your detachment?
32. What priority do you place on having a full time school liaison officer in your community?
33. What priority does the community you police place on having a full time school liaison officer assigned to a high school?
34. How can violence in schools be reduced?
35. What can the community do to reduce violence in schools?
36. What can the police do to reduce violence in schools?
37. Based on your present availability of police officers in your community, do you favour having a full time school liaison officer assigned to a high school?

Appendix D

Case Record #1

Violence Amongst Youths

When I asked Detachment Commander Smith to think back to a time in which he dealt directly with youth violence. He stated, "...The best thing that I can remember about it is, is take him home to his parents and trying to assure him that the law would protect him and, the other young chap that did the assaulting to him, would be prosecuted. I guess the other thing that I can recall is, how it affected this young person's life, how he no longer wanted to go back to school, wanted to change schools, wanted to be home schooled, and was just so frightened that he didn't wanna go back to that school."

Prevention

When Detachment Commander Smith was asked what could have prevented the incident from occurring. He stated, "Well, I, I sometimes think that, the programs that happen in the schools like the, bullying prevention programs and, and just, an educational system that teaches a bit of what the victim feels like here. I think we'll maybe always have bullies, but I think that could be reduced significantly if, say for example, all the bullies are aware of some of the effects that they have on people when they, act out the way they do. So I think some education could prevent that and, I suppose, of things like more, more playground supervision. More involvement with the police and the parents and the school system. I can't think of anything else right now."

The size of the community and the incidents of violence

Detachment Commander Smith explained that the size of the community does affect incidents of violence. He stated, "The larger communities have inter-school

rivalries. There were two high schools and some things happened, as result of kids from one school fighting kids from other schools. I think when you get a bigger community, too, you get a bigger mix of racial groups, social-economic groups that are in conflict.”

Programs

Detachment Commander Smith discussed the following program which he believed addressed violence. He said, “I’ve been involved in different types of problem solving, but ADR is one common to the Force. If a situation were to happen, everyone would gather in a room somewhere and try to solve this problem for both the offender and the victim. If nothing else, solve it to the satisfaction of the victim and ensure that it doesn’t happen again. Basically, a process where everybody can sit together and talk about what happened and how they all felt as a result of the action. All would agree upon restitution on part of the offender, and as a result future situations like that would be prevented.”

When Detachment Commander Smith was asked to describe the School Liaison Officer Program at his detachment, he stated, “Officers are assigned to the various schools and, our actual policy, indicates that they have to have some contact with the school at least once every two months. So it can be anything from, stopping by and having coffee with the teaching staff, talking to the principal about any programs that the school would like to have. We have the DARE program here and one of the Constables got the Student Crimestoppers program going in the high school so he’s quite involved with that.”

Detachment Commander Smith described the anti-bullying program that existed in his community. He stated, “Well, I think it’s a, a lot of their focus is on, on education. They have a group, and again, it’s student driven, so the students are, have been off on, I

think they went in conjunction with our office to, now I forget where it was, down in Vancouver somewhere. They got some training for it and we're, supporting it from our office, but, but the main thrust and the main, energy behind it is a, a student group and, and they're, trying to educate the students through, through things like posters and lunches and those sorts of things. And, and the idea is to reduce, bullying behavior in the school through, consulting with, with friends. Like, for example, if you were being, preyed upon, you would, go to a friend who could report the matter and that way it would leave you out of the, the snitch part of, of the, affair."

How could the school liaison program be improved?

When Detachment Commander Smith was asked how the School Liaison Officer program could be improved, he stated, "I can recall doing those jobs as a young constable and finding it very, like, I guess I can remember being, wanting to be a policeman rather than going to school and talking to kids. I've progressed through my career in policing. I have a better understanding of how important those contacts with the youth are and I guess the ideal situation is if we had enough funding to support a full-time school liaison officer I think that would be ideal where a person could do that, five days a week." Smith further described duty of the School Liaison Officer. He stated, "O.k., well, I think, uh, in our situation here, because we only have one high school in the community, a lot of that would, a lot of the time would be spent, say, a the high school before class and, during the day, the liaison officer could, slide over to some of the other schools and do some, some different talks. If there's any problem children he could monitor those situations, like, the two young people that, we had arrested today, for example, if there was any, forewarning of that, impending problem that police officer could be at that school ready to deal with it rather than having the school call us for

assistance. School Liaison Officer could run the DARE program could build a good working relationship with all the principals and a lot of the teaching staff and the, uh, in the school district. And sort of, encourage programs like the anti-bullying program and, and other similar programs.”

What priority exists for having a full time school liaison officer?

Smith described the priority for a School Liaison Officer. He stated, “....Our workload here is moderate so we’re not plagued with drug problems or gang problems, so I think our school liaison program is a pretty high priority for us. One of our business plans we’ve put in last year was to get an extra person on our establishment so that we could have a full-time community policing school liaison officer, but of course with the Province being in poor financial state that it is in, manpower’s so short. We weren’t supported for that, but it’s a pretty high priority for me as a Detachment Commander because I feel that, if we did have a school liaison officer a lot of our petty crime that happens in the community would be either totally prevented or he or she could assist in solving a lot that crime.”

Appendix E

Case Record #2

Violence Amongst Youths

When I asked Detachment Commander Davis about what constitutes violence among youths, he stated, "Well, you would've seen me, again, dealing with the incident and trying to investigate it and find out why it happened. Speaking with the victim and, the case I described, we could speak with witnesses and, but if it was an incident where, just an assault against another youth, you'd be talking, I'd be talking with the victim and then going back to the accused or the suspect and finding out-trying to get both sides of the story and then trying to deal effectively with it."

When he was asked to describe his opinion of the event, he stated, "Something that never should've happened but it was, uh, a firearm that was left insecure and parents were out, kids were drinking and a stupid thing happened and, a youth died as a result."

When Detachment Commander Davis was asked to recall situations in his community in which violence amongst youths was a factor, he stated, "Shortly after I arrived there I was in the, the Acting Detachment Commander role and, uh, at the middle school we were having a lot of, uh, fights at the lunch hour, they would, the school's located right on the main drag, the main street downtown. And the kids would cross the street and go to the park right across the road and then there would be a fight at lunch hour. And this was happening on a regular basis. So we, you know, we met with the school and met with the principal and the, the counselor and tried to, set up a, a series of rules that they were not allowed to leave the school ground at lunch time and, and if they did they had to have their parents permission and it put a, an on sight or a school-yard supervisor out and, and we also put another step in, or another measure in place where

the members were patrolling the, past the school from twelve to one o'clock trying to prevent the fights. And also, if, there was rumor or a fight going to happen, which, quite often, the principal or some teachers would hear about, two youths that were planning a fight, they would phone us before hand, and we would ensure we were there."

Prevention

What factors in the school community affect the incidents of violence?

Detachment Commander Davis believed that drug use was a factor in the incidents of violence at schools. He stated, "Well, I think drugs come into play that you know, we're, everybody says that most schools have a drug problem and I tend to agree with that. And I'm sure there's (unintelligible), the school about who's got the right to sell the drugs and who you should be buying from and if you don't buy from them then you get beat up and, you know."

Detachment Commander Davis believed that alcohol also played a role in violence in schools. He stated, "Well, drugs and alcohol I sort of put side by side. I think they're both involved in violence in schools."

The size of the community and the incidents of violence

When Detachment Commander Davis was asked if the size of the community affect incidents of violence. He replied, "Well, I think the, the smaller towns, for the most part, don't have the really serious violence. They usually don't have the guns being brought into the schools on a regular basis, although it does happen."

Detachment Commander Davis further clarified this response when he said, "I think the larger the community, the more incidents of violence you do get. And in the smaller communities it's more isolated for the serious incidents of violence."

Programs

When Detachment Commander Davis was asked to discuss programs that address violence in schools, he described the DARE program. He said, "Well, we have, starting off young we have the DARE program. In which I fully support and I know there's been some controversy over if it is effective or not, but I still think it is. I think the sooner we can get to the kids and educate [them] and also get them to see that the police are there to help and we're approachable that there is value to it."

Detachment Commander Davis described his past experience with the school liaison officer program in general terms. He said, "The first [detachment], I think it was eighteen members at the time so we didn't have a designated school liaison member. Every member was involved in it. I don't think we had specific schools assigned to each member, either. [Detachment], when I was there for three years, we again, just three members, no specific position for it but, the three of us would share the schools. Then in [Detachment] was the first time that there was more of a formalized system for me where you had a file, an operational file with a monthly diary date to put your documentation down to show what school, well, you were assigned a school so you would have to record what you did on a monthly basis. But there wasn't a school liaison position that time. It was, they had the Community Policing Officer and, which you could use as a resource but for the most part it was the watch members looking after the schools and quite often the two of us would get together and, go do a school talk together and then we would go to that other member's school and same thing. Increase our visibility, I guess, more than anything else."

How could the school liaison program be improved?

When asked how the school liaison officer program could be improved, Detachment Commander Davis said, "Well, I think if we had more members and, what I would most likely do is have somebody assigned full-time to a school liaison position."

Detachment Commander Davis described the duties and expectations of a full time school liaison officer. He said "I would expect them to be the coordinator.... I wouldn't expect them to take on the responsibility for twenty-five different schools but I would expect them to oversee the whole program, take on one or two schools themselves, spending a designated amount of time at each school and then monitoring the performance of the other members to make sure that they're doing their part. I expect all the policemen to be involved.... I think it's every policeman's responsibility to be approachable and to jump in where you can talk to kids."

Detachment Commander Davis further clarified the duties of the school liaison officer. He said, "Well, I think part of it would be presentations on drugs and alcohol abuse. Maybe to help [them] with their, their graduation, if it's a high school, to set up a safe dry grad. To ideally, I'd like to see that person in the school for, you know, maybe a set, on a set date and time, like, every Monday afternoon for three hours. And if kids want to come and talk to them, the neighborhood policeman or the school liaison person, they're available to do that. I know, in [Detachment] we're trying to get the Community Justice Program into the highschool and I would expect the school liaison person, if we had one here, to be involved in that program but, as a facilitator or coordinator maybe, for the program."

What priority exists for having a full time school liaison officer?

When Detachment Commander Davis was asked to describe the priority for having a full time school liaison officer, he alluded to the importance addressing issues like officer workloads and serious crime in his community prior to assigning a full time school liaison officer. He said, "I'm fairly new to (Detachment), which I know there's a wide range of issues here and it's a very busy Detachment. I think we're running in the fourth position in the province for caseload per member. I think we need a school liaison position, it would be to our advantage. I think we need more than just that here. So it's not my highest priority but, there's a lot of serious crime here."

How can violence in schools be reduced?

Detachment Commander Davis thought violence in schools could be reduced by having more policemen. He said, "I think having more policemen in the schools, not for enforcement for more education and prevention. I just think seeing us there would prevent violence.

As a example, going back to [Detachment], when we were able to patrol past the school at lunch time there was no fights. And the police presence would prevent it. I know we can't be there all the time but, I think, if we could be in the schools more often, though, we could get to know who the trouble makers are and even build some rapport with them. Not to throw them in jail and throw away the key but to go up and talk to these kids and find out why they're fighting. And if they know we're only a short phone call away and if they know who we know who they are then, I think that would have some affect on and reduce the incidents of violence."

Appendix F

Case Record #3

Violence Amongst Youths

When Detachment Commander James was asked about situations in the community in which violence amongst youths was a factor, he stated, “ You get incidents where, where youths would assault each other and I would just treat it as an assault. No differentiation between youths or whether it was school related, an assault was an assault. And, and that’s, that’d be about the extent of it. You know kids, fighting for the usual reasons, name calling or over a girl or whatever.”

Detachment Commander James further clarified how important the victim was in these incidents. He stated, “But you’d be there trying to address the concerns of the victim and trying to gather evidence, taking statements whether charges are warranted.”

Prevention

When Detachment Commander James was asked what would have prevented those types of incidents from occurring, he stated, “....they have courses in schools nowadays that deal with interacting with people and that. Perhaps, you know, things like that back then would’ve been beneficial, to reduce [violence].”

What factors in the school community affect the incidents of violence?

Detachment Commander James believed drugs and alcohol were factors in the school community that affect the incidents of violence. He stated “...drugs and alcohol again. They’re in the school. I think that, lack of education in some areas. Kids aren’t getting attention they need, get frustrated. With all the government cutbacks and, and funding and that, special programs aren’t available for some of the kids, like, with say, fetal alcohol or special needs kids are just being dragged through the system. And that

leads to it and, and also the, uh, money. Some kids, get jealous over others clothing 'cause they got more money and you get, you know, that kinda thing. But substance abuse will be a, a major concern, even in the school.”

The size of the community and the incidents of violence

When Detachment Commander James was asked in what ways the size of the community affect incidents of violence, he stated, “I think the smaller the community, really, the less violence because people are closer together. Kids have grown up with each other and gone through school together. The bigger the city, the less personal the contact with people. In big cities there are different schools which creates a lot of rivalry. It’s not uncommon for schools to visit each other and fight. Nobody knows each other so they don’t care. They can beat up somebody. Chances are they won’t get caught because the kid who gets beat up doesn’t know who did it.”

Detachment Commander James further explained why the size of the community is relevant in violence in schools. He stated, “So there’s a, a continuity, you know, with the parents and the kids. So when you remove that, but when you remove that anonymity, your greater chance of violence.”

Programs

Detachment Commander James explained how some programs are working in dealing with school related problems. He stated, “But we did more enforcement, more liaison with the school and eliminated it. We haven’t had a complaint in over two years since I, what I got going, a policing and teacher patrol. So the teachers and a policeman sort of pair up with each other at noon hour and they’ll do some walk arounds by [park] and that. The teachers are able to identify the problem makers to the member. The member’s able to query them on CPIC [Canadian Police Information Centre].”

Detachment Commander James described how the schools in his community are using programs to solve conflicts. He stated, "The schools here have had a bit of Community Justice within the schools. If [students] get fighting, they'll sit down in a forum to deal with it. They will sit the people down themselves instead of just one going to the principal's office. They'll sit down and resolve it and try to come to a solution. The school district here is a little bit different. Most administrators and the higher-ups, a lot of the teachers have had training in the 'Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People' and they use that in the schools here."

When Detachment Commander James was asked to describe the School Liaison Officer program in his community. He stated, "In late August, early September, we re-do the list every year so that in September when school starts, the school has a liaison officer assigned. That members is, in the first month, is to attend at the school, meet the principal and make themselves known to the principal that they are the liaison officer for the year, any problems, concerns, they are to call them. The members are also to attend the school at least once a month. Touch base, either just to have a walk around the playground, have lunch, give a talk, whatever, they're to attend once a month."

How could the school liaison program be improved?

Detachment Commander James described how the School Liaison Officer program could be improved. He stated, "It could be better. I don't think that the members put the time into it that could be put into it.... I like to see proper funding so let's say I could have another Community Policing officer and have them doing that with the members....But I think if we were able to dedicate our resources for the schools and that it would be better off than what we've got now."

Detachment further clarified why he thought a full time School Liaison Officer would better. He stated, "Yeah, because it would be a dedicated job. They would be interested and dedicated to that job. And not be doing it in between other things. The members now, all working shifts, they've only got two days out of ten or eight, two days out of eight where they can really go to a school. Because the rest of the time they're on, you know, they're on nights and days off. It could be three weeks difference if they're, they start on Saturday. You know, so you got Saturday, Sunday days, Monday, Tuesday nights. You know, then you work to eight. So I think, uh, you know, it could be better and, uh, would enhance a lot of things."

What priority exists for having a full time school liaison officer?

Detachment Commander James described the priority for a full time School Liaison Officer in his community. He stated, "I don't think there's a demand at our high school. It's not that big, there wouldn't be that much work for them either all the time.... But if we had a second Community Policing guy, maybe he could set up and be at the high school two hours on a Monday morning, or three hours, and work that into his schedule because they'd have that flexibility."

How can violence in schools be reduced?

When Detachment Commander James was how violence can be reduced in schools, he stated, "I think all the things that we've talked about here like, a very proactive teaching staff and maybe some teaching or workshops for the teachers to better prepare them for how to deal with violence in schools in addition to more involvement by the police and more education for the students to deal with violence as well."

Detachment Commander James also believed that students needed education on people and communication skills. He stated, "Through education in general and how to treat people. Through Community Justice Programs that address those things, get people to communicate and come to a resolution."

Detachment Commander James described additional ways that could reduce violence in schools. He stated, "There are other ways to handle it by sitting them down, by talking, having them apologize to each other or whatever. They're being held accountable then for their actions. They go to Criminal Court, they don't have to say anything. They don't have to admit to it, if they're found guilty, so what. You know they don't care. Through the Community Justice Forums, Circle Sentencing, they have to admit to what they've done, take responsibility and be willing to change. So I think going that route, and not letting it go off just as a couple kids arguing, you don't want it to escalate."