Safety First - In Search of Justice - School & Law Enforcement Agency Partnerships

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SCHOOL SAFETY- IN SEARCH OF JUSTICE
SCHOOL & LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

Educational problems are many and varied. At-risk students, achievement gaps and poor student outcomes are hot topics that beg for improvement in equity across the board and stand in the way of achieving excellence. These educative, albeit, social justice issues are not new, but rather, are old problems revisited (Kaestle, 1983; Morrison, 2003). Additionally, the issue of violence in schools is also recognized as not only a social justice problem but also a public health problem (Mercy & O’Carroll, 1988) and is perhaps the most pressing societal issue related to children and youth today. “Safe schools are the concern of communities throughout the world…and the protection of children in schools is a constant challenge for societies around the world,” (Rosiak, J., 2009, p.1). Violence in schools is a complex issue: student’s assault teachers, strangers harm children, students hurt each other, and any one of the parties may come to school already damaged or violated. The kind of violence an individual encounters is widespread, “theft, bullying, drugs, and weapons in school” (Dinkes, R., Kemp, J., Baum K., Snyder, T., 2009 p.3) including rape and murder. School professionals, parents, and citizens alike are alarmed by the apparent level of violent acts that plague our school communities.

The notion that schools should be safe havens is a concept that has found support in law throughout the history of public schools. For teachers to teach and children to learn, there must be a safe and inviting learning environment. Students and school personnel need a secure environment, free from the danger and threat of violence and harm, drug use, and lack of discipline, in order to ensure that all children achieve to their full potential.
The purpose of this study was to evaluate a program that focused on ensuring such a safe haven for school children; the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s School Violence Initiative. The program evaluation methodology used both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate program effectiveness. Results of the program evaluation revealed strengthening of partner relationships between the LVMPD and Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD), a reduction of 28% in reported incidences of violence, 68% reduction in handguns on campuses, and a 26% reduction in knives. Prior to the program’s inception there were 12 shootings of students over a twelve year period. Since the program’s inception there have been no shootings of students reported.
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DEDICATION

To all school faculty members, law-enforcement-agency personnel and school resource officers throughout the United States who selfishly serve every day by investing in the lives of children. To Imagine Schools, the One Hundred Academy of Excellence in North Las Vegas, Nevada and its founding Principal, Juan Henderson. To Imagine Schools, 2005-06 fifth grade teachers, Mrs. Rice, and Ms. Glass who helped me be successful. To the parents and students who trusted me. All of you taught me so very much and I will never forget you.

To the children in ThulaThula, South Africa who welcomed me into their school and into their lives. I look forward to seeing you again and taking you up on your invitation to teach at your school. It will be an honor and a privilege. To the teachers there who give of themselves tirelessly in order to make a difference in the lives of children. This is what life is truly all about.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background

We do not live in a just world as evidenced by the innumerable injustices that jeopardize the social wellbeing and safety of people everywhere. Injustices in the form of inequities and inadequacies stemming from a host of factors such as religion, national origin, political orientation, race, age, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. History has taught us all that such injustice often leads to the threat of harm and violence, seemingly lurks around every corner, and strikes with little or no warning. Organizations, large and small, public and private and across every sector of society must remain diligent in its efforts aimed at thwarting injustices while ensuring the safety and protection of constituents.

The last thing parents need be concerned about is whether their children are safe when dropped off at school. Unfortunately, however, every school is vulnerable to random acts of violence and therefore, must remain alert and ready to respond to potential threats and criminal activity that jeopardizes and threatens the safety of everyone. No more are the days, attitudes, or assumptions that school violence, such as shootings cannot happen here. The overall safety and protection of children remains an ever-present concern in the United States and around the world.

Violence in schools is being increasingly recognized as not only a social justice problem but also a public health problem (Mercy & O’Carroll, 1988) and is perhaps the most pressing societal issue related to children and youth today. School-related violence is a worldwide phenomenon and although most schools are safe, the violence that occurs
in our society and neighborhoods and communities has found its way inside our schoolhouse doors. School violence is a subset of youth violence, a broader public health concern problem. School professionals, parents, and citizens alike are alarmed by the apparent level of violent acts that continue to plague our school communities. No school can be a great school unless it is a safe school.

Youth violence is a high-visibility and high-priority concern in every sector of U.S. society. There is a significant and enduring concern about young people, both as perpetrators and victims of crime. Acts of extreme violence and reports of juvenile related shootings at schools such as the ones in Conyers, Georgia, Columbine High School in Colorado, West Paducah, Kentucky, Jonesboro, Arkansas, Edinboro, Pennsylvania, Springfield Oregon, and Pearl, Mississippi continue to highlight the lingering problem of youth violence across the nation. Although shootings at schools continue to galvanize public concern about school safety, research studies find that schools nationwide are relatively safe. In contrast to public perceptions, schools have fewer homicides and nonfatal injuries than homes and neighborhoods. For many students school is the safest place they know, since it keeps them away from violence in the community at large.

**Problem Statement**

Violence in schools is a worldwide phenomenon and although most schools are safe, the violence that occurs in our society, neighborhoods, and communities has found its way inside our schoolhouse doors. School professionals, parents, and citizens alike are alarmed by the apparent level of violent acts that plague our school communities.
Consequently, parents from all kinds of neighborhoods worry about whether or not their children will come home safe; teachers are concerned with their own safety and in the classroom, and of course, children are concerned for themselves and others.

Violence in schools is a multifarious issue. The kind of violence an individual encounters varies ranging from mere bullying to rape or murder. Schoolchildren are in even greater danger of confronting violence outside of school; particularly in urban neighborhoods surrounding schools, although not exclusively, the threat of theft, assault, vandalism, and shootings is serious.

Addressing school violence has no easy answers and schools alone cannot solve problems with complex origins. The notion that schools should be safe havens is a concept that has found support in law throughout the history of public school - for teachers to teach children to learn, there must be a safe and inviting learning environment. While most districts have existing safety programs, these programs often need conscientious, creative application to improve their effectiveness.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the troubling issue of violence in our nation’s schools and specifically, in Clark County, Nevada. It entailed an evaluation of the Clark County, Nevada, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s (LVMPD’s) School Violence Initiative and the Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD) partnership. The underlying premise was that school safety and the prevention of violence is a shared responsibility among various stakeholders; and schools simply cannot do it alone. At the request of the LVMPD, the researcher conducted a
program evaluation to identify the factors and conditions surrounding its development, components, outputs, potential inhibitors, sustainability factors, and overall effectiveness. The study provides a broad definition for the term, violence, and includes statistical data on prevalence of violence in U.S. schools and particularly, in Clark County, Nevada.

**Research Questions**

The study entailed an evaluation of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s (LVMPD) School Violence Initiative (SVI) and Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD) partnership. The LVMPD’s SVI was in response to criminal activity occurring inside its jurisdiction and specifically, within the Clark County School District. The questions guiding the program study were:

1. What events, conditions, and factors contributed to initial development of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership?
2. What are the essential components of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative?
3. What are the outputs of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership and how have they affected program modifications?
4. What are key factors in sustaining the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership?
5. What initial factors were potential inhibitors of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative’s development and subsequently, potential inhibitors in sustaining the partnership?
6. How has the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership affected the overall rate of school violence incidents?
Research Design & Methodology

The research study consisted of a program evaluation of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative. McDavid & Hawthorn (2006) define a program as “a group of related activities intended to achieve one or several related objectives” (p. 446). A program evaluation is a “rich and varied combination of theory and practice that is used to create information for planning, designing, implementing, and assessing the results of efforts aimed at addressing and solving problems using policies and programs” (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006, pg.3). The evaluation itself is a “structured process for creating and synthesizing information in an effort to reduce the level of uncertainty about a given program or policy” (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006, p. 3).

The evaluation of the SVI entailed a qualitative research approach to identify the factors and conditions leading to its development, components, outputs, potential limitations, factors for sustainment, and its overall effectiveness at preventing and or reducing violence. The researcher developed interview questions in order to learn and understand the scope and nature of the SVI. Relying on a qualitative research design the researcher was able to conceptualize and understand key individuals and organizations responsible for its implementation, objectives, and goals. Lincoln & Guba (1985) state, “Qualitative methods are more open to mutual shaping and exposing the relationship of the researcher to the respondent” (p.40). According to Mischler (1995), “We do not find stories; we make stories,” (p.115).
Significance of Study

The significance of the study was rooted in the ongoing concern for the assurance for safety of children, educators, school officials, and the surrounding communities they serve. In essence, our nation’s schools must remain free of the treats, dangers, and consequences associated with violence that stand between children getting a quality education and thereby, improving their chances for a successful life. Criminal and violent acts not only affect the students involved but also disrupt the educational process, the school itself and possibly the surrounding community (Henry, 2000). For both students and school personnel, victimization at school can have lasting effects. In addition to experiencing loneliness, depression, and adjustment difficulties, victimized children are more prone to truancy; poor academic performance; dropping out of school and violent behaviors. For teachers, incidents of victimization may lead to professional disenchantment and even departure from the profession altogether (Cornell & Mayer, 2010).

It is imperative we fully understand the nature of school violence and equally important, everything that can be done to prevent violent acts from reoccurring. Research on the subject of school violence indicates that school safety matters and linked to the academic achievement gap, teacher attrition, student engagement and motivation, dropout prevention, community poverty, and cultural disenfranchisement (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). The effects of school disorder related to the nature and frequency of violent acts or threat thereof, have generated considerable public concern, and triggered substantial changes in school discipline and security practices over the past two decades. In
summary, “safe and orderly schools are the sine qua for efficient and effective academic programs” (Cornell & Mayer, 2010, p. 8).

Within the confines of this study, the researcher aimed to gain a better understanding of how schools collaborate with police and other law enforcement agencies in an effort to thwart violent acts from occurring. Additionally, the researcher aimed to investigate the various components of the Initiatives and strategies used to combat violence and thereby, ensuring schools are a safe place for teachers to teach and for children to learn. The underlying premise here is that schools cannot do it alone but rather requires a collaborative effort by various stakeholders.

Assumptions

Initially, the researcher assumed the LVMPD conceived, developed, and owned the School Violence Initiative. Although this assumption proved to be a correct one, it should not have been at the very onset of the study. In fact, the School Violence Initiative is composed of several organizations that collaboratively work together in an effort to ensure the safety of students and valley citizens. The researcher also assumed program participants had knowledge of the School Violence Initiative and who had an individual role and responsibility for its execution and future sustainability. Surprisingly, with the exception of gatekeepers, none of the study participants interviewed knew of the School Violence Initiative by its name however, all were aware of the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership. The researcher further assumed all identified participants were willing and able to participate. It is important to note that some participants who were contacted chose not to participate for various reasons.
Limitations

Limitations are those elements over which the researcher has no control. McDavid & Hawthorne (2006) point out professional judgment as one possible limitation, “…a self-conscious recognition that whatever conclusions and recommendations produced are flavored by what the evaluator brings to the project” (p. 5). To this point, the researcher is a novice. The evaluation of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative was the researcher’s first attempt at conducting a comprehensive program evaluation. Furthermore, the researcher has limited experienced in the education field and no prior experience with school and law-enforcement agency partnerships. The researcher however, has extensive experience in the Human Resources field and a thorough understanding of business management. In addition, the researcher is a trained and certified, Development Dimensions International (DDI), Targeted Job Selection, Train the Trainer Interviewer. The knowledge and general understanding of business, interviewing, data collection, and analysis skills proved invaluable.

The researcher gathered data for the study through interviews with key representatives from participating organizations. Thus, personal perceptions and memory influenced the data gathered. Additional limitations include, time constraints, available resources, ample evidence in support of findings, and confidentiality. The researcher conducted the program study over a 12-month time period and therefore, had limited time to collect, evaluate and analyze data. Time constraints limited the number of potential study participants and subsequently, the amount and kinds of data provided. Implemented in 2008, most of the participants initially involved had since been reassigned or no longer employed with the organizations. Some study participants lacked knowledge or direct
involvement with the SVI and therefore, were somewhat, unable to directly connect to it. Another limitation is that there was not be conclusive evidence to support, but merely suggest, that the SIV actually led to a decrease in violence acts in schools. Other intervening variables may have contributed as well. Furthermore, the LVMPD and CCSDPD are both highly turbulent environments where change is the order of the day. School Violence Initiative program managers are constantly assessing the program and making modifications aimed at making improvements and adaptations to ensure sustainability. Another limitation is that as program managers come and go, changing objectives and priorities, including changes in leadership, program components and outcomes, become obsolete and misleading if there is a change in the program or in the relationship between the program and its environment (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006). Programs will eventually change. It may be difficult later to acknowledge that the picture will not represent reality in the future.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are those characteristics selected by the researcher to define the boundaries of the study; and with respect to the LVMPD School Violence Initiative, it entailed Clark County, Nevada and the Clark County School District. Program gatekeepers, LVMPD, CCSD, and CCSDPD officials, provided the researcher with access to research sites, departments, key personnel, meetings, and pertinent data necessary to evaluate the program. Not all of the possible participants were selected for interviews; this was left to the researcher’s discretion. The researcher chose to be the primary instrument for data collection.
Definition of Terms

No Child Left Behind Act: A federal law passed in 2001 under the George W. Bush administration. A reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), which relies on test-based accountability, and operates on the theory that measuring performance, identifying schools and districts that fail to meet an expected performance level, and applying a series of sanctions is what is needed to induce schools and teachers to work harder and smarter to improve student achievement (Sunderman, 2008).

Safe School: A safe school is a place where the business of education can be conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear. Such a setting provides an educational climate that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every child. It is a place free of bullying, where behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and applied daily (Mabie, 2003).

School Resource Officer: The responsibilities of a School Resource Officer range from strict rule enforcers, to surrogate parents, to counselors and coaches (Thurau & Wald, 2010).

School Violence: Described as destructive behaviors including, self-destructive, child abuse, aggressive or violent acts (Rosiak, 2009)

Theft: Includes attempted and contemplated purse-snatching, contemplated pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, excluding motor vehicle theft. Theft does not include robbery, in which the threat or use of force is involved.

Unsafe School: An unsafe school is most commonly described in terms of self-reported perceptions, such as one’s own fear of victimization or sense of not being safe at
school in terms of violent incidents or other unsafe threats (Anderson, 1998; Astor, Meyer, & Pitner, 2001; Jimerson & Furlong, 2006)

Violence: Described as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, under development, or deprivation. Certain researchers suggest a more inclusive and nuanced definition of school violence that incorporates the perspectives of diverse groups of stakeholders as well as the use of a more diverse set of measurements and methods used to describe school violence (Gastic & Gasiewski, 2010).

Violent Victimization – Includes serious violent crimes and simple assault

Weapons: Something (such as a club, knife, or gun) used to injure, defeat, or destroy.

Violent Calls for Service (CFS) – Includes robbery, robbery attempts, person with a gun, knife or other deadly weapon, assault and battery, assault with a gun or other deadly weapon, fights, sexual assault, kidnap, child molestation, and illegal shootings (L. Whitmore (personal communication, July, 24, 2010).

**Organization of Dissertation**

The dissertation centers on the issue of school safety and specifically, school and law-enforcement agency partnerships and the role of law enforcement at combating school-related violence. Each chapter includes key topic areas intended to frame the essential aspects of the study problem and various program components. There are six chapters, each one appropriately titled with headings throughout in order to ensure continuity and a clear transition from one topic area to the next.
Chapter 1 introduces the issue and concern for the growing violence in our schools. It provides a brief description of the problem, the purpose for the study, research questions guiding the program evaluation, methodology, significance of the study, and the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and a glossary of relevant terms.

Chapter 2 begins with an abstract of relevant literature on the subject of school safety, violence, the role of government, schools and law enforcement, and school and law enforcement agency partnerships aimed at ensuring safety by combating criminal behavior and acts of violence threatening schools and nearby communities.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief description of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership. It includes a list of 10 key questions and responses used to justify the need for and to rationalize overall feasibility of the program evaluation. The problem statement and study questions are revisited. The chapter provides a description of the research study setting; agenda for research, methodology, instrumentation, data collection means, and describes each of the six-steps used in data analysis. It further outlines the various methods and strategies used to ensure research integrity, trustworthiness, integrity, confidential and study limitations.

Chapter 4 provides a description of the initial conditions and factors leading up to the LVPD’s role and involvement and subsequent, CCSDPD partnership. It lists the details related to the initial development of the Police Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) Project: components, expectations, outcomes, and recommendations after year one. The chapter provides the backdrop of the LVMPD’s initial role and a depiction of the PASS Project subsequent modifications.
Chapter 5 begins with a review of the research questions and lists the five participating agencies. It includes a review of data analysis strategies and provides answers to each of the six research questions. The findings represent a shared consensus among study participant responses and data collected through research site observations that when compiled and subsequently analyzed, formed themes. The chapter ends with a description of serendipitous findings including a brief summary of essential findings.

Chapter 6 begins with the essential aspects of the study and conclusions drawn by the researcher. Conclusions drawn from study questions, two and three (program components and outputs) and four and five (potential limitations and factors for future sustainability), considering their relationship to each other, were addressed together. It includes a section comparing study findings with previous research on the subjects of school violence, and school and law-enforcement agency collaboration and partnerships. Included herein is a list of recommendations drawn from the initial PASS Project managers, previous research, and from study’s findings and subsequent conclusions. The chapter ends with brief summation.

**Conclusion**

As concerned citizens, we have come to understand that young people in every community are prone to violence, whether the community is a small town or central city, a neatly groomed suburb, or an isolated rural region. Therefore, as a nation, we cannot fail to keep school safety on the front burner while simultaneously dealing with other important education issues. Parents, teachers, and administrators, expect schools to be safe havens of learning. As such, schools must be safe in order for children to learn;
teachers to teach, and academic achievement levels to increase (Trump, K., 2005). Today, everyone in involved in education, from superintendents to bus drivers, are compelled to add safety and security to their list of responsibilities. The issues of school safety and violence prevention must continue to take center stage and schools cannot do it alone. Americans cannot afford to become complacent.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature focuses on school and law-enforcement-agency partnerships. Exploring the issue of school safety provides insight into how such partnerships effectively combat and treat acts of violence. This review explores schools as being essentially safe places, a historical perspective of school violence, an overview of international, national, and state reviews of violence in schools, safe school initiatives, school violence and intervention, and the impact of No Child Left Behind. The review of literature also looks at several nation reports and partnership initiatives for safe schools currently in operation across the country.

Schools Are Safe

In 2010, there were approximately 53 million students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade. Despite highly publicized incidents such as school shootings, schools remain the safest place for our children to be. (Morrison, 2003) In fact, National Crime Victimization Survey data show that violent crimes are much more likely to occur at a student’s home or at another residence than they are at school. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention backs this up: Between 1992 and 2002, less than 1% of the homicides of school-age children happened at school. The National Center for Education Statistics, meanwhile, reports that serious violent crime in public schools declined substantially from 1995-2003. However, these statistics do little to overcome the effect of school shootings such as those at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech, on public perception.
Decade of Violence

The decade between 1983 and 1993 was marked by an unprecedented surge of violence, often lethal violence, among young people in the United States. For millions of youths and their families, a period of life that should have been marked by good health and great promise was instead marred by injuries, disabilities, and death (Cook & Laub, 1998). The epidemic of violence left lasting scars on victims, perpetrators, and family and friends. It left communities wounded as well as the county as a whole. Arrest rates of young people for homicide and other violent crimes skyrocketed.

Never before in our history has the concern for school safety and focus on prevention of school violence garnered more attention. Safe schools are the concern of communities throughout the world. Federal, state, and local government agencies, law enforcement and school officials, community and school leaders, teachers, parents, and students cannot become complacent but rather remain increasing aware of potential threat and violence. (Rosiak, 2009) If a school is safe, and if children feel safe, students are better able to learn. There is a myriad of potential-crime related behaviors from outside communities and neighborhoods that find their way inside schools: alcohol and drug abuse, theft, bullying, weapons, and violent acts such as assaults, rape, and murder.

A Historical Perspective

The purpose of a historical background of education is to provide the background context that leads to further research in safe schools. According to Krauss, Wesner, Midlarsky and Gielen (2005) school violence can be categorized into four types of school violence: rebellion, actions out of anger, protests, and random act of violence (2005). The
issue of school violence and the need for ensuring the safety of America’s schools dates back centuries. According to Aries (1962), wide arrays of student misbehaviors have occurred in schools throughout history. In the 1990s, nearly 20% of students reported they had carried a weapon to school. Estimates show that there may be as many as 270,000 guns brought to schools on a weekly basis (Crews & Counts, 1997).

Additionally, during one year, from July 1, 1997 through June 30, 1998, 60 violent deaths in the United States were school related (Kaufman, Chen, Choy, Ruddy, Miller, Fleury, Chandler, Rand, Klaus, & Plan, 2000). Of those 60 deaths in the United States, 12 were suicides and the other 48 deaths were homicides (Kaufman et.al, 2000). Additionally, during the same time period there were 253,000 reports of non-fatal student-to-student violence, which included rape, assault, and battery. During the next four years, teachers were victims of 668,000 violent crimes at school, which translates to 83 crimes per 1,000 teachers yearly (Kaufman et. al, 2000). However, the most shocking and devastating case of school violence to date is the Columbine Massacre of 1999 (Cullen, 2009). This killing spree involved two male students who planted bombs in their school prior to fatally shooting 12 students and a teacher, as well as injuring 20 more individuals and then committing suicide (Cullen, 2009). The decade between 1983 and 1993 was marked by an unprecedented surge of violence, often lethal, among young people in the United States. For millions of youths and their families, a period of life that should have been marked by good health and great promise was instead marred by injuries, disabilities, and death (Cook & Laub, 1998). The epidemic of violence left lasting scars on victims, perpetrators, and family and friends. It left communities wounded and the county as a whole in shock. Arrest rates of young people for homicide and other violent crimes
skyrocketed. Several other violence indicators confirmed an epidemic of violence during that period.

**International, National, & State Reviews on Violence in Schools**

Results of an International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) review suggested that while incidents of violence in schools have always occurred, they have only recently received the attention of governments and the public. (Shaw, 2001) Shaw states that the three reasons for this attention are: 1) Publicity surrounding violent school-related events in a number of countries has led to both increased awareness of problems and to over-reaction by the media, public and governments. As a result, not only have greater attention of the problems, causes and solutions been noted, but also legislation, protocols and directives have been created and enacted. According to Shaw (2001), the media attention not only led to “over-reactive” and “event-driven” action by the government, but it also distorted the reality of the problems. 2) The impacts of violent behavior and victimization has accounted for a general change in attitude and awareness among young people, especially bullying, fighting and intimidation. A 2002 youth survey in England and Wales, for example, found that 51% of 11- to 16-year-olds had been assaulted, 30% bullied and 29% experienced racism in school (International Observer, 2003). 3) There has been a consolidation of research and knowledge about the risk and protective factors for offending and victimization, including school violence, and about effective practices.

Over the past twenty years, the U.S. federal government has initiated dramatic actions geared towards improving school safety aimed at preventing acts of violence in nations’
schools. Such actions include collaborations between the U.S. Department of Education and both the U.S. Secret Service and Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as programs such as Safe Schools/Healthy Students. Several national initiatives related to school safety and violence prevention have been introduced over the past several years. Two major federal initiatives are the Safe Schools Act of 1993 and the reauthorization and expansion of existing acts under the umbrella of the drug-free schools effort.

In 2003, the Office of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools created the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center and began administering a grant program to help school districts develop emergency response plans. In addition, Title IV of the No Child Left Behind Act has led to several changes in school safety policy, including uniform management, and reporting system to collect information on school safety and drug use among students.

**Safe Schools / Healthy Students Initiative**

In 2009, the U.S. Federal Government released a report citing the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative as one of three model programs that uses a community approach to prevent violence. Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative is an unprecedented collaborative grant program that draws upon the best practices of the education, justice, social service and mental health systems and is thereby supported by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Justice. The Program plays a critical role in addressing violence in schools particularly for school districts who report in their first year of their grant a high percentage of children who have experienced (35 percent) and witnessed (60
percent) school violence. In partnership with local law enforcement agencies, grantees identify and implement programs and activities such as safety and security assessments, district wide safety plans, violence prevention curricula, and staff training. The SS/HS National Evaluation has documented significant improvements among grantees for selected youth outcomes since 2005 in contrast to national trends. The SS/HS grant program is based on evidence that a comprehensive, integrated community wide approach is an effective way to promote healthy child development and address the problem of school violence and alcohol and other drug abuse. The primary objectives of a community’s SS/HS plan should be to present a thoughtful, well-coordinated strategy that will unify and enhance existing programs and services and to develop a systematic approach for sustaining those activities, curricula, programs, and services that prove to be effective.

**School Violence & Intervention**

As part of the 1994 reauthorization of SDFSCA, Congress mandated that the U.S. Department of Education (ED) collect information on efforts to prevent violence in schools nationally. Consequently, ED initiated the Study on School Violence and Prevention to describe the level of problem behavior, including violence, in schools; to learn about the measures that schools are taking to prevent problem behavior and promote school safety; and to examine the use of funds allocated through SDFSCA.

The Study on School Violence and Prevention was a cooperative effort between the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice (NIJ). At the same time that ED commissioned the Study on
School Violence and Prevention, NIJ awarded a grant to conduct the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. To maximize resources and minimize the burden to schools, the agencies and external researchers agreed to merge many of the study activities. In this report, we refer to the project as the Study on School Violence and Prevention; in NIJ and other publications, the project is called the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools.

No Child Left Behind

One of the various objectives of NCLB aimed at addressing the issue of school safety by improving information and reporting requirements. Under NCLB, each state is required to establish a uniform management and reporting system to collect information on school safety and drug use among young people. The information will be publicly reporting so that citizens have the information they need to ensure that their local schools are free from violence and drug use, and, in cases where schools fall short, to encourage improvement and track progress over time. The law now clarifies that students face expulsion for possessing a gun in school, not for just bringing a gun to school. Districts are still able to modify student expulsions on a case-by-case basis, but that modification must now be in writing. Exceptions to the expulsion requirement are allowed in two cases: firearms that are lawfully stored inside a locked vehicle on school property, and firearms that are brought to school or possessed in school for activities approved and authorized by the district, if the district adopts appropriate safeguards to ensure student safety. This provision requires states to prohibit students from bringing firearms to school or possessing firearms in school, with “school” being defined as any setting under the
control and supervision of the district for the purpose of authorized student activities. A definition of firearm is provided by reference to another statute and includes not only guns but also other dangerous devices such as bombs, rockets, and grenades. Districts must expel offending students from their regular school for at least one year, although this requirement must be construed in a manner consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and expelled students may be provided with educational services in an alternative setting. Districts may choose to modify these expulsions—in writing—on a case-by-case basis and are also required to refer offending students to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system.

**Indicators of School Crime & Safety Report (2011)**

There are a countless number of reporting agencies and reports that describe, depict, and report the nature and frequency of violence in our nation’s schools. For example, the 2011 Indicators of School Crime and Safety Report (ISCSR), produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), presents the most recent data available on school crime and student safety from federal department and agencies, including, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It aims to establish good indicators of the state of school crime and safety across the nation and regularly updates and monitors these indicators in an effort to ensure the safety of our nation’s students. The report contains data for thirteen indicators ranging from violent deaths at school and away from school to students’ reports of safety and security measures observed at school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, understanding the scope of the developing
solutions is necessary to address the issues of school crime and violence. It is equally important to assess criminal and violent behavior and activity inside schoolhouses and outside school doors and surrounding communities.

Violent deaths at schools are rare but tragic events with far-reaching effects on the school population and surrounding community (NCES). According to School Associated Violent Deaths Surveillance (SAVD), during the period from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010, there were 33 school-associated deaths in elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. A school-associated violent death is defined as a homicide, suicide, or legal intervention (involving a law enforcement officer), in which the fatal injury occurred on the campus of a functioning elementary or secondary school in the United States. Victims of school-associated violent deaths include not only students and staff members, but also others who are not students or staff members, such as parents. School-associated violent deaths include those that occurred while the victim was on the way to or returning from regular sessions at school or while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Of the 33 student, staff, and nonstudent school-associated violent deaths, 25 were homicides, five were suicides, and three were legal interventions (Table 2.2).

In 2010, data from the National Crime Victimization Survey showed that more victimization were committed against students ages 12-18 at school than away from school. Student’s ages 12-18 experienced approximately 828,400 nonfatal victimizations (theft and violent crime) at school compared to about 652,500 away from school. Theft includes attempted and completed purse snatchings, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, excluding motor vehicle theft. These figures represent
total crime victimizations rates of 32 crimes per 1,000 students at school and 26
victimizations per 1,000 students away from school. There were no measurable
differences when comparing 2009 and 2010 data. Interestingly, between 1992 and 2010,
the total victimization against students ages 12-18 generally declined both at and away
from school. This pattern also held for thefts, violent victimizations and serious violent
victimizations.

**U.S. School Tragedies & Firearms**

In March 2012 a Chardon, Ohio high school student killed three classmates in a
shooting rampage that once again brought the national spotlight to the problem of school
violence (Neuman, 2012). A major reason is firearms usage. It is now clear that the
violence epidemic was caused largely by an upsurge in the use of firearms by young
people. Ready access to firearms during a violent confrontation often had grievous
consequences. Youth violence became more lethal, resulting in dramatically higher rates
of homicide and serious injury. This triggered reporting to and response from police,
leading to higher rates of arrest. Although firearm usage may not cause violence, it
clearly increases the severity of violence.

Three factors appear to play a significant role in this dramatic surge in lethal violence
or injury: gangs, drugs, and guns. The combination of increased involvement in gangs,
selling drugs on the street, and carrying guns for protection had lethal implications. It is
African American and Hispanic males who are disproportionately caught up in this set of
circumstances. Today’s youth violence is less lethal, largely because of a decline in the
use of firearms. Fewer young people today are carrying weapons, including guns, and
few are taking them to school. Homicides at school are declining. Violent confrontations are less likely to result in killing or serious injury, and the police are less likely to be called in for an arrest.

**School Safety: Partnerships – Schools Can Not Do It Alone**

For parents, school personnel, and policymakers to effectively address school crime, they need an accurate understanding of the extent, nature, and context of the problem. Measuring progress towards safer schools require establishing good indicators of the current state of school crime and safety across the nation and regularly updating and monitoring these indicators. Schools will need to rely on willing allies in the community such as police and other city and county agencies. Police officials, educators, health experts, the private sector, non-profit entities, other recommendations require a partnership with the federal government.

**School and Law Enforcement Agency Partnerships**

“In the past decade, police have moved into public schools in unprecedented numbers,” (Thurhau; Wald, 2010, p. 982). School Resource Officers (SRO) responsibilities range from strict rule enforcers, to surrogate parents, to counselors and coaches. There are approximately 17,000 SROs throughout the United States tasked primarily with ensuring the safety of students, faculty, and securing and protecting school facilities and property. Behaviors such as schoolyard shuffles, shoving matches, and verbal altercations, once considered exclusively the domain of school disciplinarians, took sinister tones; schools were required to seek assistance from external sources
including federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Police officers, government officials, and many parents believed police officers were needed to squelch violence and crimes in order to keep schools safe and orderly.

School and law-enforcement agency partnerships face unique challenges surrounding the role and level of authority SROs have in schools in relationship to school administrators. The issue of legality of use of police powers versus those of school administrators is regularly argued by the courts. Cases focus on the issue of immunity with respect to search and seizure of student’s person or possessions. For instance, school administrators are authorized to conduct a search or seizure based on reasonable suspicion and law-enforcement officers are restricted from doing so unless there is sufficient evidence supporting probable cause.

**Michigan’s Safe Schools Initiative**

This section describes the scope of the school violence program in Michigan based on available data. It describes Michigan’s policy initiatives and programs related to school safety and violence prevention. Michigan Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) Workgroup, formed in 1998, is a group comprised of representatives from the Governor’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, the Michigan Department of Education, Michigan State Police (Emergency Management and Prevention Services), the Office of Drug Control Policy, the Department of Human Services, and University partners and state associations. The workgroup meets quarterly to outline and discuss “best practices” relative to school safety or issues that law enforcement/schools should consider. In addition, there are departmental updates whereby each agency highlights what it is doing relative to school
safety (informational sharing), as well as a legislative and legal update. Outputs of Michigan’s Safe Schools Initiative include:

Each fall during Michigan Safe Schools Week members of the Michigan Safe Schools Initiative Workgroup work together to compile school safety information, model school safety pledges, and suggested activities to raise awareness of the importance of safe schools to a learning environment. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students are urged to sign a school safety pledge. A news conference held at the state capitol kicks off the week’s activities and pledge signing. Workgroup members work with Michigan State Police Operations Center to keep parents, schools, and students aware of the School Violence Hotline. The hotline provides the means to report anonymously specific threats of imminent school violence or other suspicious or criminal conduct. The hotline is operational 24-hours per day, 365-days a year by the Michigan State Police Operations Center. Various types of school safety related workshops and conferences are developed and delivered through various partnerships among Michigan Safe Schools Initiative Workgroup members. Expertise from the Workgroup is provided for the development of various model protocol templates (lock-down/shelter in place), state curriculums (bullying) and Fast Fact sheets have been developed and distributed.
Summary

Major topics emerged in the review of literature: (1) schools are relatively safe despite highly publicized shootings and grievous acts of random violence; (2) federal, state, and local assistance to schools aimed at providing effective strategies to schools, (3) the importance of forming partnerships and sharing information among schools, law enforcement, and juvenile probation agencies is critical; (4) there is a need for accurate recordkeeping and reporting of misconduct at schools such as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); (5) it is important to establish a system for recognizing schools with effective safety and violence prevention programs.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Introduction & Review

Violence in schools is being increasingly recognized as not only a social justice problem but also a public health problem and is perhaps the most pressing societal issue related to children and youth today (Mercy & O’Carroll, 1988). School professionals, parents, and citizens alike are alarmed by the apparent level of violent acts that plague our school communities. Therefore, parents from all kinds of neighborhoods worry about whether or not their children will come home safe; teachers are concerned with their own safety and in the classroom, and of course, children are concerned for themselves and others.

This chapter outlines the methodology and research design used to evaluate the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s (LVMPD) School Violence Initiative (SVI). The SVI developed as the result of violent acts at certain Clark County District (CCSD) schools and in nearby neighborhoods. It briefly recaps the justification for the study by examining the issue of violence in schools and the need for safety to remain a top priority.

Problem Statement

Violence in schools is a worldwide phenomenon and although most schools are safe, the violence that occurs in our society, neighborhoods, and communities has found its way inside our schoolhouse doors. School professionals, parents, and citizens alike are alarmed by the apparent level of violent acts that plague our school communities. In the
past five decades, congressional hearings and government studies have periodically raised concerns about newly perceived upsurges in student violence (Crews & Counts, 1997).

Violence in schools is a complex issue. Student’s assault teachers, strangers harm children, students hurt each other, and any one of the parties may come to school already damaged or violated. The type of violence an individual encounters varies also from the threat of theft, assault, vandalism and from mere bullying to rape or murder. Schoolchildren are in even greater danger of confronting violence outside of school; and particularly in urban neighborhoods surrounding schools, although not exclusively. National statistics regarding school violence indicates it is a national problem that affects urban, suburban, and rural areas alike (Dinkes, Cataldi, Lin-Kelly, 2007). For many students however, school may be the safest place they know, since it keeps them away from violence sometimes found in the community at large.

Addressing school violence has no easy answers and schools alone cannot solve problems with complex societal origins. Violence casts a web of harm that captures the victims, the offenders, and their communities (Morrison, 2003). The notion that schools should be safe havens is a concept that has found support in law throughout the history of public schools; for teachers to teach children to learn, there must be a safe and inviting learning environment. While most have existing safety programs, these programs often need conscientious, creative application to improve their effectiveness. Goal number 7 of Goals 2000, the Educate America Act, offered a hopeful resolution that “by the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol, and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to
learning” (Goals 2000: Educate America Act, 1994). After more than a decade, the goal is yet unrealized and remains at best, a lofty aspiration.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the troubling issue of violence in our nation’s schools and specifically, in Clark County, Nevada. It entailed an evaluation of the Clark County, Nevada, LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and the Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD) partnership. The underlying premise was that school safety and the prevention of violence is a shared responsibility among various stakeholders; and schools simply cannot do it alone. At the request of the LVMPD, the researcher conducted a program evaluation to identify the factors and conditions surrounding its development, components, outputs, potential inhibitors, sustainability factors, and overall effectiveness. The study provides a broad definition for the term, violence, and includes statistical data on prevalence of violence in U.S. schools and particularly, in Clark County, Nevada.

**Research Questions**

During the 2007, 2008 CCSD school-year, a surge in the rate of criminal and violent acts involving students and juveniles at and around area schools garnered the attention of the LVMPD, Sherriff D. Gillespie, fellow law enforcement and community agencies, students, concerned citizens. The following research questions stem from deliberate actions taken by the LVMPD and CCSDPD and their combined efforts aimed at preventing further acts of violence and reducing the threat of perceived danger and harm.
1. What events, conditions, and factors contributed to initial development of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership?

2. What are the essential components of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative?

3. What are the outputs of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership and how have they affected program modifications?

4. What are the key factors in sustaining the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership?

5. What initial factors were potential inhibitors of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative’s development and subsequently, potential inhibitors in sustaining the partnership?

6. How has the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and CCSDPD partnership affected the overall rate of school violence incidents?

**Preliminary Research Methodology**

This study employed a program evaluation methodology. The researcher asked and answered 10 important questions as outlined by McDavid and Hawthorn (2006) that an evaluator should consider prior to proceeding with an evaluation. Those questions are following.

1. **Who is the Client for evaluation?**

   The LVMPD and the CCSDPD are the primary clients. It is important to note however, the evaluation of the SVI revealed numerous law-enforcement and community agencies who also share responsibility for serving and protecting Clark County, Nevada residents and who are concerned for its overall wellbeing.
2. **What are the questions and issues driving the evaluation?**

   The issues and concerns surrounding school violence and the need for schools to remain safe havens in order for teachers to teach and students to learn is at the center of the study. The research questions driving the evaluation stem from sufficient evidence supporting a belief that schools cannot do it alone but rather, need collaborative partnerships with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

   The following research questions guide the study:

3. **What resources are available to conduct the evaluation?**

   Under the direction of the LVMPD, P. Smith, CCSDPD, A. Vargas, and CCSD, A. Carrington, who served as “gatekeepers,” the researcher gained the necessary access to research sites, key personnel; and to relevant and pertinent information related to the Initiative to include, pamphlets, publications, and reports. A. Carrington served as a liaison to assist the researcher with gaining access to CCSD personnel, specifically, school administrators. A. Carrington was also an interview participant.

4. **What has been done previously?**

   To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this type of evaluation is the first of its kind. LVMPD, C. Montoya confirmed the same.

5. **What is the program all about?**

   The Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center (SNCTC) in conjunction with the LVMPD operates the School Violence Initiative. It encompasses four primary agencies: the Clark County School District Police Department, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Henderson Police Department, and the North Las
Vegas Police Department. The SVI’s primary objective is to ensure the safety and overall wellbeing of Clark County, Nevada residents and particularly, combating potential threats of criminal behavior and violence at CCSD schools and in nearby communities.

6. **What kind of environment does the program operate in and how does that affect the comparisons available to the evaluator?**

   The SVI is atypical and operates outside the boundaries of a brick and mortar structure: building, department, unit, or a particular agency, per se. However, the SNCTC’s Command Center and Watch Station is located inside the LVMPD’s Corporate Headquarters, 400 South Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Las Vegas, Nevada. The CCSDPD is located at 120 Corporate Park Drive, Henderson, Nevada.

7. **Which research design alternatives are desirable and appropriate?**

   The researcher, with the help of UNLV professor, Dr. Gene Hall, determined a program evaluation to be an appropriate research design.

8. **What information sources are available and appropriate, given the evaluation issues, the program structure, and the environment in which the program operates?**

   Available information sources include key law-enforcement agency personnel at various levels of the organization, different departments, operational units, and capacities. In addition, key CCSD personnel participated in the study all of whom provided insight and data obtained through observations, interviews, and printed materials.
9. Given all of the issues in points 1 – 8 which evaluation strategy is least problematical?

The researcher, with the help of UNLV professor, Dr. Gene Hall, determined a program evaluation least problematical. It is important to note the LVMPD requested an evaluation of its Initiative and CCSDPD partnership.

10. Should the program evaluation be undertaken?

Yes, as evaluated by the researcher and in agreement with the LVMPD, CCSD, and CCSDPD, and with approval from the UNLV Institutional Review Board and Dissertation Committee members.

Study Methodology

The research study consisted of a program evaluation of the LVMPD’s SVI. McDavid & Hawthorn (2006) define a program as “a group of related activities intended to achieve one or several related objectives” (p. 446). A program evaluation is a “rich and varied combination of theory and practice that is used to create information for planning, designing, implementing, and assessing the results of efforts aimed at addressing and solving problems using policies and programs” (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006, pg.3). The evaluation itself is a “structured process for creating and synthesizing information in an effort to reduce the level of uncertainty about a given program or policy” (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006, p. 3).

The evaluation of the SVI also entailed a facets of a qualitative research approach in order to identity the factors and conditions leading to the development of the Initiative, its components, outputs, potential limitations, factors for sustainment, and for its overall
effectiveness with respect to reducing the threat and danger of violence. The researcher constructed and asked interview questions in order to learn and understand the entire scope and nature of the SVI. Relying on the qualitative design allowed the researcher to understand the various people and agencies responsible for its implementation, objectives, and goals. Lincoln & Guba (1985) state, “Qualitative methods are more open to mutual shaping and exposing the relationship of the researcher to the respondent” (p.40). According to Mischler (1995), “We do not find stories; we make stories” (p.115).

Research Study Setting

Clark County is located in southern Nevada and spans 7,910 square miles with five law-enforcement agency jurisdictions: the LVMPD, Henderson Police Department (HPD), North Las Vegas Police Department (NLVPD), Boulder City Police Department (BCPD), and the Mesquite Police Department (MPD). Over the past century, Clark County grew at a rapid pace and as a result, it became increasingly challenging to the various enforcement agencies to keep up with demand for police presence and safety resources. During the 1960s, in an effort to help manage juvenile justice crimes and unlawful behavior at and around schools, the CCSD hired security officers to serve, protect, and intervene in school related incidents and thereby freeing up law enforcement resources. In 1971, Clark County, Nevada officials recognized the need for the CCSD to have its own police resources and subsequently, established the CCSDPD.

The CCSD is the largest school district in the state of Nevada and the fifth largest in the United States. CCSD’s administrative headquarters is located at 5100 W. Sahara Avenue in Las Vegas, Nevada. The school district encompasses all of the southern part of
the state, which covers 7,910 square miles. The CCSD operated at 352 locations (2007-08) that included elementary, middle, high, alternative, special, private and charter schools. The district serves several large communities as well as surrounding rural areas.

As stated, the CCSD employs its own internal police agency, the CCSD Police Department, located at 223 Lead Street in Henderson, Nevada. The agency utilizes the concept of community oriented policing to work with school administrators, parents, students, and the community in its effort to prevent and combat crime. The CCSD Police Department is an integral part of the research study.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument who was unbiased without any prior generalization or knowledge of the LVMPD SVI. He is a 44, year-old male and who resides in North Las Vegas, Nevada and has for approximately, 24 years. He is the Senior Vice President, Shared Services Director for Western Alliance Bancorporation a publically traded banking organization. He has 22 years of Human Resources experience across several industries: Hotel & Casino, Banking and Finance, Manufacturing and Hospitality. He is a trained and certified interviewer and has extensive interviewing experienced gained while working in the Human Resources field. He earned his undergraduate degree in Business Management (BSBM) from the University of Phoenix, Phoenix, Arizona, a Master in Business Administration (MBA) degree from Regis University, Denver, Colorado; and currently pursuing a degree in education (Ed.D.) from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada.
Professional Judgment

There are no program evaluations that do not include, to some degree, an evaluator’s own perceptions, experiences, values, beliefs, and expectations. These play an important role. The importance of using professional judgment is designed, executed, and acted upon. The qualitative researcher is an experienced Human Resources professional and college graduate who understands the importance of exercising discretion, ensuring privacy and maintaining confidentiality, and using good judgment.

Data Collection

The researcher used his humanistic and natural senses (i.e. sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing) including, his intuition. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen (1993) point out “the use of such senses enables a human to be a powerful and perceptive data gathering tool” (p.2). Specifically, the researcher relied on human senses: intuition, thoughts, and feelings while collecting and analyzing data. This instrumentation method proved significant in the Findings chapter. Information collected included participants’ nonverbal responses and off the record remarks and ideologies.

The researcher collected information through a variety of means: observations, interviews, contact analysis, semi-structured and structured questions, internet searchers, LVMPD, P. Smith, CCSDPD, C. Montoya, and CCSD A. Carrington and UNLV, Dr. Gene Hall were gatekeepers. Each one assisted the researcher by providing access to the research sites and helped to identify and locate the people and places required to do the study. The researcher transcribed notes and collected artifacts to conceptualize the conditions and understand the factors leading up to the SVI and law-enforcement
partnership. As Mischler states “we construct the story and meaning through our concepts and methods, our research strategies, data, transcription process, journals, observations, and, lastly, the interpretive perspectives from the participants (1995, p.117).”

In addition to using qualitative data, the researcher also collected and analyzed quantitative data such as non-verbal communication sources and numerical information. Quantitative data consisted of law-enforcement agency data and statistical information pertaining to the frequency and types of reported cases of criminal acts and violence. Furthermore, quantitative data yielded specific numbers that were “analyzed and subsequently, provided information related to frequency and trends” (Creswell, p.552).

**Data Analysis Strategy**

The following steps were followed to analyze, code, and development themes from the qualitative data:

1. In preparation of data analysis, the researcher read and re-read the data in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the information collected, a process known as “preliminary exploration” (Creswell, 2008, p. 250). This process led to the researcher determining the need to gather additional information from certain participants. The researcher created a table in which to sort the information by organization and source and assigned each one a number for identification purposes: SNCTC-010, LVMPD-020, CCSD-030, CCSDPD-0-40, and the CCJJC-050.

2. The next step involved analyzing the data by assessing what exactly the participant was trying to convey and what each response actually meant. It further entailed analyzing observed data in order to identify a correlation and or contrast between
spoken data and observed data. Creswell (2008) points out that “analyzing qualitative data requires understanding how to make sense of text and images so that you can form answers to your research question” (p.243).

3. The third step entailed the coding of certain data by highlighting and placing brackets around specific participant responses. This same method applied to data collected from observations. The coding process allowed the researcher to make sense of the data by dividing the text in an attempt to weed out redundancies, overlaps, and less pertinent information. Creswell (2008) points out that this is “an inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes. (p. 251).” The researcher stated some codes in the participant’s actual words and others in words of his own, a process known as “in vevo” codes (Creswell, 2008, p. 253).

4. The next step entailed listing all of the code words and properly aligning each one with the appropriate research question. The majority of codes matched however, with a few exceptions, the researcher moved them as needed.

5. At the fifth step, the researcher compared the list of codes to the “raw” data in an effort to organize by categorizing the codes. This step allowed the researcher to identify two new codes and specific participant quotes in support of the codes.

6. At the sixth step, the researcher reduced the list of codes to seven that became themes, “also called categories, similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea” (Creswell, 2008, p. 252).
Constant Comparisons

The researcher collected and analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data during the program evaluation in his attempt to conceptualize the SVI’s various components, outputs, limitations, factors for sustainment, and overall effectiveness. Throughout the data collection phase, he conscientiously framed incoming data by sorting, comparing, and contrasting it with previously obtained information. Creswell (2008) describes the constant comparative procedure as “the process of slowly developing the categories of information.” (p. 443) Six, research questions guided the study however; constant comparisons established a sense of validity while identifying categories (codes), descriptions, and themes.

Negotiated Outcomes

Throughout the entire data collection process, the researcher initiated a procedure known as member checking. It is the process of allowing both the researcher and the research participants to ask clarifying and follow-up questions (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). After each interview, the researcher transcribed interview responses and field notes and then returned the typewritten responses to participants for their review and approval. This step resulted in the researcher’s ability to gain an accurate and complete understanding of the participant’s responses thereby, minimizing the possibility of incorrect interpretations, inferences, or assumptions. The researcher further engaged in casual conversations with participants while observing research sites and during interviews. The intent was to make participants feel comfortable and at ease which resulted in gaining additional insight from the participants’ own perspective.
Referential Adequacy Materials

The researcher used referential adequacy materials to analyzing the various forms of collected data (interviews, observations, program data, and reports) in order to identify codes and formulate answers to the six research questions. In addition, the researcher relied upon certain quotes from participants in order to emphasize important points and to ensure the appropriate interpretation, meaning, accuracy, and credibility.

Member Checking

The researcher collected interview responses by hand and via tape recordings and later transcribed them. The researcher returned typed responses to participants to allow the opportunity for participants to revisit the questions and more importantly, verify the completeness and accuracy of researcher’s transcriptions (written responses) and interpretations—a process known as member checking. Member checking is the most important step in establishing credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). This step provided participants with the opportunity to verify or dispute the accuracy of the now transcribed notes, comments, and answers. This step in the validation process proved essential as most participants responded with affirmation while a few provided further clarification to responses, omissions or made corrections.

Reflexive Journal

The reflexive journal is a tool that supports the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The researcher developed and maintained an electronic reflexive journal in Excel format to keep track of interview subjects, schedules
including dates, times, and location, confirmations, status of signed and returned consent forms, and miscellaneous notes and comments.

**Recordkeeping**

Throughout the study, the researcher maintained individual research files to ensure appropriate organization, planning, scheduling, and execution. A primary research file contains all of the guidelines and applications from the University’s Office of Human Research and UNLV’s College of Education including other materials required to perform the study. Other files contain participant invitation letters, informed consent documents, copies of participant’s profiles, interview questions, interview transcriptions, e-mail transactions, and schedules. Each participant file is color-coded identifying the organization they represent and their individual role in the study. This improved organization and proved valuable when retrieving data for contrast and comparison. Additional files contain research materials utilized throughout the study including program materials, various reports, literature such as materials referenced in the study, reflective journal, peer debriefing notes, and drafted versions of the study.

**Politics**

(McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006) point out that all program evaluations are “political” (p. 26) with respect to selecting what to evaluate, whom to report the results to, how to collect the information, even how to interpret the data, and affected by the interests and values of key stakeholders. “The evaluation’s client(s) will also likely affect how the goals, objectives, activities, and intended outcomes of the program are defined for the
purpose of the evaluation (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2000). Ian Shaw (2000) comments, “many of the issues in evaluation research are influenced as much, if not more, by political as they are methodological considerations” (p.3). To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there were no overt acts of politicalizing during the course of the evaluation. The researcher remained aware of such tactics in order to ensure the overall credibility of the evaluation.

**Subjects & Samples**

The researcher used critical sampling as a means of selecting subjects and samples for the study. Critical sampling, according to Creswell (2008) is “a sampling strategy to study an exceptional case so the researcher can learn as much as possible about the phenomenon” (p. 214). The LVMPD SVI is a partnership between municipal law enforcement agencies and specifically, the CCSDPD. The researcher interviewed key personnel in various capacities from several organizations: the LVMPD, SNCTC, CCSDPD, CCSD, and Clark County Juvenile Justice Center (CCJJC). The researcher conducted interviews and collected various forms, materials, documents, and reports needed for the evaluation. The researcher changed the names of the interviewees to ensure anonymity. The researcher participated in two LVMPD SVI Task Force meetings held at the LVMPD’s headquarters. The triangulation of collected data is comprised of interviews, field notes, observations, materials, and reports allowed the researcher to conceptualize the various components and outputs of LVMPD SVI. The LVMPD and CCSPD provided the researcher with necessary access to its work sites, key employees, pertinent information related to the SVI and insight into its internal operation centers.
Research Sites

Rossman and Rallis (1998) suggests that the ideal research site includes the following characteristics: “(a) entry is possible; (b) there is a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, structures of interest, or all of these; (c) strong relations with the participants are possible; and (d) ethical and political considerations are not overwhelming, at least initially” (p. 86). The researcher conducted interviews at several locations of the participant’s choosing and participated in two LVMPD SVI Task Force meetings at its administrative headquarters.

Interview Subjects

The researcher collected data from various sources and in different forms. Initially, the researcher met with the LVMPD, P. Smith, LVMPD, L. Buford, and University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Dr. Gene Hall who provided the researcher with insight to the School Violence Initiative and the client’s initial expectations. Additional instruments used for data collection included interviews with key employees of the LVMPD, CCSDPD, CCSD, and the CCJJC. LVMPD, P. Smith provided the researcher with an initial list of individuals that led to snowballing, a technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances.

Trustworthiness

The conventional trustworthiness criteria are consistent with the procedures of a program evaluation. Research participants gain trustworthiness through the following four standards: credibility (truth-value), transferability (applicability), dependability
(consistency), and conformability (neutrality) (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Lincoln & Guba (1985) recommend specific techniques to enhance the credibility of research: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and referential adequacy materials, peer debriefing, member checking, reflective journal, thick description, purposive sampling, and an audit trail.

**Triangulation**

The researcher used the process of triangulation in his efforts aimed at ensuring the integrity and credibility of the program’s evaluation. Triangulation involved the validation of findings through multiple sources of information including multiple methods of data collection. It further entailed the reproduction of similar data obtained from differing perspectives. Data collection and analysis measures included second interviews and multiple meetings with certain participants, additional efforts intended to clarify prior accounts and establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) point out “single items of information contribute little to an understanding of the context of the study unless they are enriched through triangulation” (p. 138). Therefore, the researcher compared and analyzed data through collected from different sources (interviews, observations, documents, and reports). In essence, the process improved the overall validity of the study.
Summary

This chapter covered the methodology and step by step procedures for conducting a program evaluation study of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s School Violence Initiative.
CHAPTER FOUR
SETTING THE STAGE

Creswell (2008) explains the significance of providing detailed information surrounding the climate and environment of the research setting. “The description can transport the reader to a research site or help the reader visualize the situation,” (p. 255). This chapter provides a description of the primary research site, key organizations at the center of the study, and a brief summary of the conditions and factors leading to the development of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s (LVMPD) Police Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS Project), a precursor to the School Violence Initiative, and Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD) partnership. It further outlines the PASS Project’s initial objectives, components, limitations, and recommendations for future sustainability.

Study Participants

Clark County, Nevada

Clark County is located in southern Nevada and spans 7,910 square miles with five law-enforcement agency jurisdictions: the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), Henderson Police Department (HPD), North Las Vegas Police Department (NLVPD), Boulder City Police Department (BCPD), and the Mesquite Police Department (MPD). In the past century, Clark County population has grown at a rapid pace and as a result, became increasingly challenging for the various law enforcement agencies to keep up with demand for police presence and safety resources (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.1: Clark County, NV Population 1910-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Clark County Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4,853</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8,532</td>
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<td>741,459</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,375,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,951,269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center

The Southern Nevada Counter-Terrorism Center (SNCTC) is comprised of 20 different Federal, State, and local agencies; an all-crimes and all-hazards fusion center responding to incidents within Clark County, Nevada. The SNCTC’s core function is to provide tactical and strategic analytic support to regional stakeholders. In the event of a natural or man-made incident, the tactical analysis section of the Fusion Center provides the LVMPD decision makers, county officials, and area jurisdictions with timely information and availability of assets on a 24/7 watch capability.

Clark County School District

The Clark County School District (CCSD) is the largest school district in the state of Nevada and fifth largest in the United States. CCSD’s administrative headquarters is located at 5100 W. Sahara Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The school district includes all of
the southern part of the state and in 2011 operated 352 schools: elementary, middle, high, alternative, special, private, and charter schools. The district serves several large communities as well as surrounding rural areas.

**Clark County School District Police Department**

During the 1960s, in an effort to help manage juvenile justice crimes and unlawful behavior in and around schools, the CCSD hired security officers trained to serve, protect, and intervene in school related incidents and thereby freeing up federal, state, and local law enforcement resources. In 1971, Clark County, Nevada officials recognized the need for the CCSD to have its own police resources and subsequently, established the CCSDPD. Located at 223 Lead Street in Henderson, Nevada, the law enforcement agency utilizes a concept of community oriented policing: works collaboratively with school administrators, parents, students, and the community in an effort to prevent and combat violence and improve overall safety. In 2008, the LVMPD joined forces with CCSDPD and established a partnership.

**CCSDPD Officer Role & Responsibility**

Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 289.460 categorizes (Category I) School Resource or Police Officers (SRO) as a peace officer, with unrestricted duties and who is not otherwise listed as a Category II or Category III peace officer. NRS 391.275 states school police officers are responsible for the protection of school property such as buildings and facilities within the school district, protection of school personnel, pupils, real personal property, or real or personal property of the school district. In addition, requires school
police officers to cooperate with local law enforcement agencies in matters relating to personnel, pupils or real or personal property of the school district; beyond school property, building and facilities and when in hot pursuit of a person believed to have committed a crime. It extends further to safeguarding activities or events sponsored by the school district-on and off school property but within the school district. Furthermore, when authorized by the superintendent of schools, the authority to issue traffic citations for violations of traffic laws and ordinances during the time school is in session or school-related activities are in progress (NRS) 391.275).

**Christopher Privett**

On February 15, 2008, Christopher Privett, a 15-year old Clark County, Nevada, Palo Verde High School freshman, athlete and honor roll student was fatally shot while walking home from school. The shooting death, a random act of violence, was one of several recent shootings in the Las Vegas valley involving students and juveniles alike. Family, friends, and CCSD officials were outraged and saddened. A media-frenzy ensued. The homicide involved two triggermen traveling in a car with two other teenagers. The two gunmen, Gerald Q. Davison, 16, and Ezekiel Williams, 18, later tried and convicted of murder, did not attend Palo Verde High School.

Christopher father was a CCSD middle school teacher at the time and according to CCSD, M. Carpenter, “Christopher’s death hit closer to home and was considered personal because it was the child of one of our own” (personal communication, August 14, 2012). LVMPD’s M. Solomon, CCSD and CCSDPD officials, organizations, community leaders, and parents met soon thereafter, to discuss the surmounting acts of
violence that plagued the district schools and surrounding neighborhoods. According to LVMPD’s, P. Finch, “the increased threat of criminal behavior involving students and juveniles and their use of guns required immediate action in order to prevent violence from re-occurring” (personal communication, August 14, 2012).

**Policing Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS)**

In 2008, the LVMPD (Area Command Units, Saturation Teams, Gang Crimes Sections, Investigative Services Division, Traffic Bureau, and Special Operations Division) developed and initiated the Policing Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) Project and joined its law enforcement resources with those of the CCSDPD. The PASS Project aimed to combat the increased threat of criminal activity and series of violent acts occurring at area schools and in surrounding neighborhoods. The PASS Project, launched from LVMPD, Bolden Area Command, one of 11 Area Command Units, was strictly operational in nature. According to LVMPD’s, P. Finch, “the multi-task force partnership resembled a similar relationship between the LVMPD and the U.S. Department of Drug Enforcement,” (personal communication, May 14, 2012). The sharing of Intelligence data between the LVMPD and CCSDPD and among officers was a key component and output of the Project’s plan.

**Project Management & Intelligence**

PASS Project managers relied on timely and accurate information obtained from a variety of sources: LVMPD Field Commanders and Area Captains, CCSDPD officers, CCSD officials and faculty and other partner agencies. Information sharing was a
primary component of the Project and therefore, vital to its overall success. Tasked with evaluating and assessing certain aspects of the Project, program managers used Intelligence data to make deployment and other operational decisions. For example, in 2008 near the end of the school year, an emerging pattern of racial tension indicated increased racial tension brewing at several CCSD middle schools. At the time, McDonald Middle School had been determined to be the most at risk school in the Clark County School District. Reportedly, during the last week of school, a near riot occurred, involving approximately 150 students. Intelligence data received by LVMPD Area Captains, Bolden Area Command Units, CCSPDD officers, and Las Vegas City Marshalls led to a multi law-enforcement agency response aimed at ensuring the safety of all involved. Intelligence data helped to determine the appropriate law enforcement agencies and police resources needed to handle the situation. Program managers also used Intelligence data to identify necessary Project modifications and the emergence of trends. Timely and reliable Intelligence data allowed program managers to identify problematic and potential problematic schools categorized as either Core or Watch schools based on perceived or known threats of criminal activity and violence.

**Core & Watch School Lists**

The terms Core and Watch are lists used between the two law enforcement agencies to label and categorize certain CCSD schools considered problematic or those that have the potential to become problematic. Core schools are problematic in nature and warrant more police presence and intervention. Typically, Core schools have a high frequency of police calls and LVMPD officer interaction and reports of violence on school campuses
or in surrounding neighborhoods. Watch schools are certain CCSD schools that have the potential to become problematic. Core and Watch schools are labeled as such based on both perception and actual reports of criminal behavior and violence.

PASS Operational Components & Guidelines

The PASS Project called for additional LVMPD intervention and increased police presence at and around certain CCSD schools: Clark High School, Cashman Middle School, and Rex Bell Elementary. The LVMPD tasked Area Captains with assessing the need for additional police presence including operational deployment. Area Captains assigned officers to patrol certain schools throughout the entire school day while others deployed officers in the morning before school and in the afternoon at the end of the school day. LVMPD officers patrolled both inside and outside schools to thwart and or combat criminal behavior and acts of violence. LVMPD officers patrolled surrounding neighborhoods as a preventative measure aimed at discouraging large crowd gatherings and potential fights. Reportedly, in the spring of 2008, the LVMPD deployed as many as 100 officers to certain schools and surrounding neighborhoods. The PASS Project provided LVMPD and CCSDPD officers with specific procedural guidelines to follow:

- LVMPD and CCSDPD officers will report to existing supervisors and follow current chain of command
- Agency policies, procedures, and training requirements will apply to officers from their respective agencies
- Operational and supervisory issues and concerns between officers were to come to the attention of immediate supervisors or operational managers. Unresolved issues and concerns at this level were elevated to the attention of CCSDPD and LVMPD project managers, respectively.
• Routine management meetings between Clark High School Principal and CCSDPD and LVMPD project managers to assess the Project and to provide guidance to the program

• Daily briefings with CCSDPD officers at the LVMPD Bolden Area Command (BAC) at 6:30 a.m. Monday – Friday, to include a CCSDPD supervisor at each meeting

• CCSDPD Officers equipped with a LVMPD radio and assigned a “Call Sign”; officers will log on and off via this system – established protocol in response to the threat of violence

• A LVMPD Liaison Officer (LO) from Union 5 assigned to work with CCSDPD during the day shift. The LO is responsible for working with CCSDPD officers by bringing operational concerns to the attention of LVMPD and CCSDPD supervisors assigned to the project.

Keeping Everyone’s Eye on the Neighborhood (KEEN)

In 2008, Keeping Everyone’s Eye on the Neighborhood (KEEN) merged and became an integral component of the PASS Project. KEEN, one of several community programs in place at the time, centered around Clark High School, the Union area, and surrounding community. Its primary goal and objective aimed at improving neighborhood conditions by combating potential threats and acts of violence. The merger between the two Initiatives (PASS and KEEN) resulted in improved collaboration efforts between the LVMPD and CCSDPD. The merger also led to the assignment of an additional CCSD police officer to Clark High School.

PASS Project Limitations

The LVMPD, tasked with the overall management of the PASS Project, identified a lack of management interaction between it and the CCSDPD as a primary limitation. The majority of LVMPD and CCSDPD management interaction was often “bottlenecked” and
subsequently, not communicated to lower level officers on the ground in a timely matter or not all. Furthermore, there was reportedly a noticeable difference in the level of interaction among LVMPD Area Command Units. “The active Area Commands, for the most part, were able to contain the violence or somewhat manage the problems in their respective areas, and overall, the participation between line officers from both agencies was good. It depended however on the particular officers on how much interaction was effective. Some areas commands took a very active role while others did not,” stated LVMPD’s, P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012).

The following were additional limitations identified in the Project’s first year of operation:

- Very personnel intensive and requiring many resources
- Challenging to manage as evidenced by obvious operational gaps that existed between the various agencies involved
- Overall participation and cooperation efforts between and among law enforcement agencies and officers varied based on the level of interaction
- A lack of representation from all local law-enforcement agencies
- Project managers lacked sufficient decision-making authority from their respective agencies

**Recommendations**

The LVMPD proposed the following recommendations based on its operational experience and other factors gleamed from the PASS Project’s first year. Each recommendation may work in whole, in part or in combination with one another.

- LVMPD Area Command Units should continue with School Violence Control Individual Action Plans (IAP) as were implemented during the 2007-08 school year. The IAP’s will include, at a minimum, LVMPD officers assigned to schools at the beginning of the school year and at the end of school. Area Command Captains can increase the police presence as needed. Operational plans submitted to PASS project managers on or before August 15, 2008.
• The CCSD should implement its own written Violence Reduction Plan.

• The Henderson Nevada Police Department (HPD) and North Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (NLVPD) should also implement a written Violence Reduction Plan.

• The LVMPD’s Gang Unit, ISD, Traffic, and other support bureaus will have IAPs in place to support the LVMPD Patrol Division as needed or during emergencies.

• Maintain the CCSDPD Analyst position at the LVMPD Division Operations Center (DOC), staffing the Watch desk

• Maintain the Intelligence Log and analysis of information contained in the Log.

• Continue with the current intelligence dissemination program, headed by the CCSDPD dispatcher and the Watch Desk

• Retain the School Violence Reduction Plan managers, one Captain from Central Patrol Division, and the other from Valley Patrol Division. These captains are responsible for the overall reduction plan, management, deployment, intelligence, and PASS Project plan modifications. The managers will also coordinate operations with partner agencies.

• Release the LVMPD Saturation Team (SAT) from the Project and reassign the SAT to normal duties. Evaluate the need for SAT officers on an ongoing basis.

• There is a need for greater community involvement at problematic CCSD middle schools. CCSD to adopt programs such as Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE).

• CCSDPD officers will brief and inform LVMPD Area Command Units of schools they are zoned to patrol

• CCSDPD supervisors should attend the LVMPD Area Command management meetings to ensure continuity and the overall management of the Project.

• Expand the PASS Project to both Henderson and North Las Vegas, NV territories. Both agencies provided minimal support in the PASS Projects’ first year.

• Transfer alarm call responsibilities from CCSDPD to the LVMPD.

• Transfer CCSDPD officers from swing and grave shifts to supplement the officers actively working at the schools while schools are in session

• Retain a small contingent of CCSDPD officers to respond to the alarm call with keys allowing LVMPD entry.
Increase the level of management interaction between LVMPD, CCSDPD, HPD, and NLVPD. There is a need for a coordinated and cohesive valley wide strategy.

Create an advisory and operational management board consisting of all involved agencies. Board members need consists of LVMPD Captains or managers who have operational control over the officers assigned to their agencies. An executive board should be created that the management board will report to quarterly or as needed.

Give LVMPD operational management authority to oversee the CCSDPD to include deployment, assignment, and day-to-day field operations. CCSDPD should retain administrative management of its officers.

Create an infrastructure within the LVMPD to manage the CCSDP. Assign a police captain to co-manage the CCSDPD.

Solicit legislative changes to facilitate merging the CCSDPD into the LVMPD and place responsibility of policing the school district with the LVMPD. This is the least suggestive method and most problematic.

**Conclusions**

“The PASS Project was not considered to be a long-term solution but rather a short-term fix to an immediate problem,” said LVMPD’s, P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2102). The LVMPD understood its need to remain concerned with the increased threat and potential acts of violence at area Clark County, Nevada schools. It further understood that it could not return to a business as usual stance with respect to policing schools. An increased collaborative effort was required. The CCSDPD’s assumption and belief that it adequately and appropriately could handle the issue of violence was not a shared one. Other law enforcement agencies in the Las Vegas valley needed to take a more proactive role in the reduction on school violence. The LVMPD should take a greater role in managing the CCSDPD or the CCSDPD should take a more active role in managing itself” LVMPD’s P. Finch (personal communication, July 14, 2102).
It is important to note here that according to LVMPD’s J. Smith, since 2008, the PASS Project evolved and subsequently “morphed” to become known as the School Violence Initiative (personal communication, January 14, 2012). The law-enforcement agency partnership has matured, and works in conjunction with the Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center. The collaboration between these law enforcement agencies exemplifies horizontal information sharing, a critical component of the all-crimes and all-hazards fusion center approach to support policing activities. The PASS Project operated throughout the remainder of the 2008/09 school year and at years’ end, considered successful. LVMPD’s P. Finch stated, “the PASS Project was successful as there were no further reports of school shootings and the number of violent acts both inside and outside targeted schools decreased” (personal communication, July 14, 2012).
CHAPTER FIVE  
FINDINGS OF THE PROGRAM EVALUATION

The chapter begins with a brief summary of the program evaluation methodology with the identification of the primary organizations and key study participants. It provides a brief review of the data analysis strategy and then delineates the findings of the program evaluation of the School Violence Initiative along with several serendipitous findings.

Summary of Program Evaluation Methodology

This research study entails a program evaluation of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s (LVMPD) School Violence Initiative (SVI) and its partnership with the Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD). A program, defined as “a group of related activities intended to achieve one or several related objectives” (McDavid & Hawthorn, p. 446) was the focus of this study. The LVMPD requested the researcher evaluate the SIV and specifically, assess its partnership with the CCSDPD with respect to the issue of safety and prevention of school violence. Key representatives from several organizations participated in the study: The Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center (SNCTC), the LVMPD, the Clark County School District (CCSD), the CCSDPD, and the Clark County Juvenile Justice Center (CCJJC) (see Table 5.1).
Table 5.1 Program Evaluation Study Participants

- Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center
- Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
- Clark County School District
- Clark County School District Police Department
- Clark County Juvenile Justice Center

The researcher collected, transcribed and organized field notes and interviews by hand, a process known as “hand analysis” (Creswell, 2008, p. 246). This study method resulted in the researcher becoming familiar with the data, its context, study sites, and developing a thorough understanding of the data and information collected. The researcher used a “bottoms up” method for analyzing the data, “the most commonly used approach for qualitative research studies” (Creswell, p. 244). It entails a six-step process that began with developing a general sense of the data by exploring all of the details and the assignment of codes. “The coding process makes sense out of text data by dividing it into text or image segments, labeling the segments with codes, examining the codes for potential overlaps and redundancies, and collapsing codes into broad themes” (Creswell, p. 251). From the analysis and coding of interview transcripts, field notes, observations, reports, and various program materials, key conditions, components and themes of the program initiative emerged.
Program Evaluation Findings

Initiating Conditions

The following events, conditions, and factors emerged as contributing to the initial development of the initiative. “During the 2007 and 2008 school year, conditions in certain Las Vegas, Nevada communities, neighborhoods, and in schools had become violent and threatening,” said LVMPD’s P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012). **The increased threat and rate of violent crimes** and particularly, criminal activity involving CCSD students and juveniles, erupted both on and off school property in nearby neighborhoods. “Certain elementary and high schools within the CCSD had become problematic as the result of a surge in juvenile justice crimes,” (personal communication, P. Finch, May 14, 2012). The increased frequency and severity of violent acts included the use of knives and guns that led to a series of juvenile shootings at local schools, bus stops, and in valley neighborhoods. There was a degree of speculation by some that the CCSDPD lacked sophistication and that “the severity of violence and nature of crimes was too big for CCSDPD to handle on its own” said CCSD, M. Carpenter (personal communication, August 19, 2012). Therefore, the tumultuous conditions required, if not demanded, the LVMPD and CCSD Police Departments to join forces and orchestrate a tactical and strategic plan to combat the surmounting threats and acts of violence.

According to LVMPD’s P. Finch, “the shooting death of a CCSD, Palo Verde High School freshman, athlete and honor roll student was the tipping point” (personal communication, May 14, 2012) that led to a media frenzy and heightened sense of community awareness and concern. This was **the critical incident** that sparked the
creation of the SVI. The shooting death, later determined as a random act of violence, occurred on February 15, 2008 when the student was walking home from school with a group of friends. Two teenagers who were also CCSD students, were charged and subsequently convicted of the murder. Shortly thereafter, LVMPD Sherriff Doug Gillespie reportedly, contacted CCSD Superintendent Walt Rulffes and top school officials that led to a town hall meeting at the LVMPD, Bolden Area Command. There were a host of attendees representing several organizations: the LVMPD, CCSD, CCSDP, Henderson Police Department (HPD), North Las Vegas Police Department (NLVPD), faith-based organizations, chambers, community leaders, and concerned citizens. The increased threat of violence and a rash of recent shootings involving juveniles was at the forefront of the agenda and prompted the key question, “Who is responsible for the safety of the community?” said LVMPD’s P. Finch (personal communication, May 12, 2012). It was at this time the LVMPD joined forces with the CCCDPD and coordinated efforts aimed at improving safety conditions at CCSD schools and surrounding communities by thwarting any further incidents of criminal activity and acts violence.

**Components of the Program**

In the early stages of the SVI’s development, the LVMPD dispatched officers to area CCSD schools considered problematic including adjacent neighborhoods. According to LVMPD’s, P. Neville “some of the more problematic students had become complacent with CSDPD’s presence and aware of how the officers operated, the boundaries of their authority, span of influence and control. As a result, problematic
students had become less concerned and fearful of the CCSD’s police presence than those that carried out their intentions and criminal behavior in nearby neighborhoods outside of CCSDPD jurisdiction” (personal communication, May 14, 2012). In addition to the 

**pairing of officers**, the LVMPD dispatched major **Crime Saturation Teams (CST)** comprised of a large number of LVMPD officers that moved throughout valley schools. Prisoner **Transport Wagons** (Paddy Wagons) were also used as a scare tactic intended to get kids to “beat their feet” according to LVMPD’s P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012). Students were not aware of or accustomed to the level and type of LVMPD officer engagement and involvement. The mere presence of the LVMPD proved effective from the very start and remains a primary component of the program.

“The **sharing of intelligence data** (criminal activity, suspects, criminals, and juvenile violence records) between law enforcement agencies is a primary component of the SVI and essential to the partnership’s overall success,” said LVMPD’s Deputy Chief M. Joseph (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Information sources include, LVMPD Field Commanders and Area Captains, CCSDPD management and officers, fellow law-enforcement partner agencies, CCSD school officials, faculty, students and concerned citizens. Intelligence information provides LVMPD and CCSDPD program and operational managers with a picture of what was happening at area schools. Tasked with evaluating and assessing certain aspects of the SVI, program managers **assessed intelligence data to make deployment and other operational decisions.** For example, “an emerging pattern of racial tension at the end of the 2007/08 school year indicated an increase in racial tension at several CCSD middle schools and particularly, Roosevelt Middle School” according to the LVMPD’s P. Finch (personal communication,
Roosevelt Middle School. At the time, the LVMPD had classified Roosevelt as the most “at risk” school in the entire Clark County school district. During the last week of school, a near riot occurred, involving approximately 150 students. Intel received by LVMPD Area Captains, Bolden Area Command Units, CCSPDD officers, and Las Vegas City Marshalls led to a multi law-enforcement agency response to combat the threat and ensure the safety of all involved. Information sharing in this example helped determine the appropriate law enforcement agencies and number of police officers required at the scene to control the situation. **Key personnel from LVMPD and CCSDPD and members from other law-enforcement agency partners meet on a constant basis.**

“The LVMPD responds immediately to threats against schools and coordinates investigations of those threats,” said LVMPD’s C. Winslow (personal communication, July 3, 2012). According to CCSD’s L. Lopez (personal communication, July 17, 2012), “reliable and accurate information sent to the SNCTC Fusion Center and all agencies sharing information at the same level” is an essential component.

The **Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center (SNCTC)** is the “Watch Station” for intelligence data collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination of important information,” said LVMPD’s LVMPD’s L. Fitts (personal communication, July 24, 2012). Also referred to as the “Fusion Center,” the SNCTC is comprised of 20 different federal, state, and local agencies, an all-crimes and all-hazards fusion center responding to incidents within Clark County, Nevada (see Table 5.2). The SNCTC’s core function is to provide tactical and strategic analytic support to regional stakeholders. In the event of a natural or man-made incident, the tactical analysis section of the Fusion Center
provides LVMPD decision makers, county officials, and area jurisdictions with timely information and availability of assets on a 24/7 watch capability.

In March 2008, in an effort to increase the coordination and sharing of intelligence data, the CCSDPD assigned an Analyst to the SNCTC. The analyst serves as “a dispatcher, responsible for receiving, interpreting, analyzing, and disseminating data via the SNCTC’s Watch Station—the hub of the operation” said CCSDPD’s M. Salazar (personal communication, September 29, 2011).

Table 5.2: SNCTC Partners

| Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department |
| Henderson Police Department |
| North Las Vegas Police Department |
| Clark County School District Police Department |
| Clark County Fire Department |
| Department of Homeland Security |
| Transportation Security Administration |
| Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| City of Las Vegas Fire Department |
| Nevada Department of Public Safety |
| Federal Air Marshalls |
| Silver Shield |
| Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives |
| Boulder City Police Department |
| Las Vegas Emergency Management |
| Nevada National Guard |
| Clark County Marshalls |
| Nevada High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area |
| Clark County District Attorney |
| Las Vegas Convention Authority |
Emergent Themes

In 2008, the LVMPD launched a project, the Policing Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) and joined its law enforcement resources with the CCSDPD.

The Project’s primary objective was to combat increased threats and acts of violence both at area schools and in the surrounding neighborhoods. The Project launched from the LVMPD Bolden Area Command, one of eleven Area Command Units, was strictly operational in nature. The Project resembled a similar multi-agency task force partnership between the LVMPD and U.S. Department of Drug Enforcement. The PASS Project had evolved over the past few years and its name was “morphed” to become the School Violence Initiative according to LVMPD’s J. Smith (personal communication, July 24, 2012). Although the primary objective of ensuring safety and the prevention of violence was relatively unchanged, the initiative has matured.

The LVMPD uses an Intelligence-Based Policing Efforts approach to thwart criminal behavior and ensuing violence. It does so through a combination of intelligence data collection, management, and dissemination of information to partnering agencies. The research study revealed that information concerning school shootings was often available before the incidents occurred. Students, parents, school officials, and the general public often reported useful information; however; police agencies lacked formalized procedures and mechanisms for sharing that information. As a result, resources were sporadic and misplaced which led to less effective responses or wasted resources. There is now an established protocol for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence data to law enforcement agencies, personnel and community-partner agencies.
The **sharing of intelligence data** between the LVMPD and CCSDPD and among officers is both a key component and output of the School Violence Initiative. Prior to the development of the initial Pass program and the ensuing SVI partnership, the lack of, or inability to gather and disseminate, intelligence data hampered law enforcement efforts. In the very beginning, “we were chasing our tails” said LVMPD’s, S. Martinez (personal communication, July 12, 2012). Over time, improved communication efforts between the two agencies and their officers strengthened the partnership. In addition, the sharing of information resulted in “less redundancy of efforts” said, CCSD’s, M. Carpenter (personal communication, August 19, 2012) and subsequently, improved the partnership’s overall effectiveness.

The SNCTC School Intelligence Log (SIL) is a tool used **for recording incoming information to the Watch Station**. It is comprised of rumors, perceived threats, criminal acts, and reports of violence. The CCSDPD Analyst records information received from various law-enforcement agencies, officers, parents, school liaisons, citizens, and students. This information provides LVMPD and CCSDPD Operational Managers with a “picture of what is happening at area schools and also to identify patterns, criminal behavior, and trends” according to LVMPD’s S. Martinez (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Additionally, the SIL is a tool for coordinating law enforcement efforts and an instrument for ensuring accountability. Based on intelligence data received from the Watch Station and SIL, operational and deployment decisions are made. Thus, the SIL contains information from schools, officers, and the community related to possible threats and acts of violence.
Data-driven tactical efforts and strategic planning initiatives have resulted in improved coordination and collaboration efforts. CCSDPD’s, M. Salazar stated “intelligence information in the SIL is rolled up into the SVI Statistical Report and further used to analyze violent acts, identify possible trends, and to create “Core” and “Watch” school lists” (personal communication, August 17, 2012).

Law enforcement agencies use compiled intelligence information to categorize certain CCSD schools as either, Core or Watch. The term Core refers to problematic schools and Watch refers to schools that have the potential to become problematic. Since the data intelligence capacity at the SNCTC permit the analysis of emerging school violence trends based on documented incidents, calls for service across the county, and school district data concerning violent students, the classification of certain schools allows law enforcement agencies to more effectively utilize and deploy resources. Core and Watch school lists are fluid and continually assessed through each school year. At the beginning of the 2011-12 CCSD school years, there were eight schools on the Core list and 11 schools on the Watch list.

The overall concern for the safety and lives of students and thereby the prevention of violence has to remain the number one priority and is required to ensure sustainability of the SVI and LVMDP and CCSDPD partnership. “The mutual concern for safety is a balancing act between the CCSDPD and LVMPD,” said LVMPD’s, J. Smith, (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Although there are unique organizational and operational differences between the two agencies including philosophical points of view, the effectiveness of the SVI and partnership hinges on the primary and mutual concern for the safety of children. A Clark County Juvenile Justice described the relationship
between the two law-enforcement agencies as a “living partnership” (personal communication, April 25, 2012). Therefore, the leadership across the two organizations own responsibility for assuring the LVMPD SVI and CCSDPD partnerships’ continued success.

As stated, **communication** emerged as a key theme of the SVI and LVMPD and CCSDP partnership. Not surprisingly, “the success of the initiative and continued partnership hinges on the access and sharing of accurate, reliable, and real time information,” indicated LVMPD’s S. Martinez (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Whether in the form of verbal or written communication; and obtained via police radio channels, emails, or printed materials such as reports, the sharing of information is imperative to all interested parties. In addition, the sharing of resources: people, equipment, and other forms of gathering Intel improves the ability to effectively plan (both tactically and strategically) and the likelihood of improved preparedness planning and enhancement of coordinated efforts.

In addition to ensuring the sharing of accurate, reliable, and timely communication efforts, the continuous **nurturing of the relationship between the two agencies** is equally important. Relationships are fragile in nature whether between two human beings or two organizations. As organizations evolve and change “so do its leadership, and with leadership, personnel, and with personnel, the vision, the mission, commitments and priorities”, indicated CCSDPD’s L. Lopez (personal communication, July 17, 2012). According to LVMPD’s P. Finch, there was “considerable friction between LVMPD and CCSDP agencies and its officers and also between LVMPD officers and CCSD school site administrators (personal communication, May 14, 2012).
The friction may have stemmed from “philosophical differences,” said LVMPD’s, P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012) and as a result of “turf wars” said LVMPD P. Baldwin (personal communication, July 24, 2012). Therefore, an ongoing effort is needed and often required to ensure **multi-agency shared goals, interest, commitment, and trust** to sustain a partnership.

**Themes on Inhibitors to Sustainability**

Several themes emerged relative to potential inhibitors to the sustainability of the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership. The majority of participants were not familiar with the School Violence Initiative merely by its name. Therefore, responses varied based on the participant’s knowledge of the SVI and familiarity of the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership. Although most participants did not recognize the SVI by name, all were somewhat aware of the LVMPD and CCSDPD collaborative efforts aimed at ensuring the safety of students and the public at large. The researcher determined it was not prudent to list all their responses but rather, to provide insight on the most commonly shared perspectives. In summary, during the SVI’s early stages of development inhibitors included **a lack of communication, understanding, and a wavering degree of mutual support** between the LVMPD and the CCSDPD and respective personnel.

As stated, communication is an essential component and output of the SVI and LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership. “Communication [internally and externally within all agencies] is key and if it does not flow correctly via the School Violence Initiative then the program is limited” said CCSDPD’s, M. Salazar (personal communication, August 17, 2012). Therefore, the collection, analyzing and sharing of intelligence data...
between agencies as well as among officers is imperative to the initiative’s overall effectiveness and sustainment. “Communication however, is both an asset and a liability,” said LVMPD’s J. Smith (personal communication, January 18, 2012). In the initiative’s early stage of development, the building and sharing of intelligence data proved challenging and often ineffectual. “Internal LVMPD departments and units don’t always share their information with fellow officers or with other law enforcement agencies. In some cases, officers are asked to hold on to information, referred to as the domain effect,” said LVMPD’s L. Fitts (personal communication, July 31, 2012).

LVMPD, P. Neville further stated, “In the beginning, there was no vehicle for law enforcement officers and agencies to quickly access data (threats or acts of violence) other than for email which wasn’t quick enough to always be an effective communication tool. A lack of cooperation hampered the sharing of intelligence data between partnering agencies and among internal departments, operating units, jurisdictions, hierarchy, and between work shifts,” said retired LVMPD’s officer, L. Hunt (personal communication, August 5, 2012).

Another inhibitor to sustainability was lack of cooperative efforts. Reportedly, CCSD schools are “controlled by principals and school administrators who do not all share the same level of appreciation or cooperation for the presence and involvement of LVMPD officers on his or their respective campus,” said LVMPD’s L. Stephens (personal communication, July 31, 2012). There is also the issue whereby certain school administrators are “in denial of the potential threat and level of gang and criminal activity on their campuses and have subsequently, decided not to acknowledge, report, or request assistance from LVMPD officers. We don’t have a gang problem here,” said LVMPD’s
L. Fitts (personal communication, July 31, 2012). CCSD school administrators have their own unique characteristics and leadership styles and thereby influence the atmosphere and create the culture at their particular school. Reportedly, there is both a perception and belief by some students, parents, citizens that school administrators manage and direct CCSDPD officers.

**Program Outcomes**

There is shared consensus among participants that *conditions have improved significantly* at area schools and in surrounding neighborhoods that were once threatening and violent. In fact, “there was an immediate decline (plummet) in the rate of violent acts in the first 30-days of the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership,” said LVMPD’s P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012). The LVMPD reported *weapon recoveries of handguns and knives* on and around Clark County, Nevada school campuses *declined* substantially between the 2007-08 and 2010-11 school years. In the absence of school shootings, the reduction of weapon recoveries, and evidence indicating a diffusion of benefits, the SVI has received national and local recognition.

“After some time, LVMPD and CCSDPD officers, and CCSD school administrators began to realize their presence and involvement was actually working,” said LVMPD’s, P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012). According to CCSDPD’s, M. Salazar “…statistics generated by the SVI indicate that the overall rate of violence incidents has decreased” (personal communication, August 17, 2012). In addition, several participants agreed the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership definitely reduced both the threat of and amount of violence in and around schools. There was reported a *decrease in* both the
number of reported juvenile justice crimes and the number of reported acts of violence. To date, there haven’t been any reported school-related shootings since the shooting death of the high school student in 2008. There are improved safety conditions within the Clark County School District.

Serendipitous Findings

Surprisingly, none of the research participants recognized the SVI by its official name with the exception of the program’s gatekeepers. This required the researcher to take a different communication approach and tactic for contacting participants and requesting their participation. Ironically, program gatekeepers identified all of the possible participants, all of whom, reportedly, were notified in advance of the study. One by one, the researcher discovered participants were unfamiliar with the SVI when called by its name; however, all were knowledgeable of the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership. According to one participant, “initiatives come and go and therefore, it’s not at all unusual that people don’t know of them all by name” LVMPD’s, L. Stephens (personal communication, July 31, 2012). This individual further added, “Initiatives lose steam, resources, funding, including a lack of shared knowledge… everyone may have his or her role to play but may not know the name or acronym” (personal communication, July 31, 2012).

A mutual concern for school safety is not the only issue at the center of the LVMPD and CCSDPD working relationship. In addition to combating potential threats and acts of violence at or around schools, there has been an on-going jurisdictional turf war between the two law-enforcement agencies with respect to CCSDPD’s officer authority and span
of control. Recently, the CCSD allowed its school police force to ticket people on the county highways if they observed a law being broken. Nevada Revised Statute 391.275 restricts school-police jurisdiction to the streets that are adjacent to the school property, buildings, and facilities within the school district for the purpose of, issuing traffic citations for violations of traffic laws and ordinances during the times that the school is in session or school-related activities are in progress.

According D. Williams, “In 2011, there were 27,000 referrals to the CCJJC attributed to the increased presence of police in schools,” (personal communication, April 25, 2012). Over the past several years, the rate of referrals has declined which may be as a result, of the LVMPD’s SVI and CCSDPD partnership. However, over the past year, CCSD student enrollment has declined for the first time since 1973. The decrease in the rate of juvenile justice crimes over the past several years in Clark County may not necessarily be the result of the School Violence Initiative. One thing is for certain, “the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership sparked a change in student behavior,” said CCJJC’s D. Williams (personal communication, April 25, 2012). Problematic students at certain CCSD schools had become familiar and thereby, comfortable with CCSDPD officers. Data suggests there may be other factors influencing the decline of violence; the School Violence Initiative has had a positive impact on the overall safety of schools.

Table 5.3 summarizes the conditions, themes, and outcomes that emerged from the program evaluation of the School Violence Initiative.
Figure 5.3: Summary of Conditions, Program Components, Themes and Outcomes – the School Violence Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiating Conditions</th>
<th>Program Components</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Program Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase threat &amp; rate of violent crimes in and around schools</td>
<td>dispatched LVMPD officers to schools</td>
<td>Intelligence-based policing efforts</td>
<td>Overall safety of schools improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat too big for CCSDPD to handle on own</td>
<td>Crime Saturation Teams</td>
<td>Sharing of intelligence data recording information to Watch Station</td>
<td>Decline in reported weapon recoveries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting of H.S. student a critical incident</td>
<td>Visibility of transport wagons at school</td>
<td>analysis of emerging school violence trends</td>
<td>Decrease in reported juvenile justice crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing of intelligence data</td>
<td>Sustainability of program</td>
<td>Decrease in number of reported acts of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of data for deployment or other operational decisions</td>
<td>Importance of communication</td>
<td>No reported school-related shootings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ongoing meetings with partners</td>
<td>Continuous nurturing of partner relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Watch Station (SNCTC)</td>
<td>Multi-agency shared goals, interest, commitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Data Analyst Manager</td>
<td>Shared Trust inhibitors: lack of communication, wavering degree of mutual support</td>
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<td>Lack of cooperative efforts</td>
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CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A perception of imminent danger in the school environment has become commonplace in many U.S. communities, leaving parents, students, school faculty and personnel with a tenuous sense of security. In an effort to ensure the safety of schools, faculty, and students, the CCSD employs its own internal police agency. The Clark County School District Police Department (CCSDPD) utilizes the concept of community oriented policing with sworn School Resource Officers (SROs) responsible for responding to safety related issues and concerns at valley schools. The SRO concept offers an approach aimed at improving school security and thereby, alleviating community fears and concerns. The CCSDPD works in tandem with fellow law enforcement agencies at federal, state, and local levels.

“In the spring of 2008, conditions in certain Clark County communities, neighborhoods, and schools had become violent and threatening,” said LVMPD’s, P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012). Juvenile justice crimes involving the use of deadly weapons (knives and guns) threatened safety conditions at area schools and in nearby neighborhoods. At the time, there were reportedly numerous weapon and gun recoveries taken from juveniles. The increased number of students possessing guns was attributed to a series of school related shootings both on and off school property.

The increased frequency and severity of violent acts prompted the LVMPD to intervene by developing an action plan aimed at combatting the violence and restoring safety in the community. The initial PASS Project, now referred to as the School Violence Initiative, entails a partnership between the LVMPD and the CCSDPD.
According to CCSDPD’s M. Salazar, “this was not the first time the two law enforcement agencies partnered together to combat violence” (personal communication, January 24, 2012). In 1990, M. Salazar recalled an incident in which a CCSD student was killed on school property in response to gang-related issues were the agencies worked together.

This research study is a program evaluation of the LVMPD’s School Violence Initiative and the ensuing CCSDPD partnership. For the purposes of this chapter, the researcher has addressed the findings by combining research questions 2 and 3, and 4 and 5, since the program’s components drive the outputs and sustainability factors and also potential inhibitors of its future success. The chapter also summarizes recommendations made to the School Violence Initiative.

**Discussion of Findings**

**Research Question 1: What events, conditions, and factors contributed to initial development of the LVMPD’s SVI and CCSDPD partnership?**

The primary event leading to the formation of this partnership was the death of Christopher Privitt. According to the SDI Herman Goldstein Award submission, there were nine shootings prior to Chris’s death, either at CCSD schools, bus stops, or surrounding communities. Between February, 2000 and February, 2012 there were twelve shootings that either killed or injured students. There was an air of danger and violence at the schools that now would be identified as Core and Watch schools. High incidences of violent crimes and gang activity were noted. While this was a collaborative program between CCSD, CCSDPD, and the LVMPD, “the school district and district
police department may not necessarily volunteer but rather were ‘voluntold’ by LVMPD officials” said P. Finch (personal communication, May 14, 2012).

In the view of the researcher, the hegemonic nature of the creation of the partnership may inherently have had an impact on its overall effectiveness and sustainability. Some speculated that because the shooting happened in a predominately, white school and community, involving a Caucasian student, in an upper-class neighborhood, Metro decided to take action. Prior to the Privitt shooting there had been other shootings in lower-socioeconomic neighborhoods. The victims were minority students that did not garner the same level of media attention or response. However, rightly or wrongly, the mass media attention that the Privitt shooting garnered served to highlight the violence in schools and called for a response to ensure the safety of the valley’s school children.

**Research Question 2: What are the essential components of the LVMPD’s SVI initiative?**  
**Research Question 3: What are the outputs of the LVMPD/CCSD partnership and how have they affected program modifications?**

“The sharing of intelligence data (criminal activity, suspects, criminals, and juvenile violence records) between law enforcement agencies is a primary component of the SVI and essential to the partnership’s overall success,” said LVMPD’s J. Smith (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Intelligence information provides the LVMPD and CCSDPD program and operational managers with a picture of what was happening at area schools. Tasked with evaluating and assessing these data, program managers make deployment and other operational decisions. Information sharing further assists the appropriate law enforcement agencies and helps determine the number of police officers
required at the scene to control the situation. Key personnel from LVMPD and CCSDPD and members from other law-enforcement agency partners meet on a constant basis. “The LVMPD responds immediately to threats against schools and coordinates investigations of those threats,” said LVMPD’s C. Winslow (personal communication, July 3, 2012). According to CCSD’s L. Lopez (personal communication, July 17, 2012) “reliable and accurate information sent to the SNCTC Fusion Center and all agencies sharing information at the same level is an essential component.”

The SNCTC mentioned is the Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center. It and the CCSDPD analyst are also important components of School Violence Initiative. The analyst, an employee of CCSD, serves as a liaison, which receives, interprets, analyzes, and disseminates the data via the SNCTC’s Watch Station. This component was not in existence prior to the shooting of Christopher Privitt. Once the data is analyzed, a school intelligence log is created which, theoretically, is disseminated to all involved partners. A critical output of the program is the lists that are created from input data of schools that have elements that make them predictive of possible future violence. These lists are called Core Schools and Watch List Schools. They help focus the program to potential problem areas that may require additional resources and interventions.

Research Question 4: What are key factors in sustaining the LVMPD/CCSD partnership? Research Question 5: What initial factors were potential inhibitors of the School Violence Initiative’s development and subsequently, any potential inhibitors in sustaining the partnership?
The very things that make a program like LVMPD SVI and CCSDPD partnership sustainable, shared vision and leadership, communication, continued commitment, and a collaborative effort are also obstacles to its sustainability. The conduit for the programs shared vision and leadership centered on the need for political expediency as a result of the public pressure created by media frenzy surrounding the murder of the CCSD student. Although collaboration may suggest that the entities willingly worked together for a desired end, there were varying opinions as to whether it was a true collaboration. As stated earlier in this document, CCSD and CCSDPD were “voluntold” rather than volunteered by LVMPD officials. Metro, in the interest of ensuring community safety, took required action without necessarily gaining consensus from either CCSD or CCSDPD officials. Yet, collaboration is necessary in order to ensure continued buy-in from respective stakeholders and to ensure the future sustainability of the program.

It is fair to conclude that the LVMPD considered the interests of its constituents and various stakeholders. Although the potential threat and surmounting violence required action be taken, the LVMPD recognized the sensitivity of the situation and the potential impact of the immediacy of its efforts. Therefore, at the time and extent possible, LVMPD officials involved fellow law enforcement agencies, community agencies, and concerned citizens. The perception of stakeholders including school leaders and community members varied. This resulted in a public relations campaign to ensure that the community understood that the LVMPD was there to assist and not to arrest children. “LVMPD’s intent was not to be the bad-guy in the eyes of the community,” LVMPD P. Finch, (personal communication, May14, 2012).
Research Question 6: How has the LVMPD’s SVI and CCSDP partnership affected the overall rate of school violence incidents?

Although none of the study participants recognized the SVI by name, all were aware of the LVMMPD and CCSDPD partnership. Ironically, participants unanimously agreed that conditions in once threatening and problematic schools and nearby communities had since improved. In addition, although there have been numerous weapon recoveries (guns and knives) since the Program’s inception, there have been no further shootings on CCSD buses, bus stops or campuses.

In spite of these results, there is no way to ascertain if the improved conditions, decreased rate of violent acts, or decrease in school shootings were directly attributed to any given component of the School Violence Initiative. One of the false assumptions that the LVMPD made at the inception of the PASS Project, now known as the School Violence Initiative, was to rely too heavily on its Gang Unit. In fact, “the violence was not a gang problem” said LVMPD’s, J. Smith (personal communication, January 18, 2012). Because of the serious nature of the types of dangers and acts of violence this program evaluation clearly supports the idea that schools cannot go it alone but rather, require assistance from federal and local law enforcement agencies.

Comparison of Findings with Previous Research

The concern for safety and the issue of violence are not unique to the CCSD nor are the challenges facing the LVMPD and CCSDPD partnership. The literature supports the underlying premise that safe schools are the concern of communities throughout the world (Rosiak, 2009) and that if children feel safe, students are better able to learn.
The literature on school violence and its prevention is well established (Jimerson and Furlong, 2006). There is also an extensive and varied body of literature on how the community affects individual behavior. Safe schools require broad-based efforts by partners in many sectors of the community, including educators, students, parents, community-based organizations, and law enforcement. Research supports a commonly shared belief that “safe schools are everyone’s business” (Rosiak, 2009, p.1). Schools rely on collaborative relationships with various stakeholders: community agencies and leaders, parents, students, and law enforcement agencies. A common challenge that law enforcement faces in working effectively in schools is identifying leadership that can fosters trust. If trust can be developed among members of a partnership, Effective school-based violence prevention programs show a number of positive effects, including improvements in school achievement.

**Recommendations for the School Violence Initiative**

- Communication is an essential component of the SVI and key to its continued success. Continue with scheduled quarterly meetings as a routine and insist on representation of all partner agencies. There is a shared consensus among all programs for the need for improved communication and information sharing.

- The CCSDPD Analyst position remains a critical position inside the Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center. Program study participants agreed that the Analyst’s role is an important one for ensuring intelligence data gathering, assessment, and dissemination. It is the only role of its kind that strategically relays incoming data received from a variety of sources and disseminates it to the Clark County School District and district police officials.

- The LVMPD should increase its public relations campaign aimed at community, school and student relationship building. Branding is a critical component of program recognition. Consider developing a logo for School Violence Initiative that provides visual recognition of the program.
Use the institutionalizing of the initiative as a means to combat leadership change. Systems and personnel in place aim to ensure the programs continued existence. This includes codifying the initiative’s mission, vision, policy, procedures, and positional authority.

Summary

This study evaluated the School Violence Initiative partnership among the Las Vegas Metro Police Department, the Clark County School District, and its CCSD Police Department. The LVMPD created the School Violence Initiative after the shooting death of a CCSD High School student. In 2007 and 2008, certain Clark County, Nevada communities were threatening due to criminal behavior and violent acts involving students and juveniles. Although the CCSD employs its own internal police agency CCSDPD, violent conditions at certain schools, bus stops, and nearby communities garnered media and community attention forcing the LVMPD to intervene and take immediate action. The two law enforcement agencies joined efforts and paired their resource officers to combat violence and prevent it from re-occurring. The undisputed evidence from this program evaluation is that the School Violence Initiative has united local police agencies and the CCSD to use a team approach to tackle juvenile violence issues impacting the school and the community.

That initial PASS Project has since evolved into the School Violence Initiative and has matured the LVMPD, CCSD, and CCSDPD relationship. The School Violence Initiative’s initial components and outputs remain intact. But, according to LVMPD’s, L. Stephens, “the institutionalizing of an initiative” can be an inhibitor to the School Violence Initiative future sustainability. LVMPD’s L. Stephens points out, “Initiatives lose steam over time often as the result of changes in leadership, objectives, priorities, funding, commitment levels, and appropriate planning.” (personal communication, July
31, 2012). Changes in leadership are quite common in both CCSD schools and the participating law enforcement agencies. It is hoped by this researcher that because of the impact this program has had in increasing the safety of CCSD school children, the community, school system, and law enforcement agencies will not permit the program to “lose steam”.
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