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What We Heard- Executive Summary

The baseline perception of police officers and School Resource Officers (SROs) is almost a balance of positive (41%) and negative (40%) sentiments and 17% of whom are mixed or balanced sentiments.

However, when examined per demographic category, there is an overall negative perception associated with POs/SROs across four demographic groups.

- Almost half of Black student-participants have negative sentiments.
- Sixty three percent (63%) of indigenous participants' sentiments are negative.
- Half of the LGBTQ2S participants' sentiments are negative and
- More than half of the participants who self-identified as someone with a disability have negative sentiments.
- Across four demographic groups, participants reported a high level (or more than 50%) of negative sentiments.

Positive sentiments of Police Officers / SRO include: 1/ intervene/enforce law/justice. 2/ safety / security, 3/ helpful and useful, and 4/ protect, serve. Whereas negative sentiments used the following descriptions to a Police Officer/SRO: 1/racism, profiling, targeting, 2/ fear, 3/ Bias, discrimination, prejudice and 4/ Corrupt / scandal.

With regard the memory or experience of police that has stuck with the student-participants (whether positive or negative experiences), the following are the key findings:

- More than half of the direct experiences happened at school.
- More than half of the direct in school experience are positive. 12 of the 17 positive sentiments stem directly from in-school and other direct experience with an SRO. This positive direct experience must be interpreted with caution.
- Some direct experience stories may in fact be about school, but participants did not explicitly say they happened in school.
- Face to face interaction in school results in students forming positive perceptions of police officers.
- There is a noticeable overlap between the direct and in school experiences given the context of the question.
- While classified as secondary positive themes, these words/themes are mostly direct experience that happened in school and with high frequency.

The student-participants were asked if their personal experiences of SRO align with the SRO roles: build relationships, teach students about crime and safety, conduct school lockdown.

- There is almost an equal number of positive (n=110; 38%) and negative (115, 39.7%) sentiments.
- In terms of the role alignment of School Resource Officers, 84 (51%) expressed alignment with the stipulated roles,
- 66 (n=40%) claimed that their roles are not aligning with building relationships, teaching students about crime and safety and conducting school lockdown drills.

The following are top responses of student-participants to improve building trust, relationships, and visioning of future police engagement in schools with SRO:

- Frequency of SRO presence in school – 2-3 days
- Expectations of the Roles of SROs:
 - More engagement with students
 - Information and education around the consequences of actions, safety and share stories
 - Provide support and reassurance to students in need
- How SRO should behave
 - Connect, talk to and build relationship with students
 - Be nice, friendly, smiling
 - Provide safety and security protection
 - Be casual, informal and relax when talking to students
 - Be polite and respectful.

Project Background and Engagement Overview

Project Background

As part of the Calgary Police Service (CPS) 2020 commitment to anti-Racism. In 2021, the CPS tapped Argyle PR to evaluate the School Resource Officer (SRO Program to determine if students are experiencing equitable outcomes.

In 2022 CPS engaged ActionDignity to conduct student reengagement to dig deeper into inequitable outcomes experienced by students including determining root causes. The results of the engagement will inform a roundtable session with stakeholders to develop an Action Plan to reimagine and transform police presence in schools.

The engagement period started in the middle of July to the middle of December 2023.

Objectives

Specifically, the purpose of the engagement is to:

1. Speak with students from equity seeking communities across Calgary to discuss fear of police, unequal treatment by police and other related issues.
2. Determine root causes where possible to help give context for realistic solutions development.
3. Capture any recommendations for change provided by students during the engagement.

Methodology

Study Design and Strategy:

The issue was researched with a wide range of strategies and techniques appropriate to the sensitivities and abilities of the participants. Racialized and indigenous communities are often described as difficult to engage in research because of the lack of trust.

Study Design. The study used a qualitative design applying key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) or class-facilitated discussion either in person or virtually. The original methodology identified to engage student-participants through an in-person FGD, with a maximum of 10 participants per FGD, facilitated by a trained Community Broker. However, we modified the study design to include participants who preferred one-to-one interviews or having the interviews online.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of study participants as to type of data collection techniques.

Key Variables	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Focus Group Discussion		
In-person	33	14.6
Virtual	126	56.0
Key Informant Interviews		
In person	16	7.1
Virtual	36	16.0
Classroom facilitated	14	6.2
Total	225	100

Table 1 describes that online engagement became the de facto preferred method by most participants (72%). A preference for one-on-one engagement, and full classroom written response, necessitated a slight modification of the focus groups questionnaire into a survey form. A full classroom written response was conducted in one high school (Forest Lawn) with indigenous students under the supervision of the indigenous teaching strategist. This was done during their lunch hour and computer laboratory class. At another high school (*École Ste Marguerite Bourgeoys*), the youth success coach (who knows the participants well) was present to assist with language barrier. These students were 18-year-old thus capable of providing consent.

Study Participants. This consultation engages specifically junior and senior high school students (who are minors) including recently graduated high school students and their families to find out about their perspectives and lived experiences with Calgary Police, in general, and the Student Resource Officers (SROs) who are embedded in various high schools across the city.

A total of 225 student-participants and families participated in the consultation from 23 ethnocultural groups and 81 schools.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of selected demographic variables

Key Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Participants' Grade Level		
Grade 6	4	1.7
Junior High	41	18.2
Senior High	136	60.4
Recently Graduated	30	13.3
Family	14	6.2
Sub-total	225	100.0
Key Demographics of Student-Participants (multiple response)		
Aboriginal / Indigenous / FN / Metis / Inuk	43	20.3
LGBTQ2S	34	16.1
Disability	10	4.7
Note: Total number of students is 211		
Number of ethnocultural groups / ethnicity engaged. Please See Annex 1: List of Ethnocultural Groups)	31	-
Number of schools Represented. Please See Annex 2: List of Schools Represented)	46	-

Table 2 shows that there were 211 student-participants. About 60% are senior high school followed by junior high school (18%) and recently graduated students (13%).

- Twenty (20) percent (n=43) of whom self-identified as indigenous/Metis.
- About 16% of the students self-identified as LGBTQ2S. It is important to note that 44% (n=19) of these indigenous students also self-identified as part of the LGBTQ2S community.
- Also, of the 10 students who self-identified as someone with disability, 8 of whom also self-identified as part of the LGBTQ2S community.

Strategy to engage students. To expand the reach especially among indigenous participants, ActionDignity hired an indigenous community broker who is known and respected by the community and students. It resulted to more indigenous participants from various high schools. ActionDignity also expanded its engagement strategy and recruited five (5) more community connectors from various ethno-cultural groups as well as mobilized other program and project connectors in the recruitment process. A concerted effort was made between the CPS and City staff to connect ActionDignity directly to CBE and CSSD administrators and other nonprofits who are working for youth. This was intended to get access to students within the school grounds and address the parental consent requirement.

Racial trauma support. The CPS and ActionDignity acknowledge that conversations that include racism and related experiences may be traumatic for students who may relieve them by participating in these engagement sessions. Racial trauma support was made available to students, if needed by certified racial trauma council connected to ActionDignity, and a therapist from CPS with working knowledge of racial trauma.

Informed Consent and Community-vetted Consent Form. ActionDignity uses an informed consent process and has developed a participant-friendly, lay-language consent form that would be administered by trained community connectors. It contains the following:

- Purpose of study
- Procedures and risks
- List of physical data collected
- Anticipated benefits for the participant and the community
- Compensation for participation [This is contained in the flyer]
- Privacy and confidentiality of the data collected
- Rights of research participants
- Consent to be contacted by researchers

The recruitment flyer, consent form and questionnaire are often sent ahead and explained to the participants and/or their parents or guardian/s. Honorariums were provided to the participants.

Approach to analysis. This engagement is a qualitative study and used non-random techniques in study participants selection, hence it is not statistically representative. The results cannot be inferred to represent all of Calgary's students. What this analysis brings to the conversation is encapsulating the lived experiences and sentiments of the student-participants into thematic areas.

To prevent misclassification, the research adopted three tiers of thematic coding:

1. A trained encoder identified the themes and encoded these in a database.
2. The Research and Policy Analyst reviewed and reclassified, if need be, the themes; and
3. Together with the Programs and Policy Manager and the Analyst, the themes were again reviewed to avoid misclassification bias.

At the onset, we decided to use qualitative method and include quantitative analysis because of the rich amount of data that have been collected. As stated above, the focus of the research are as follows: a) racialized students from various Calgary high schools and b) the demographics within this grouping to include Blacks, indigenous, LGBTQ2S and students with disability.

It may be helpful to note that this categorization (and succeeding figures and tables) was created to make sense of the data by looking for patterns or recurring themes and then assign a category based on feelings, attributes, experiences that could potentially inform a particular course of action. The overall perception of all participants is compared, to the extent possible, with the perceptions coming from four specific demographic groups: Blacks, indigenous, LGBTQ2S and persons with disability - to recognize and capture

their perceptions and sentiments. We attached value to patterns/sentiments and actively followed them to create structural similarities on a given question and response.

The unit of analysis is the sentiments / experiences expressed by the student-participants. The responses may not necessarily add up to the total number of participants as one student may have two or more sentiments captured as themes. Percentages might not total to 100% due to rounding issues.

Engagement Findings

This section is divided into four parts. Each part represents the four questions that we asked to students:

1. What one word comes to mind when you think about police officers or School Resource Officers?
2. Tell us about a memory or experience of police that has stuck with you (whether positive or negative experiences). What do you want CPS to know about your experience?
3. This is what the SRO program is intended to do:
 - a. Builds relationships with students.
 - b. Teaches students about crime and safety.
 - c. Conducts school lockdown drills.

Purpose: To help all students view CPS as a trusted resource in society

For those that have seen or interacted with police officers in schools, does this role description align with your experience?

- d. Who do you think is, or who do you see benefiting from an officer in your school?
 - e. Who doesn't benefit or is unfairly treated by an officer in your school?
 - f. Why?
4. Building trust, relationships and visioning the future of police engagement in schools

You will see in this report four sections that describe the findings and insights from the students-participants.

Part 1: Baseline Perceptions of the Calgary Police Services (CPS)

Question 1

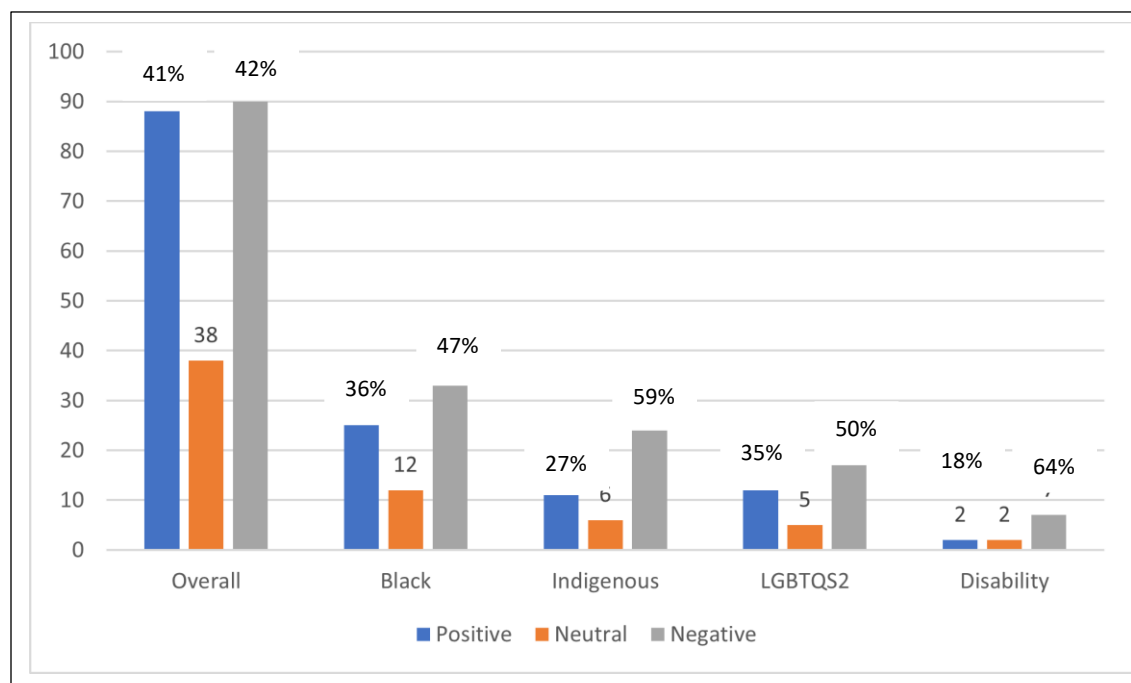
What one word comes to mind when you think about police officers or School Resource Officers?

Responses from this question were organized into high-level sentiments of positive, negative, and neutral in nature, as illustrated in Figure 1. Some respondents did not comment on this question. Each of these sentiments include many nuanced themes which are described below.

While most of the feedback to this question describes situations and qualities of police officers, many respondents also shared their personal feelings and experiences. Some respondents shared a mixed of negative and positive sentiments while others shared only a word in response to the question.

In Figure 1, the baseline perception of police officers and School Resource Officers (SROs) is almost a balance of positive and negative sentiments. However, when examined per demographic category, there is an overall negative perception associated with POs/SROs across four demographic groups (Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+ and with disability).

Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Student-Participants' Perception of Police Officers Per Key Demographic Group.



The overall perception among all participants is a balance of negative (40%) and positive (41%) sentiments and 17% of whom are mixed or balanced sentiments.

- For Black participants, almost half of their sentiments are negative.
- Sixty three percent (63%) of indigenous participants' sentiments are negative.
- On the other hand, half of the LGBTQS2 participants' sentiments are negative and
- more than half of the participants who self-identified as someone with disability are negative.
- Across four demographic groups, participants reported a high level (or more than 50%) of negative sentiments.

Key Thematic Responses for Question 1

Multiple themes from both positive and negative sentiments were commonly mentioned by respondents and these were coded accordingly. All themes below are reported in order of most to least mentioned and positive negative sentiments mentioned in the same frequency are presented side by side.

Table 3 outlines the 51 themes that capture the description of situations, qualities of police officers and participants' feelings. Twenty (20) of these themes are positive (blue), twenty-six (26) are negative and five (5) are neutral. Below are the 14 most frequently mentioned words/themes that earned at least 10 points, ranked from highest to lowest. Interestingly, 4 out of 6 highest themes are positive with above 20 points each. Another notable finding is that there are nine (9) themes describing their personal feelings and out of these, fear comes out with the highest frequency at 20.

Table 3. List and Rank of Words / Descriptions or Qualities of Police Officers / School Resource Officers and Student-participants' Feelings.

Rank	Positive (Frequency)	Negative (Count)
1	Intervene, enforce law, justice (35)	
2	Safety, security (30)	
3	Helpful, useful (23)	
4-6	Protect, serve (20)	
4-6	Racism, profiling, targeting (20)	
4-6	Fear (20)	
7	Bias, discrimination, prejudice (15)	
8	Corrupt, Scandal (14)	
9	Intimidating, look scary (12)	
10-13	Authority, power (11)	
10-13	Generally good (11)	
10-13	Untrustworthy, unpredictable, unreliable (11)	
10-13	Superiority, power trip (11)	
14	Violence, abuse, attack, brutality (10)	

Below are the direct quotes describing the positive sentiments categorized on key thematic areas.

Theme 1: Police Officers / SROs Intervene and Enforce Law/Justice

“A strange man came to school. Police officers were called and apprehended the person.”

Grade 8, Black

“[They] protect people, uphold the law. For example, someone was acting unruly in a restaurant. [The] CPS was called to escort them out.”

Grade 11, Black

“Intervene. When rules are broken [they] make sure no laws are broken, nobody is getting hurt.”

Recent graduate, Latinx

Theme 2: Safety and Security

“SROs are nice [unlike police outside of school], they know what they're doing with kids and approach the situation carefully.”

Grade 12, Black

“When you can open up to a police officer, you feel safe when they're there. At school, a girl felt unsafe. She thought someone was going to kidnap her. [She

was] able to run to school. A police officer was able to help. [He] reacted quickly.”

Grade 9, Black

Theme 3: Police Officers / SROs are Helpful / Useful

“At school there was a horse coming. We were afraid it was going to hurt us. A police officer came and tried to rescue us.”

Grade10, Black

“Problem Solver. [They are trying] to solve problems among people who are discriminated among their families and to make a change in society.”

Grade 12, Black/LGBTQ2S

“Polite. [The] SRO in our school is very talkative caring and careful. Is active in school. Very welcoming; talks to students including myself.”

Grade 12, Southeast Asian (Filipino)

Theme 4: Police Officers / SROs Protect and Serve

“Weapons. [They] always carry weapons, use them to protect civilians. [I] always see police with a gun or weapon and used [them] when necessary.”

Grade 11, Asian

“Protection. It is their job to protect us when we need it.”

Grade 10, Indigenous

Theme 5: Police Officers / SROs are Generally Good

“[The] CPS is good because they put bad people in jail.”

Grade 9, Sudanese

“Justice. When they are in sight, people know that justice will be done but that does not mean it is always good. There have been many instances of bad interaction when the police are involved. [It] depends on your definition of justice.”

Grade 12, Asian

“I feel neutral about police officers - both good and bad. Officers shoot people in the news [but my] personal experience has been good. [They are] there to help you.”

Below are direct quotes describing the negative sentiments based categorized on key thematic areas.

Theme 6: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Racism, Profiling and Targeting

"[I was] watching news [and I] fear of police as racialized people. Something could happen to me, and they wouldn't really care. Being a certain skin colour comes with having the fear that you can potentially lose your life or police won't help because you're not white."

Recent Graduate, Indian

"Sometimes racist. Many indigenous and coloured people have experienced racism from police officers."

Grade 10, Cree

"Racist. They didn't even try to find my native grandpa they just said he was dead."

Grade10, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S

Theme 7: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Fear

"Intimidation. When youth see police officers, they feel fear, intimidated. [They] are powerful because they are the law."

Grade 11, Central Asian (Afghan)

"Danger. Am I in trouble? Did I do something? [These are my] first thoughts when someone sees police officers."

Enock196, Grade 9, Black

"Chaotic. Police have many points of views and honestly, I cannot even tell if I feel safe around them or not. There comes to a point where you either fear them or put your life on them. Some police officers are terrible, and others are just amazing and cool but again, it's either one or the other."

Grade10, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S

Theme 8: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Bias, Discrimination, and Prejudice

"Unfair. I feel like I am judged for being a teenager and for what I look like. From where I grow up...they don't seem to listen to the other side of the story."

Grade11, Metis/LGBTQ2S

"Brutal and discriminative. Police are people who brutally deal with people more so blacks without evidence. They discriminate us because of colour."

Grade 12, Black/LGBTQ2S

"Arrogant, too much pride. [They] don't listen, judge unequally; no attention to detail."

Recent Graduate, Black/LGBTQ2S

Theme 9: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Words like Corrupt and Scandal

"Fear. I have a lot of reasons. My family has dealt with the police and almost every experience was bad. My grandpa used to be abused by police and left out in the snow in the middle of nowhere and I've heard stories from elders. I do not trust them fully. Of course, I do believe there are good ones. Why wouldn't there be? But there's more than enough police that abuse their power and has been given praise for it. They almost have never made me feel safe from childhood."

Grade10, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S/Disability

"Police [if] given authority to do whatever can overuse [their] power."

Hameen14, Grade 11, Black

"Corrupt. I believe that the judicial system is broken, and they be racist."

Indigenous/LGBTQ2S

Theme 10: Police Officers / SROs Look Scary and Intimidating

"Intimidating. Some of the ones I've met were nice but most of them were just mean."

Grade10, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S

"Scary, frightening, afraid, uncomfortable. Because of the way they exercise their authority over people, especially youth."

Grade 11, Black

"Scary. "They look very scary to me."

Grade 11, Latinx

Theme 11: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Superiority and Power Tripping

“Power hungry. Some officers think they can do anything because they are wearing a uniform and carry weapons.”

Grade 12, Indigenous

“Pigs. They are extremely power hungry and don't care about the community.”

Grade 10, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S

Theme 12: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Untrustworthy, Unpredictable, and Unreliable

“Intimidating. I don't know what their intentions are and if they are gonna take her [mother] away. ”

Grade8, Indigenous

“Violence. I've seen or heard or interacted with police hasn't been in a kind loving community type of way.”

Recent graduate, Black

“Not trustworthy. Most people who trust the police live by the rules. If you are native, or has bad background [family history], you will feel like you can't trust them.”

Grade12, Indigenous

Theme 13: Police Officers / SROs are Associated with Violence, Abuse, Attacks and Brutality

“Brutality. Police brutality and how people of color especially black people are being treated. So anytime you think about police as a whole, you think police brutality. Those two go hand in hand.”

Recent Graduate, Nigerian

“Fear. I have a lot of reasons. My family has dealt with the police and almost every experience was bad. My grandpa used to be abused by police and left out in the snow in the middle of nowhere and I've heard stories from elders, I do not trust them fully. Of course, I do believe there are good ones. Why wouldn't there be. But there's more than enough police that abuse their power and has been given praise for it. They almost have never made me feel safe from childhood.”

Grade 8, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S)

The quotes below reflect the neutral sentiments expressed by student-participants.

Theme 14: Police Officer / SROs are Associated with Authority and Power [neutral/mixed sentiment]

"Privileged. They have the power, even if they don't say it directly. They are just above other people."

Grade 12, Filipino

"Scary - frightening, afraid, uncomfortable - because of the way they exercise their authority over people, especially youth."

Grade 11, Nigerian

"Police viewed as badge, gun, taser – are signs of power. People feel fear, overpowered."

Recent Graduate, Indian

Part 2: Root Causes

Question 2: Tell us about a memory or experience of police that has stuck with you (whether positive or negative experiences). What do you want CPS to know about your experience?

Once the overall perception has been mapped out, Question 2 digs deeper into the nuances of those perceptions by finding out from the participant's stories their experience or memory of police officers that influenced their perceptions. This open-ended question elicited responses that are now categorized according to the types of experience. The sub question -- What do you want CPS to know about your experience? -- was intended to give more voice and power to participants to express what they wanted the police officers to know upon telling their stories.

Below are definitions as to the types of experience:

Direct experience – means that a participant has personally experience, has direct participation with or witnessed the event (e.g., participates in lockdown, event witnessed inside the classroom or hallways; event that happened within the family).

Indirect experience – means that a participants' source of sentiment is not personally experienced by them (e.g., Observed).

Little/No experience – means that the participants' sentiment is far removed from their experience or there is none (e.g., heard from secondary source, opinion, social media); and

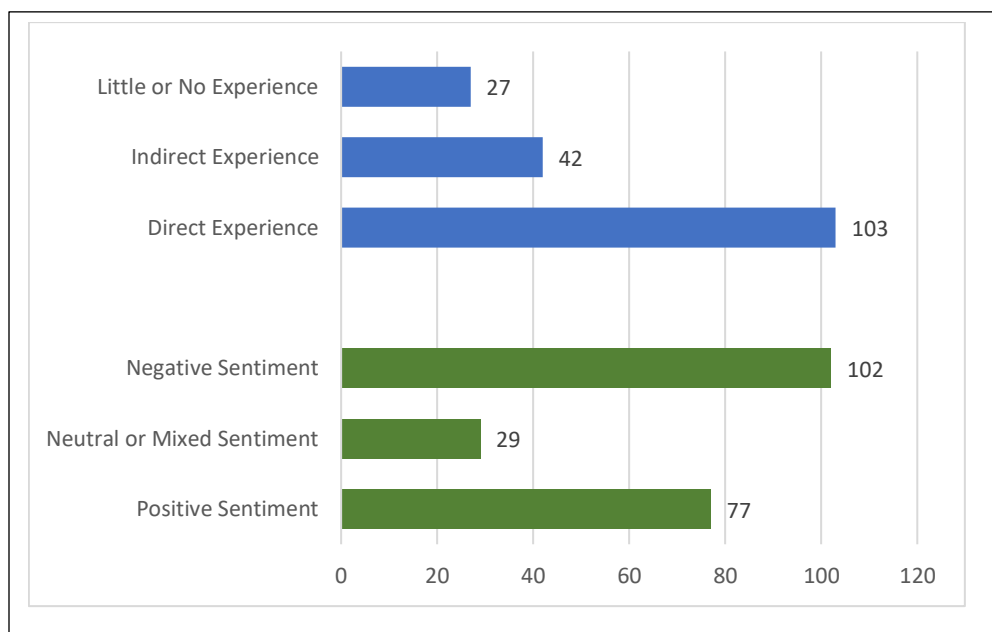
In school experience – means that the experience or event occurred within the school campus or can be inferred from the context of the story that it happened in school.

There are two key graphs presented in this section. It is important to note the differences between Figure 2 versus Figure 3. Figure 2 illustrates the positive-negative sentiments based on overall (in school and outside of school) direct, indirect, and little or no experience sentiments while Figure 3 zeroes in on in-school experiences where there is SRO presence.

Figure 2 shows that 103 (60%) of the expressed sentiments are direct experiences of student-participants. Whereas 42 (24.4%) and 27 (16%) are indirect experiences and little/no experience, respectively.

On the other hand, student-participants expressed a total of 208 negative, positive, or neutral sentiments. Nearly half (49%) of these sentiments (n=102) are negative; 37% (n=77) and 14% (n=29) are positive and neutral/mixed sentiments, respectively.

Figure 2. Percentage and Frequency Distribution of Positive, Neutral, and Negative Sentiments and Direct, Indirect, and Little or No Personal Experience.



2.1 Most mentioned positive and negative sentiments (from all types of experiences)

The table 5 illustrates the positive and negative sentiments ranked from highest to lowest that garnered ten (10) or more counts. Eight (8) out of 13 (thirteen) most mentioned sentiments are positive sentiments.

These sentiments represent both in-school and out-of-school experiences and direct/indirect experiences.

It is observed that most of the negative sentiments specifically on racism, profiling, discrimination, brutality, harassment, or violence were mostly indirect experiences and occurred outside of school. The overall interactions with the student-participants highlighted that their sentiments are formed not just through direct experiences (in-school) but their overall experiences and observations in their family and community including the media.

In-school and direct experiences either positive or negative sentiments are all outlined in Section 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 5. Frequency and Rank of the Overall* Positive and Negative Sentiments.

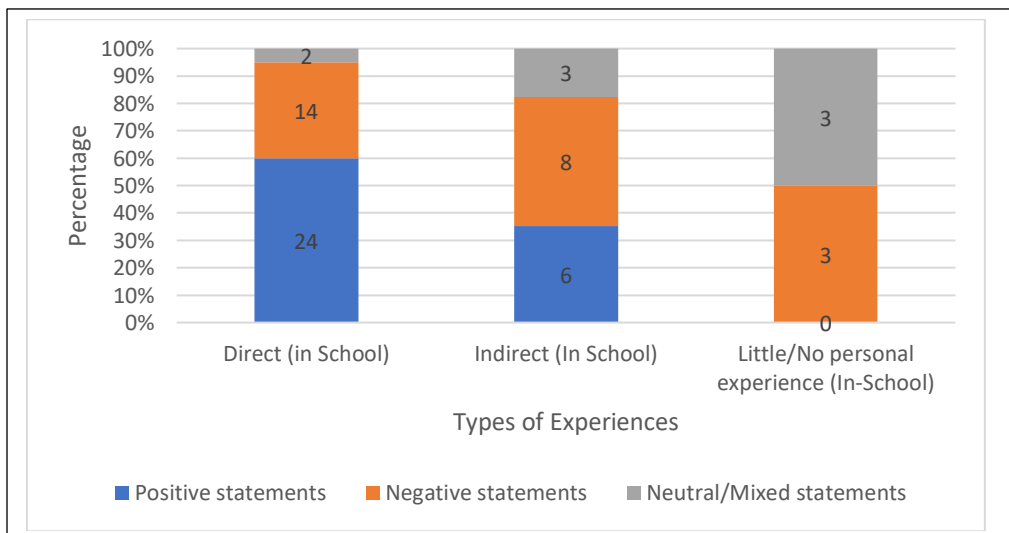
Rank	Positive Sentiments (Count)	Negative Sentiments (Count)
1	Generally good\mixed (32)	
2		Racism, profiling, targeting (24)
3	Helpful, useful, reliable, trustworthy (21)	
4-6	Peace, order, safety, protect, serve (19)	
4-6		Generally bad (19)
4-6		Bias, discrimination, prejudice (19)
7	Nice to kids, friendly, likeable, polite (16)	
8	Educates, hold presentation, conduct lockdown drills (explain, teaches - personal or school-wide) (15)	
9-10	Enforce law, justice, fair (13)	
9-10		Harass, interrogate, instigate, mistreat, insult (13)
11-12	Connects, talks, builds relationships (12)	
11-12		Violence, abuse, attack, brutality (12)
13	Caring, careful, empathetic, kind (emotional – more depth than nice, friendly...) (11)	

*Includes in-school and out of school direct, indirect or no experience sentiments.

2.2 Breakdown of Sentiments from Student-Participants with Direct and In-School Experiences

Figure 3 shows that 60% (n=24) of direct and in school sentiments are positive. Only 35% (n=14) are negative sentiments. Whereas for indirect and in school, 47% (n=8) are negative sentiments followed closely by 35.3% (n=6) positive sentiments. None of the student-participants with little/no personal experience in school expressed any positive sentiments. This group of sentiment had 50% each negative and neutral statements.

Figure 3. Percent and Frequency distribution of positive, negative, and neutral/mixed sentiments based on direct, indirect and little/no personal experiences in school.



Below are direct quotes to help illustrate the direct experiences that happened in school both negative and positive sentiments.

2.2.1 Primary Positive Sentiments from In School and Direct Experiences.

The following are sentiments that were frequently mentioned by students when sharing about their **positive, in-school, and direct experiences**:

Theme 1: School Police Officers Connect, Talk, and Build Relationships with Students

"[Our] SRO interacted with students a lot. At Western, they set up a room each week with food."

Grade12, Filipino

"My only experience is I see like, my school police officers because we have a police officer at our school. [He is] super nice, just talks, nice to the students and interacts with us. He has gotten to know about us - he's got time to know us."

Grade 11, Black

Theme 2: SPOs are Interactive and Involved

"[He would] start conversations, small talk about events, news and trying to gather [students] to come outside. [It was a] good experience."

Recent graduate, Punjabi

"In Grade 1, a classmate's dad was a police officer. He showed the class the equipment he used and gave us donuts. Another classmate was scared. The police officer told her that he is a nice, safe guy and that a police officer will protect you."

Grade7, Black

Theme 3: SPOs are Supportive, Reassuring, and Calming

"[We] have a white female SRO. There was a conflict at school – a student stabbed another student with a knife. [Those who] witnessed the incident were traumatized. [Our] SRO who is usually present 3 days a week, took eyewitness statements. She said she was there for them if they had any feelings [and to provide] support system."

Grade 11, South Asian

“Police came to classrooms with massive weapons around them looking for a student. [We were] scared. Police officer said everything will be fine. I felt reassured, safer. I trusted them.”

Grade 11, Asian

Theme 4: SROs are Involved in the Community

“I was cold while walking outside. A police officer gave me a ride home and bought me coffee. I felt comfortable and safe.”

Grade 11, Black

Theme 5. SROs are Nice to Kids, Friendly, Likeable, and Polite

“[Our] current SRO is easy to talk to, has relationships with students and feels like a friend.”

Grade 11, South Asian

“One police officer in my school was passing out snacks and saying hi to everyone, and everyone liked him.”

Grade 10, Black

Theme 6: SROs Educate, Hold Presentations, Conduct Lockdown Drills

“There was a police officer who came to my class for lockdown drills. My experience was good. I don't have any problem. I think of them as helpful people who keep people safe, friendly, and help civilians.”

Grade 7, Chinese

“While in Grade 6, there was a group chat with all the students in his grade. A classmate with an anonymous account committed cyberbullying of some of the students. The principal found out, told them not to do it but kept happening until police officers showed up. The CPS did a presentation about cyberbullying.”

Grade 7, Black

“We have lockdown drills. We are scared of intruders but when police officers come, we feel safe. We still want them to leave the school though. We don't feel 100% safe even with police officers, but I trust the police, so I believe that when they're there, they came for a reason. They know what they are doing. They will help us.”

Grade 9, Black

Theme 7: SROs are Professional.

Quotes:

"[I do not have] much personal experience but once, a fight broke out at school. A police officer asked questions. It was my first time talking to an officer. I told the truth. I felt scared but understood they were doing their job. [It was the] right thing to do."

Recent graduate, Black

"A kid was cut with a knife. Police was called. The conversation with the police was cordial. The offender was charged in court. The police that escorted him to the station made the kid comfortable. So, the way they handled the case outside the school premises was impressive."

Nifise268, Grade 11, Black

2.2.2 Primary Negative Sentiments from In School and Direct Experiences.

The following are quotes frequently mentioned by students when sharing about their **negative, in-school, and direct experiences**:

Theme 1: SROs Conduct Random Search (No Consent) i.e., locker.

"In school, police have wrongfully searched students and without an adult present. It can happen often in catholic schools. Nothing has been said or done about it, and students are too scared to bring it up to parents. There may be fear that the parents have to side with school and police to avoid the students being suspended or expelled."

I just feel like genuinely it makes people feel uncomfortable and not safe. Like your school is supposed to be like a second home because you are there more than your home on a normal day. The school police are supposed to keep you safe and everything yet they're mistreating you just makes you feel sad you just don't trust the system like you don't trust anyone at the school. And it's like you don't have anyone who's going to support when they take your bags because we don't have a teacher who is racialized, a teacher of color who will be able to understand the experience."

Recent Graduate, Black

"In Grade 7, one student was accused of possessing bear spray. Rumors spread and there was a locker check. [I] felt there was a breach of privacy without their

consent. [It] robs students the wrong way. Procedures should have been handled better because it created a negative memory."

Grade 12, Filipino

Theme 2: General bad

"I remember a time the police broke in through my back door because they thought we had drugs, but it was actually our downstairs neighbours, crazy right? It was kind of funny in my opinion."

Grade10, Indigenous/LGBTQ2S

"There was basketball game. The score keeper was a volunteer. Her brother was just hanging around. Teacher bought pizza for volunteers. Score keeper gave the box of pizza (with a few slices left) to her brother. Teacher got mad and called PO. Teacher escalated the situation by calling the PO. PO took her off campus even though there is no reason to do so. She was not a direct threat.

The students watching the spectacle were uncomfortable. They will not take law enforcement seriously. There was no respect for PO after that. [Authorities should not] be harsh to students. [They should be] be patient instead. Calling POs right away makes her a bad kid. There should be a restorative way of handling conflict, not aggressive."

Recent Graduate, Black

Theme 3: SROs Harass, Interrogate, Instigate, Mistreat, and Insult Students.

"Teacher suspected his classmates wanted to set the school on fire, called CPS - only Black students were interrogated, harassed."

Recent Graduate, Black & LGBTQ2S

"I had a toy gun at school - my friends reported me to the teacher, who called the police - harassed (by PO) because of my colour - not given the chance to explain myself - this really lowered by self esteem."

Recent graduate, Black and LGBTQS

Theme 4: SROs are Bias and Discriminating

"I was mentioned among students who were planning arson in school. When the school presented us before police black students were isolated and labelled as architects of the plans. We were not given a fair hearing because of our colour we were brutally harassed and forced to accept that we were the ones with the idea which was a mere allegation labelled to us."

Recent graduate, Black and LGBTQ

“Black students’ bags and lockers searched without another adult present and without warrant or consent. Black kids too scared to talk to parents due to fear of suspension or expulsion.”

Recent graduate, Black

“I was stopped for a search - I asked why - the answer I got was that racialized people are suspicious at all levels.”

Grade 12, LGBTQ2S Disability

Theme 5: Poor Engagement and Judgment

“When I was racially abused and reported to some of policemen in school, instead of offering assistance he inflicted more pain to me and abused me. That was my word experience I cried. My self esteem was low.”

(Grade, Ethnicity) Hassan

Part 3: Current Program Assessment

Question 3: This is what the SRO program is intended to do:

- Builds relationships with students.
- Teaches students about crime and safety.
- Conducts school lockdown drills.
- Purpose: To help all students view CPS as a trusted resource in society

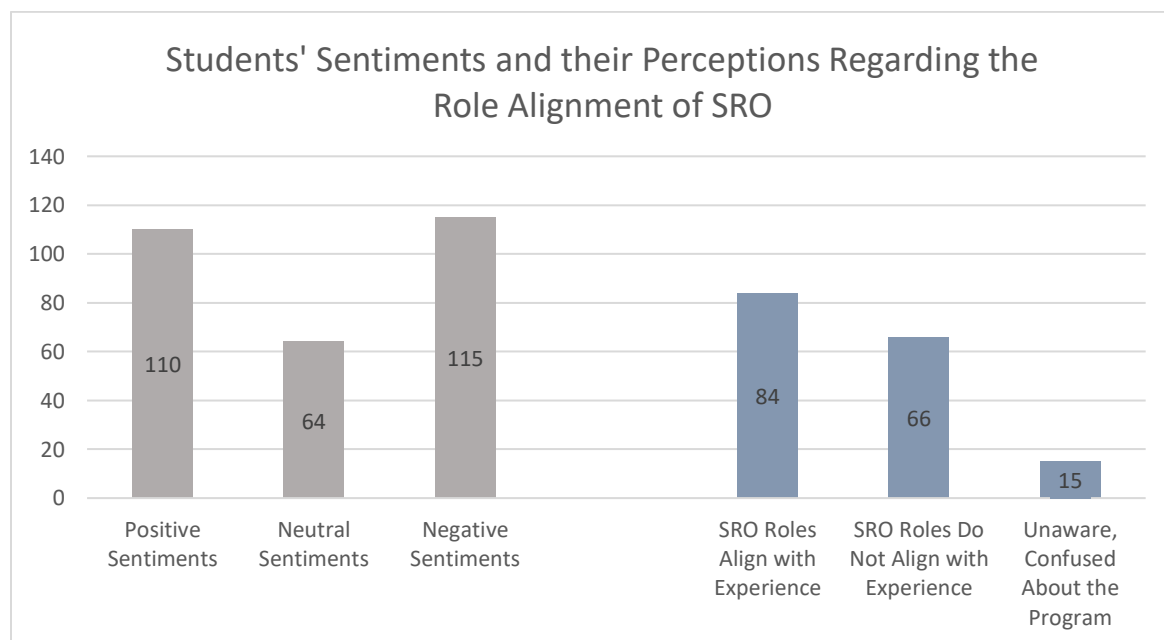
For those that have seen or interacted with police officers in schools, does this role description align with your experience?

- Who do you think is, or who do you see benefiting from an officer in your school?
- Who doesn't benefit or is unfairly treated by an officer in your school?
- Why?

Figure 4 illustrates two key variables: positive, neutral, and negative sentiments and the perceived role alignment of Student Resource Officers. There is almost an equal number of positive (n=110; 38%) and negative (115, 39.7%) sentiments.

In terms of the role alignment of School Resource Officers, 84 (51%) expressed alignment with the stipulated roles, and 66 (n=40%) claimed that their roles are not aligning with building relationships, teaching students about crime and safety and conducting school lockdown drills.

Figure 4. Frequency distribution of student-participants' sentiments and their perceptions regarding the role alignment of SRO.



Some of the student-participants expressed who benefits having SRO. The question generated 62 sentiments of which 27% (n=17) pertains to benefiting all or benefitting only the principal and teachers. Only 15% (n=9) of the sentiments are relating to benefitting racialized, indigenous, black, or bullied and weak kinds. Whereas 16% (n=10) also claimed that white kids benefit from the SRO.

Table 6. Percentage distribution of perceptions regarding the benefits of having SRO (n=62 sentiments)

Key Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Benefits all	17	27
Benefits to specific groups		
Benefits principal and teachers	17	27
Benefits white kids	10	16
Benefits racialized, Indigenous, Black, and bullied kids	9	15
Unclear Benefit	9	15
Total	62	100

Part 4: Building Trust and Positive Relationships

Question 4: Building trust, relationships and visioning the future of police engagement in schools:

- **How might police officers build trust and relationships with students when they come to your school?**
 - **What would you expect for frequency of officer visitation?**
 - **What would the interaction between you and the officer look like?**
 - **How should they act, how should they talk to you, etc.**
 - **What role should police play in your school?**
 - **What support do you want from this police officer?**
-

This section outlines the key responses of student-participants on the students' expectations of the roles of SROs and recommendations on how SRO should behave.

The table below represents multiple responses.

When asked what the roles expected of SROs, the student-participants identified the top three roles: more engagement, information and education and support to students in need.

Table 7. Top Recommendations of Student-participants to Build Trust and Expectations of SROs Roles in School.

Top Students' Expectations of the Roles of SROs	Frequency
More engagement with students	67
Information and education around the consequences of actions, safety and share stories	42
Provide supports and reassurance to students in need	19
Intervene / enforce rules and justice	18
Act like a teacher / counsellor / parent or guardian	18
Visit classes / conduct workshops / fund and physical activities	15
Crime prevention	16
Do not interrogate or be confrontational or intimidating	15
Serve as a role model to students	13
Community involvement	13

As regard to the question on how SRO should behave, the student-participants expressed the need for the SRO to connect and build relationship, to be nice and friendly and provide safety ad security as top three (3) answers (Table 8).

Table 8. Top Recommendations of Student-participants on How SRO should Behave.

Top Recommendations on How SRO Should Behave	
Connect, talk to, and build relationship with students	62
Be nice, friendly, smiling	55
Provide safety and security protection	46
Be casual, informal and relax when talking to students	35
Be polite and respectful	34
Be approachable	27
Be understanding, nuanced, patient	24
Fair and unbiased when it comes to race and SES	23
Dependable and reliable	22
Calm	20
Be open minded / listens / reasonable	19
Positive demeanor	18
Caring, empathetic and kind	15

The student participants also indicated the preference of SROs' to be in school only 2-3 days in a week or only during crisis or danger situations (See Table 9).

Table 9. Top Recommendations as to Frequency of SRO's Presence in School

	Frequency
Top students' responses regarding the frequency of SRO presence in school	
2-3 days	24
Only on crisis / danger situation / lockdown drills	19
1-2 days a Month	9
Once a week	8

Part 5: Facilitators' Observations

There were 5 community connectors hired to support the engagement process, most of whom were youth themselves. Later in the process, they were complimented with five others coming from ActionDignity's various programs to help recruit student participants from other ethno-cultural groups and hard to reach target participants. The connectors' exposure to the project ranged from 15 hours up to about 200 hours for those who were hired from July to December. There were 5 connectors and 2 ActionDignity staff who were able to provide input in this section.

Staff and connectors felt that the overall engagement with students generated a wealth of knowledge and insights not just for the SRO program but in understanding working with or for, youth. They believed the initiative led by the Calgary Police Service in partnership with Action Dignity had effectively resulted in a large data set of valuable information informing policymakers, school board administration, city councillors, and all other overarching decision-making positions about the efficacy and the current impact of the Student Resource Officer Program.

It is rewarding as what the indigenous broker has shared, "Working with the youth is always a big satisfaction for me as I love to see them succeed and helping them or just giving them voices where they feel unheard is a reward in itself. I believe everyone needs to feel heard, otherwise, they are left feeling unimportant."

Connectors noted the participants' overall willingness to be heard and be a part of the SRO project. While some youths (and parents) were hesitant to participate, the assurance of anonymity and the continuing consent provided made them more comfortable to share their insights and experiences. The presence and/or the availability of a trauma specialist signaled the Project considered the best interest of the participants.

In terms of recruiting and engaging participants through various means, including their personal and community connections, some connectors credited their success of deeper engagements because as one broker would put it, "having a relationship with them made it easier for them to talk to me". Engaging indigenous participants can be so challenging. The indigenous broker thinks "the delivery method of this program is great especially in finding people of the same ethnicity to conduct the surveys with the youth". Another broker cautioned it may skew the analysis of information due to a lack of randomness. It was, however, clarified that the sampling was not meant to be representative of the entire student population in Calgary.

Connectors and staff also noted many participants (and teachers) appreciated the efforts going towards recognizing and honoring their time and input through the flexibility and variety of the engagement methodology - online, in-person, one-on-one or full classroom engagement - to meet them where they are as well as the small financial incentive and even food. Connectors also expressed their joy, satisfaction, and the opportunity of engaging participants in both group and individual settings. One broker remarked,

"The participants shared their different experiences with the police - good and healthy stories, neutral encounters, and some bad experiences from their perspective. There were a lot of lessons through the group interviews conducted via zoom. As one person opened to share their stories with confidence, others got encouraged to share theirs too."

Another thinks, the SRO Project is “a unique project creating a platform for youth to express themselves and through it they shared their experiences with the police both inside and outside the school premises. In some cases, the damages it caused them, and the bad taste left in their mouth”.

Another broker observed the research structure of the focus group discussion, and the design has confidently provided a window and insight into the feelings and experience of students. The wording and overall vernacular of the questions has not caused any issues regarding the students’ ability to comprehensively answer each question. This came with a caveat on the merits of online versus in-person engagement. Most connectors believed an in-person engagement was a lot more informative and beneficial. Some have strong opinions based on their engagement experiences about the value of an in-person engagement (while recognizing the various challenges such as the pandemic not being over, many participants themselves preferred the online format). One broker expressed, “Through my personal observation, focus group discussions that were held online through any available platform were visibly weaker in their efficacy for producing meaningful and deep conversations. Participants are noticeably disengaged from online focus group discussions.

Conclusions

When examining the data generated from the engagement, it is important to note the context and question behind each response. Some questions were less structured, whereas some questions prompted a more positive or negative response.

General findings and conclusions:

1. Students generally feel positive about being protected in crisis situations.

Many students do not want the SRO to be a daily presence. On the negative spectrum, at best, they feel that the SRO's presence is intimidating and disruptive to the environment. This is especially true if the SRO is armed. At worst, they feel that the SRO will harass, interrogate, or otherwise discriminate against them. This perception is shaped either by general anxiety, caution, fear, and worry or past experiences.

There are two common perceptions seemingly contradicting the above perceptions: a) the SRO should be accessible to respond to crisis situations in a timely manner, and b) the SRO should be interacting with students to build relationships and foster trust.

These seemingly contradictory perceptions are not actually mutually exclusive. Data from participants' engagement has shown that, although racialized students have high negative perception of the police or the SROs, students will appreciate their presence more if they are actively involved in a positive relationship with students. This is illustrated by high positive sentiments when participants have direct interactions with SROs. More importantly, the SRO program needs to equitably support racialized students- especially those from African and indigenous backgrounds.

It is important to note the SRO should be present to regularly interact with students. This response was cultivated in response to the question, "How might police officers build trust with students when they come to your school?" This response rarely occurred naturally without being evoked.

Overall, participants' feelings about police officers' duty to protect and serve (i.e., provide peace, protection, order, safety, security, and intervention) is not mutually exclusive to their feelings of anxiety, caution, worry, and fear. Rather, the personal experience of respondents has created doubt with respect to their acceptance of the police officers' oath to do no harm, not in police officers' ability to fulfill their basic role. Students are confident in the SRO's ability to intervene in crisis situations. They believe police officers have the authority and duty to protect them, and they will not be the target of any potential mistreatment if there is a more significant event at hand.

The CPS may look at the data significantly mentioning peace, protection, order, safety, security, and intervention as a signal to direct focus towards **preventing and responding** to crisis situations. However, the students' engagement clearly shows that they are already confident in the CPS' ability to protect and serve. The CPS through the SRO Program has a huge opportunity to continue building these relationships and trust with students and community at large, such that the community and CPS are in collaboration, which would lead to a more cohesive and impactful meaning of "to protect and serve."

2. Many participants cited social media and news as well as stories from elders as factors that have contributed to their (negative) perceptions of police officers.

These negative perceptions may seem unfair, it is important to acknowledge that to resolve these perceptions, police officers must demonstrate ‘goodness’ or to be **true to its professed role in protecting** such that civilians will have faith in police officers. This is seen in the data from certain apprehensive students with negative personal experiences or negative perceptions in general who have experienced an improved perception or hope to have the opportunity to improve their perception. It should not be understated how aware students are of bias, prejudice, and discrimination exist within the police force.

3. Many student-participants want support not typically offered by police officers that are more reminiscent of social supports (i.e., areas of psychology and social work).

Expecting SROs to fill this need may be a bit too much. This suggests that a) resources may be better directed toward these services than wholly toward police services in schools or b) that a better coordination, clarity in the delineation and overlaps of roles between school administration and SROs.

Furthermore, participants mentioned trusting and relying on their counsellors and teachers. In a classic school structure without SROs, the principal and teachers are regarded with the highest authority. Even then, a significant amount of their interactions with students does not involve authoritative acts. Faculty may participate in pep rallies, dress up for holidays and theme days, and have friendly conversations with students both during and outside of class time. SROs may look to student-teacher interactions to identify strategies for building relationships and fostering trust.

Teachers are clothed with the same responsibility as a parent and exposed them to the same liability for a child’s wellbeing. The doctrine loco parentis or “in place of a parent” meant that a teachers must act in the manner of a reasonable and prudent parent. The CPS or SROs do not adhere to this kind of responsibility within school grounds thus can potentially become problematic when exercising their authority over and dealing with students with issues or who are deemed “problematic”.

A clear transparent CBE-CPS-SRO guideline or agreement to be in place is important.

4. Some participants critiqued the placement process for SROs.

One notable suggestion shared by a couple of students was to ensure that the SRO wanted to work at a school, particularly with students (youth). Ideas to facilitate this included police officers choosing to be SROs on a voluntary basis. Others mentioned that, regardless of the SRO's personal desire to work at a school, they should be prepared to interact with students in a way that is specifically considerate of their age.

Other related issues that were mentioned were to have background checks, ensure SROs were anti-Racist, and hire more SROs that are representative of the student population (i.e., ethnicity/race, gender). Overall, the SRO Programming and any collaboration involving youth should intentionally consider young peoples' perspectives for these to be relevant and meaningful for them.

5. Questions about transparency of the SRO Program.

As mentioned above, a CBE/CSSD Agreement would be ideal. Since starting this student engagement in July 2022, staff and connectors have been wondering how and where SROs are they stationed. And why are they stationed there? Feedbacks from participants rendered an inconsistent picture about what SROs do specifically. It is unclear what outcomes and changes are expected from this program.

6. Unique experiences from indigenous and Black participants

Indigenous participants were more assertive about wanting to be left alone regarding SROs. They are specifically assertive in that this response was procured even to the clear and directly suggestive prompt, "How might police officers build trust and relationships with students when they come to your school?" This is notable, seemingly as many Indigenous participants are also more likely to have a personal negative experience with police officers. Intergenerational traumas are evident in many of their anecdotes. This is very consistent with the data showing their very limited direct interaction, albeit positive, with SROs.

One striking observation was about the coping mechanisms of participants who alleged and experienced discrimination, racism, and trauma. They avoided or ignored police/SROs or laugh about a negative experience as something that has become an ordinary part of their lives. One Black participant shared, "I avoid SROs at all costs". An indigenous participant stressed, "I want to be left alone." while another was laughed when narrating about police officers mistakenly bashed at their door during a drug operation.

7. SROs to serve as role models.

Students value receiving advice, guidance, support, and education from SROs and SRO to be not "just there" or as one student would put it, an "NPC" or non playable character in video games. The emphasis is on active and positive involvement or engagement when on campus which will not require additional resources from the program. A major theme that emerged during the participant engagement was the need for an improvement on the soft social skills for Student Resource Officers.

Some anecdotal observation from community connectors/engagement facilitators relate to the intersection of race/ethnic background, class, and gender and have influenced their participation and perceptions of police. Examples of these observations are:

Participants in the SW or NW were less frightened by the police and participants who had bad experiences with the police were more reluctant to answer the questions.

A female identifying youth had better interactions with their SRO over the male identifying youth.

An LGBTQ2S Caucasian youth with a visible disability had a more positive experience than a BIPOC youth that interacts with an SRO.

Many participants of African and indigenous background have expressly stated that they avoid police or SROs most of the time.

8. Some participants shared their hardships as students.

One almost dropped out of school; still living through the trauma and frustrations with police officer; how they how they want to perceive police office after this research. One powerful statement from one or two participants was summed up this way, "Our physical bodies are not a threat to anyone - we are just being kids" who want to be treated with respect and be given equal opportunities.

Recommendations

Focus Area 1: Comprehensive training for core capacities of SROs

Focus Area 2: Relationship building is an essential part of SRO. Relationship building takes time and needs to be funded and supported accordingly.

Focus Area 3: Transparency of SRO Program

Focus Area 4: Changes to the SRO Program will not be effective if made in isolation. SRO Program should be implemented as part of a broader anti-racism strategies.

Other Concerns: (Recommendations) that may or may not be the domain of the SRO program should be considered if we are going to address the root causes of issues holistically and intersectionally.

Address sexual assault/harassment claims of students

Training of SRO in working with kids especially racialized and indigenous youth and involve community. Training o include de-escalation techniques.

Violence or abuse

Rehabilitative justice not punitive justice

Start SRO Programs or activities at grade level

Reduced uniform; no guns in schools; carry a taser or baton only

Some thoughts:

Protocols within the school grounds. (Who has authority within the school grounds: SRO or teachers?)

Transparency, purpose of program (8),) Is it known? What outcomes and changes are expected from this program?

Intentional anti-Racism initiatives (6)

Appendix

Annex 1: List of 31 Ethnocultural Groups (As self-identified by the Participants)

Afghan
African Canadian
African/Indigenous
Asian
Bengali
Black
Black/African American
Black/African Canadian
Black/White
Canadian
Chinese
Colombian
Egyptian
Ethiopian
Eritrean
Filipino
Indian (East)
Indigenous
Lebanese
Metis
Mexican
Nigerian
Pakistani
Punjabi
South Asian
Sri Lankan
Sudanese
Sudanese (South)
Vietnamese
Vietnamese/White
White

Annex 2: List of 46 Schools

All Saints	ED
Almadina Language Charter Academy	Ernest Manning
Annie Gale	FA
Balmoral	Father Lacombe
Balmoral Junior	FE Osborne
Bishop Grandin	FFCA South Middle School
Bishop McNally	Forest Lawn
Bishop O'Byrne	Glenmore Christian Academy
Bishop Pinkham	Grant McEwan
Blessed Marie-Rose	Griffith Woods
Bob Edwards	H.D. Cartwright
Bowness	Heritage Christian Academy
Branton School	Jack James
Calgary Academy	James Fowler
Captain Nicola Goddard	Joanne Cardinal-Schubert
Centennial	John G. Diefenbaker
Central Memorial	Lester B. Pearson
Chestermere Lake	Lord Beaverbrook
Crescent Heights	Louis Dean
Crossing Park	Nelson Mandela
Discovering Choices	North Point
Dr. E.P. Scarlett	Northcott Prairie
Dr. Gordon Higgins	Notre Dame