

## **Contexts and Dynamics of School Violence**

**Contexts and Dynamics of School Violence: A Multi-Method Investigation in an  
Ontario Urban Setting**

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## **Abstract**

The issue of bullying, among school age children, has been popularized by North American news media. These media frame bullying as a violent epidemic plaguing our schools, resulting in school officials implementing new anti-violence intervention and prevention programs. However, popular media and school administrators often do not rely on research with consistent definitions for bullying behavior to inform these changes. As a result, the term bullying has become quite ubiquitous, conflating bullying behavior with other forms of youth violence. My research aims to delineate the contextual influences for youth violence and the types of violence youth engage in. I argue that sociology can contribute to the study of bullying by elaborating on the roles of three kinds of contexts: immediate networks, neighborhoods and micro-geographies, and status situations. Further, gender can also be a consistent conditioning influence on those contextual effects. This study utilizes a multi-method approach to better understand the contexts and dynamics of youth violence. My quantitative component uses data from systematic social observations of all Hamilton public school neighborhoods, Hamilton Safe School Surveys and the 2006 national census. These methods build on different contexts for youth violence. While the survey findings used in the quantitative portion of this thesis examine broad contextual influences, my qualitative interviews develop micro-geographic contexts for youth violence. Using these data sources, I found significant relationships between gender, age, physical disorder and types of violence used by students. My qualitative component used interviews conducted with fifteen Hamilton youth from a variety of different neighbourhood backgrounds to understand youth's social dynamics in different kinds of violence. I found dynamics that were consistent with

the types of in-school violence described by Randall Collins (2008, 2011) and different types for violence used by male and female students for similar social ends. It is my hope that these findings can be used to better inform violence intervention and prevention policies within Ontario schools.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.1 Today’s Images of School Bullying	1
1.2 Research Questions	3
1.3 Sociological Contexts	4
1.4 Settings	5
1.5 Dynamics	9
1.6 Gender	10
1.7 Methodologies	11
<b>Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Interpersonal Youth Violence</b>	
2.1 The Contexts and Dynamics of Violence	14
2.2 Settings	16
2.3 Gendered Environments	18
2.4 Gendered Bullying	21
2.5 Micro Contexts	22
2.6 Dynamics	24
2.6a Boasting	24
2.6b Bluster	26
2.6c Audience Effect	27
2.7 Types of Violence	28
2.7a Peer-to-Peer Honour Contests	29
2.7b Intergroup Fights	30
2.7c Scapegoating	31
2.7d Bullying	32
2.7e Cyber Bullying	33
2.8 Status	36
<b>Chapter 3 – Methodology</b>	
3.1 Quantitative Data Collection	37
3.2 Constructing a School Level Data Set	40
3.3 Construction of Scales	40
3.4 Dependent Variables	42
3.5 Independent Variables	42
3.6 Qualitative Methodology	47
<b>Chapter 4 – Quantitative Data Analysis</b>	
4.1 Contexts and Questions	50

4.2 Answering Research Questions	72
4.2a Context	72
<b>Chapter 5 – Qualitative Data Analysis</b>	
5.1 Dynamics and Questions	76
5.2 Descriptions of Accounts	77
5.3 Types of Violence	31
5.3a Peer-to-Peer Honour Contests	31
5.3b Group Fights	37
5.3c Scapegoating	39
5.3 d Bullying	91
5.4 The Role of Status	95
5.5 Confrontational Tension and Fear	99
5.6 Forward Panic	103
5.7 Types of Conflict According to Gender	104
5.8 Violence Cultures According to Gender	105
<b>Chapter 6 - Conclusion</b>	
6.1 Summary	106
6.2 Implications for Future Research	105
6.3 Implications for Future Policy	111
<b>References</b>	113
<b>Appendices</b>	
1. Letter of Information/Consent	117
2. Interview Questions	122
3. Systematic Social Observation Protocols	124



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

- 1.1 Today's Images of School Bullying
- 1.2 Research Questions
- 1.3 Sociological Contexts
- 1.4 Settings
- 1.5 Dynamics
- 1.6 Gender
- 1.7 Methodologies

### ***1.1 Today's Images of School Bullying***

There has been a considerable lack of research on school bullying within the field of sociology. Recent publications and policy recommendations on the subject, within North America, have largely been produced by psychologists and psychiatrists. As youth violence becomes a larger social concern with ample media coverage, more sociological research on bullying is needed to further inform education policy. Mass media portray rates of violence as increasing, and school safety as falling. Through this, they make “bullying” a ubiquitous term that refers to many different forms of interpersonal youth violence. This practice of glossing over different forms of violence and victimization across school settings and gender lines may result in misleading policy recommendations.

Sociological research is important to the study of youth violence, by providing a useful framework for study. Psychological studies often focus solely on the rates and outcomes of youth violence. While these methods are helpful for understanding the overall implications for youth violence, they do not fully appreciate the subtle social contexts and dynamics of those actions by clearly distinguishing bullying from other types of violence experienced by youth. Frequently, these studies do not ask participants to describe their violent encounters, but instead relate the number of times they believe they were affected by a given type of bullying behavior. This has

the effect of not only glossing over the different types of violence experienced by youth, but also the social influences for those different kinds of conflict. Through prevalence rates research the dynamics and contexts of interpersonal youth violence become lost. We therefore need to not only look at the environmental and social contexts for youth violence but also the dynamics involved in different types of interpersonal youth violence.

Sociological research attempts to understand the macro and micro situational influences for particular social behaviors. These perspectives are useful to the study of interpersonal youth violence for their ability to build on previous prevalence research and to further understand the contexts and types of violence youth engage in. Building from previous prevalence rates research we are able to develop an understanding of the environmental influences for different interpersonal youth violence experiences. From a macro perspective, we are able to question if neighbourhoods that vary in their socioeconomics also have different effects on the rates of violence experienced by youth. Investigating further, we can understand if those neighbourhood characteristics influence school environments. Understanding the macro environmental influences of neighbourhoods can allow us to focus on the micro social influences for youth violence. This is supported by Collins' rational for microsociology, that social background explanations have limits in their power to explain actual incidents of violence, since actual incidents of violence are rare and situational dynamics appear to determine whether or not violence actually transpires. Perhaps by understanding the social economic influences for violence in each neighbourhood we can understand how youth create and interpret their own social structures through an interaction with those environments. This might have an effect not only on the prevalence of youth violence, represented by different social expectations and norms

of neighbourhood environments, but also in the types of violence youth experience. And perhaps neighbourhood influences can further be studied by questioning the influence of gender. This study, therefore, utilizes quantitative survey findings to understand broad contextual influences and qualitative interviews to examine both micro-geographical contexts and social dynamics of youth violence. Building from broad quantitative findings to micro qualitative findings allow for a more holistic study of interpersonal youth violence.

### ***1.2 Research Questions***

My thesis research explores: first, the macro-level prevalence of bullying across Hamilton neighbourhoods, examining specifically if students from lower socioeconomic and physically disordered neighbourhoods are more likely to commit or be victims of school-based bullying and violence, and whether this prevalence differs by gender. This is investigated by the following research questions: In terms of context, what is the overall prevalence of bullying/violence in Hamilton Schools? Does prevalence differ by gender? Is this prevalence notably higher in some schools than others? If so, is it higher in schools that are situated in lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods? These questions will allow me to examine broad contextual influences for different types of interpersonal youth violence.

Moving away from broad contextual explanations for youth violence, I will examine the micro-contexts of school-based bullying and violence, specifically exploring whether Randall Collins' (2009, 2011) typologies of student aggression are useful for understanding the experiences of youth in North Hamilton. From this I will explore the extent to which youth violence described as “bullying” may be better classified as other types of interpersonal violence. This will be described by the following research questions: In terms of dynamics, do forms of

school conflict take the forms suggested by Collins; can we recognize differences between peer-to-peer honour contests, group fights, scapegoating and bullying? In terms of gender are there different cultures and dynamics of violence for males and females? By using both macro quantitative and micro qualitative methods I demonstrate different contextual elements that influence youth violence in Hamilton.

The negative social consequences of interpersonal youth violence extend into our general culture through various media. It has shapes our understanding of youth behaviour and socialization processes. These influences not only shape our personal understandings of youth situations but also educational responses. Youth bullying has been framed in terms of a social problem, with responsibility extending beyond the classroom. These frames are perhaps dangerous to our institutional behaviour and should be considered more seriously in terms of youth environments, cultures and dynamics.

### ***1.3 Sociological Contexts***

Sociology contributes to the study of youth violence by elaborating on three components of the contexts of youth violence: neighbourhood and network settings, social dynamics and status situations. Gender is also a moderator, or conditioner, for all three contexts.

Neighborhood environments play a key role in shaping the social networks of youth. They provide the basis for social resources and interactional behavior. The dynamics of youth violence might be influenced by their surrounding social contexts. The types of violence youth engage in are perhaps a reflection of the social structures of their environments. These situational dynamics might also be different according to gender. Violent behaviors might be deemed socially appropriate or inappropriate based not only on social context but according to prescribed gender

norms. As such, social contexts may play an important role in shaping the prevalence and types of certain violent behavior for youth.

A relevant aspect of the immediate social context of interpersonal youth violence is physical location. Patricia Bennett's research on the occurrence of youth violence states that certain community factors such as the prevalence of liquor stores, availability of guns, and poor educational attainment put youth at a great risk for experiencing violence (Bennett 2009). Youth from these environments are also more likely to be victims of violent crime (Bowen and Bowen 1999). Low socioeconomic neighbourhoods not only experience more public displays of violence, but also have higher occurrences of domestic abuse (Curtis 1998). As individuals of low socioeconomic neighbourhoods are said to witness higher rates of interpersonal violence, children from these neighbourhoods may learn to understand violence and personal relationships differently. Youth from these neighbourhoods are more likely to commit acts of violence than their peers of high socioeconomic status (Anderson 1999). Increased amounts of physical and social disorder found in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods act as cues for predatory criminal behaviour (Sampson 1999). Disorder signals local residents' unwillingness to participate in their environment or confront illegal behaviour (Sampson 1999). Youth from low socioeconomic neighbourhoods with high rates of disorder not only experience more criminal behaviour but interpret their environments as lacking the social control necessary to reform it.

#### ***1.4 Setting***

The neighbourhoods of Hamilton are relatively unique to Canada in that many display characteristics similar to those of impoverished formerly industrial neighbourhoods in the United States that are often referred to in research literature on violence and social disorganization. Both

have decaying housing stocks, empty and abandoned industrial lots, Brownfield sites, along with relatively high rates of unemployment and poverty. There is a large amount of sociological literature on poverty, neighbourhood disorder, violence and school subcultures that describe various settings within the United States. Of special interest are the works by Elijah Anderson and Robert Sampson, focusing on impoverished neighborhoods in Philadelphia and Chicago respectively. Hamilton is a rare Canadian setting in which many of these American sociological theories can be fruitfully applied and tested.

Situated on Lake Ontario, Hamilton is a major industrial center for North American steel industries. Hamilton boasts large economic holdings with international companies such as Stelco and Dofasco. The city's primary economic base has long been the physical labour provided by these major industries. As a result, large numbers of those employed individuals residing in North Hamilton or Harbour Front neighbourhoods are manual laborers. Unfortunately, with an increasing demand for cheap international labour and the economic downturn following the recession, many of these large industrial companies have downsized, reducing their labour forces significantly. These changes have had extremely negative consequences for both adults and youth growing up in those low socioeconomic neighbourhoods. The characteristics of Hamilton's low socioeconomic, industrial labour neighbourhoods bear striking similarities to the Chicago neighbourhoods from which Robert Sampson's broken windows theory or Philadelphia neighborhoods where Elijah Anderson's Code of the Street were derived, now that unemployment has risen due to de-industrialization.

Hamilton is demographically unique in that extremely low socioeconomic neighbourhoods are located within walking distance from high socioeconomic neighbourhoods.

Following Main Street through Hamilton, from west to east, one is exposed to a variety of different neighbourhoods. The west end of Hamilton is home to one of Canada's largest research universities. The university is home to almost 30,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs, boasting large medical, engineering and athletic facilities. The neighbourhoods around the university are not the traditional university slum. Many individuals employed by the university as administration, professors or healthcare workers are also located in the initial areas around the school. The neighbourhoods in the west end of Hamilton are an eclectic mix of student housing and high-end residential neighbourhoods. The businesses in those areas cater to middle class tastes, with large independent grocery stores, small boutique clothing stores and bistro restaurants. The high schools and elementary schools situated in these neighbourhoods are maintained to a high standard. They have large schoolyards with landscaping and play equipment. There are no immediate signs of disorder or graffiti on the buildings and the buildings themselves look to be newly renovated.

Moving east along Main Street, passing over the 403 highway that dissects the city, one will begin to notice changes in businesses and housing. In contrast to the well maintained houses of the West end Hamilton, houses located along Main Street following the Highway 403 overpass, begin to show signs of disrepair. Litter on sidewalks and front lawns become more prevalent and some buildings display damaged exteriors. Local businesses here are much different from those located in West Hamilton. Small bistros are replaced by fast-food chains and gas stations. Moving further along Main Street one will quickly find themselves in Hamilton's downtown core. The downtown core is a ten minute drive from West Hamilton and the university neighbourhoods, but the atmosphere is entirely different. Large multi-storey international business buildings stand next to closed and boarded up stores. The apartments

above some of these smaller businesses are missing windows or are similarly boarded up. Graffiti and litter are evident on most of the street faces and loitering around smaller businesses, bars and bingo parlors is also popular.

Downtown Hamilton, like West End Hamilton, is home to a number of public schools. Located one block north of the downtown core is one of the city's largest public high schools. Unlike the high school in West End Hamilton, this high school does not boast large maintained lawns and gardens. While there is a football field, it doesn't appear to be often used. The school building also shows signs of disrepair. Graffiti and litter are visible around the building, with warning signs for trespassing visible on most face blocks. With no windows on the North and East sides of the building, high walls and chain linked fence, the school resembles a detention centre rather than a public school.

The physical geographies of Hamilton are important to the study of youth behaviour. Many theories on disorder and anti-social behaviour derived from American scholars focusing on the physical geographies individuals inhabit. One of the main theories used in this study to explain public engagement is work by Robert J. Sampson (1997). Sampson's (1997) major works come from studies conducted in neighbourhoods throughout Chicago. He found that measures of Collective Efficacy, the willingness of individuals within a neighbourhood to work together, at the neighbourhood level were negatively correlated with violence (Sampson 1997). Another significant theoretical influence for this study is the work by Elijah Anderson (1997) and his work on the Code of the Street in Philadelphia. Both theories aim to understand how disordered environments impact the social experiences of those individuals living there.



These studies are relevant to the geographies presented in Hamilton. Philadelphia and Chicago are two of the most highly populated cities in America. While Hamilton's population is not nearly as large as its American counterparts, it does hold many demographic similarities. All three cities have large immigrant populations. They also have large populations dedicated to manual labour and manufacturing. Chicago, like Hamilton, is a shipping port located on a Great Lake. Both Chicago and Philadelphia formerly relied on a large industrial labour force to sustain their economies. Unfortunately, both cities have experienced harsh unemployment following the economic recession, like Hamilton. While all three cities have experienced prosperity from manufacturing industries in the past, de-industrialization has had negative effects on all three cities, at least for certain neighbourhoods. As a result, all of these cities have large low socioeconomic and unemployed populations. Philadelphia is home to some of the nation's largest low income housing projects. Hamilton is similar, in that many such of its North End and waterfront neighbourhoods are home to low income and disordered neighbourhoods (areas with high amounts of graffiti, litter, unkempt properties, and drug paraphernalia visible). The de-industrialization of cities creates unemployment and triggers disorder in former working class neighbourhoods. However, Hamilton is dissimilar to Philadelphia and Chicago in that it does not have strongly racially-segregated ghettos that are equivalent to those described by Anderson and in much of the social disorganization literature. Some Hamilton neighbourhoods do, however, have some similarities with those US cities, unlike most other major cities in Canada. The city of Hamilton has a valuable social geography in which we can test ideas used in American cities.

### ***1.5 Dynamics***

Moving from the contextual theories for understanding youth violence, this thesis also delves further into the situational dynamics of those behaviors. Since bullying has become a

ubiquitous term used in schools and media to describe a variety of different forms of interpersonal youth violence, it is increasingly important to distinguish between the different forms of violence youth engage in. Research by Randall Collins (Collins, 2008, 2011) suggests that while actual physical violence is very rare, youth do engage in specific types of aggression and conflict. It is important to disaggregate ‘violence’ into different types, since those types have very different relations to social structures, dynamics and outcomes (Collins 2008). He classifies these acts as “scapegoating”, peer-to-peer “honour contests” or actual “bullying” (Collins 2011). Each type of violent altercation has its own code and social structure. For bullying to actually take place, specific social dynamics are at play. Traditional bullying is only between two individuals, one of middling and one of lower social status, whose antagonistic behavior is prolonged (Collins 2011). Collins (2011) argues that, often times, youth violence that does not follow that strict social definition is also called “bullying” by school officials and popular media. This is problematic as it leads to ineffective violence intervention and prevention policies. He also discusses how the social and emotional impact of bullying is much greater than other forms of interpersonal youth violence, due to the victim’s network isolation. My research therefore builds from the contextual influences of physical youth conflict, to understand the different situational and social dynamics of youth violence.

### ***1.6 Gender***

Gender plays an extremely important role in shaping the dynamics of interpersonal youth violence. Previous research has focused extensively on indicators for male violence, ignoring the dynamics of female violence. Female violence has historically been characterized as a social anomaly, perhaps resulting in a lack of research on the subject (Ness 2004). However, recent studies have begun to focus on the use of interpersonal violence by females for personal pleasure

or cultural capital (Ness 2004). While there are significant differences in the rates of violence perpetrated by each sex, the forms of violence used by females may be used for the same personal gains as males. The physical locations for which females create social environments might also have an effect on the types of violence used. Females are seen to engage in more relational forms of aggression, as opposed to direct physical confrontation. Most school violence is also between individuals of the same gender, be it direct or indirect. In this study, I attempt to understand the prevalence of different types of violence used by female and male youth in Hamilton neighbourhoods and why those genders differ in rates and types of violent actions.

### ***1.7 Methodologies***

To examine the influences of local environments, social cultures and the dynamics of interpersonal youth violence, a multi method approach is taken. Some argue that qualitative and quantitative research methods are incompatible (Howe 1988), that is, that these methodologies cannot and should not be mixed. I use both methods to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of each. This approach better allows me to address my diverse research questions in a complementary way. To understand the physical, social and economic environmental influences for interpersonal youth violence, quantitative methods are be utilized. This involves the analysis of Hamilton's Safe Schools Survey (2008-2010), a Systematic Social Observation data-set, and the 2006 Canadian Census data for Hamilton neighbourhoods, obtained in 2008/2009. These quantitative data are supplemented with structured interviews from Hamilton youth to better understand the dynamics and cultures of youth violence. My research methods are been designed to meet the needs of my research questions.

Social researchers have created a methodology for measuring characteristics of neighbourhoods that are the settings for violence, low socioeconomic status and large amounts of physical and social disorder. Robert Sampson defines physical disorder as a deterioration of urban landscapes, indicated by graffiti on buildings, abandoned cars, broken windows and garbage in the streets (Sampson 1997, 1999). He suggests that the social and physical disorganization of neighbourhoods negatively affects the willingness of individuals to work together to benefit their environment. As an alternative to Broken Windows Theory by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (1982), Sampson noted that physical disorder has a negative effect on Collective Efficacy (Sampson 1997). Collective Efficacy is explained as the solidarity felt between residents in a local environment, which is demonstrated by their willingness to intervene for the common good of a neighbourhood (Sampson 1997). Instances of physical disorder, such as broken windows and graffiti, encourage offenders to assume local residents are unwilling to confront criminal behaviour (Sampson 1997, 1999). Students growing up in disordered neighbourhoods may interpret socially acceptable behaviour in different ways. Predatory crime and public disorder are frequent occurrences in their environments; therefore, they interpret their neighbourhoods as lacking social control. This theory informs the hypothesis that student conduct is negatively affected by the physical and social disorganization of those environments. To address the influences of social disorder, systematic social observation techniques are used to examine Hamilton neighbourhoods. Utilized by Sampson (1999), these techniques use a previously determined list of indicators for physical and social disorder. For the neighbourhoods surrounding each school, and for the physical grounds of all public schools in the city, indicators for disorder are recorded. These data provide me with a picture of the environmental influences for violent behaviour in neighbourhoods of local youth.

Statistical indicators for demographics also provide an understanding of violent youth behaviour. Systematic social observation data are supplemented with data from the 2006 Canadian Census. This allows me to better understand the socioeconomic and demographic influences for youth violence. Measuring against demographic data are indicators used from the Ontario Safe Schools Survey. The Safe Schools Survey was completed for all Hamilton elementary and secondary public schools, providing information regarding individual perceptions of violence, the violence those students personally engaged in, violence students had been victims of and how students perceived the effectiveness of school anti-violence procedures.

For the qualitative portion of my study, interviews with students from different neighborhoods, who have engaged in interpersonal youth violence, provide insight into the behaviours of youth violence and their link to youth culture. My interview questions are designed to shed light on the actual dynamics of youth conflict and social structures that are navigated in these moments. I ask youth about the physical location of their fight, the number of individuals involved, the gender of individual aggressors and victims, and ask questions regarding their perspectives for the social influences of that aggressive behavior. These questions are answered by asking participating youth to recall actual violent encounters they have witnessed or directly been involved in, which have previously been resolved by school officials. By asking youth to reconstruct violent situations, I hope that the definitional differences and micro social contexts of youth violence are demonstrated.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Interpersonal Youth Violence**

### 2.1 The Contexts and Dynamics of Violence

#### 2.2 Settings

#### 2.3 Gendered Environments

#### 2.4 Gendered Bullying

#### 2.5 Micro Contexts

#### 2.6 Dynamics

##### 2.6a Boasting

##### 2.6b Bluster

##### 2.6c Audience Effect

#### 2.7 Types of Violence

##### 2.7a Peer-to-Peer Honour Contests

##### 2.7b Intergroup Fights

##### 2.7c Scapegoating

##### 2.7d Bullying

##### 2.7e Cyber Bullying

#### 2.8 Status

### ***2.1 Contexts and Dynamics of Violence***

Bullying among school aged youth is increasingly recognized as a problem facing educators and school officials. Behaviour that was once defined as a normative part of childhood development is reframed in terms of a social problem. While all forms of interpersonal youth violence are considered limiting to youth's social and educational development, bullying is determined as posing the greatest risk to normal developmental processes (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995, Nansel et al. 2001). However, the term bullying is constantly changing and often used by commentators to encompass a wide range of aggressive behaviours. Research by Stephanie Howells (2006) found over seventy different definitions for bullying in research literature. Within the field of youth violence research, bullying is been understood as a subset of peer aggression in which one or more individuals verbally, physically and/or psychologically harass a weaker victim (Haynie et al. 2001, Olweus 1991, 1993, 1997, Whitney & Smith 1993, Demko 1996, Colvin et al. 1998, Bosworth et al. 1999). A key function of bullying behaviour is its

repetitive nature and influence of power (Viljoen et al. 2003, Olweus 2002, Tattum and Tattum 1992, Hover et al. 1992, King et al. 1996, Smith 1997, Rigby 1997). That individuals who experience bullying, experience or perpetuate those actions repeatedly. This conceptualization of bullying is problematic, however, as it leaves a lot of definitional leeway for other forms of interpersonal youth violence to be interpreted as bullying.

Due to the variable nature of bullying behaviour definitions, studies that attempt to understand its prevalence offer different conclusions. A British study by Viljoen, O'Neil and Sidhu (2005) found that, of 193 males and 50 female young offenders, 32% had reported engaging in bullying behaviour, while 8% reported being victims. Similar research conducted in Canada found that 19% of students in schools reported being bullied by others more than twice per semester, while 8% reported being bullied at least twice a week (Craig and Pepler 1997). However, the rates reported in this Canadian study are nearly four times higher than popular European findings (Oleweus 1991). More recent research shows that on average, a large proportion of students say they have also been victims of cyber bullying (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve & Coulter, 2012, Tokunaga, 2010; Wade & Beran, 2010; Wang et al. 2009). Also, students experience both high rates of bullying (52%) and sexual harassment (34%) (Gruber and Fineran, 2008).

Research within the field of youth violence examines subject extensively from the perspective of the individual. These studies often frame their research questions as: why do some individuals bully while others are bullied? An individual difference perspective, however, is limited in scope. To understand interpersonal youth violence we must understand not only the physical dynamics involved in violent encounters, but also the social and environmental

influences. According to Craig and Pepler (1997), "... the interactions of bullies and victims cannot be fully explained by merely the convergence of two personality patterns, but must be considered within the complex of interactional influences".

## ***2.2 Settings***

Building from the problem of definitions of bullying multiplying in misleading ways, an approach is needed that better sets the contexts and notes the social dynamics of violence in order to ultimately provide better interpretations of that behavior. Through the sociological analysis of environmental settings we attempt to go beyond purely psychological approaches for understanding the causes of violence. We begin to understand how youth interact and develop social structures based on environmental cues within their immediate environments. The contexts of youth violence allow us to understand how those cues are influences of disordered behavior. From better understanding social settings and how they influence interpersonal youth violence contexts, we are able to define bullying by distinguishing its dynamics.

There is a considerable amount of research on environmental influences for criminal behavior, but less research on such influences on youth bullying. According to Robert Sampson (2009), scholars have long interpreted the differentiation of the social spaces for which different groups engage in violence, based on interpreted signs of disorder. For this study, I focus on traditional conceptions of physical and social disorder. Physical disorder is typically specified by physical markers such as graffiti, litter and broken windows (Sampson 2009). This forms the basis for the long used Broken Windows thesis. According to Wilson and Kelling (1982), broken windows and other symbols of neighbourhood disrepair act as cues to potential predators, who interpret a lack of neighbourhood upkeep as indicating that local residents are indifferent to



what goes on there. Disorder acts as cues for predatory behaviour and eventually crime (Sampson 1999). Social disorder is similarly evaluated as instances of active public indecency, public violence or obvious drug use act as cues to public indifference (Sampson 1999). These cues are important as the grounds for which perceptions of disorder are formed are contextually shaped by social conditions and go beyond simple observations of disorder (Sampson 1999). Individuals use these cues to shape identities and reputations.

Unfortunately, highly disordered environments form sustained concentrated disadvantage for individuals living in them (Sampson 1999). Many researchers evaluating environmental disadvantage focus on economic or racial influences. However, disorder theories suggest that the nature of poverty and violence isn't solely based on demographic indicators. Instead we must also look at the social environmental influences for those behaviours. As such, the identities and moral evaluations derived from those neighbourhood settings have significant influence over the life course of local individuals. Children and youth developing in these neighbourhoods might be negatively affected by their environmental influences. Schools located in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods with high levels of disorder have found higher rates of school problems, including bullying (Bowes et al. 2009). Research by Percy-Smith and Matthews (2001) found that bullying among children and youth was more prevalent in highly populated urban area schools. It is argued that bullying and youth violence is more likely to occur in these neighbourhoods because they are freer from regulated adult gaze (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001). Higher density neighbourhoods with greater evidence of physical and social disorder signal to youth the disengagement of adults.

As youth encounter everyday settings that lack cues of social regulation, more anti-social behaviour is prevalent. According to Bowes et al. (2009) hostile interactions between adults in children's communities provide examples of bullying and violent behaviours that youth can reproduce within their own social settings. Therefore, socioeconomic or racial demographics do not necessarily determine the likelihood of interpersonal youth violence. Rather, social cues provided by acts of physical and social disorder can influence violence. Anti-social cues might, however, have an impact on the likelihood for more severe forms of violence and criminality, but perhaps not for more common forms of youth bullying. As bullying is commonly used as a tool for soliciting and stabilizing social status, extreme forms of physical aggression in neighbourhood settings might not influence those behaviors. Instead the social micro-contexts of youth neighbourhoods, for which meanings and status are attached to different geographies or groups, might have a larger impact on interpersonal youth violence. These interactions are also shaped by demographic characteristics such as age and gender. Females and males experience different amounts and types of interpersonal violence according to age. Therefore, it is important to not only examine the larger geographical contexts for youth violence by also the smaller micro social contexts for that behavior.

### ***2.3 Gendered Environments***

Neighbourhood environments play a key role in youth development. Increased amounts of physical and social disorder found in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods act as cues for predatory criminal behaviour (Sampson 1999). Disorder within different neighbourhoods signals local residents' unwillingness to participate in their environment or confront illegal behaviour (Sampson 1999). Youth from low socioeconomic neighbourhoods with high rates of disorder, therefore, not only experience more criminal behaviour but interpret their environments as

lacking the social control necessary to reform it. Patricia Bennett's (2009) research on the occurrence of youth violence states that certain community factors such as the prevalence of liquor stores, availability of guns, and poor educational attainment put youth at a great risk for experiencing violence. Familial and neighbourhood effects work together through the exposure to poverty and disorganization, elevating the risk for youth violence (Herrenkohl 2000). This acts as a mechanism for which potential offenders gravitate towards disordered locations because there they perceive social controls to be the weakest.

Specific attention should be paid to how neighbourhood risk factors differentially affect females. If females are more at risk for physical and sexual abuse, through family and neighbourhood environments, micro psychological contexts should be explored. Rapport and Thomas (2004) contend that female violence should be an especially important focus for researchers as girls exposed to antisocial behaviour at young ages are at greater risk than boys for suffering co-morbid psychiatric disorders.

Research that focuses on the influence of peer groups on female violence is important. Goldstein et al. (2007) found that female violence is primarily conducted in social settings, as opposed to private settings. Maintained loyalty and honour are common justifications for female violent behaviour (Jones 2010:210). Females defined violence in terms of the physical striking or manipulation of an individual's body with some part of their own and were clear to make distinctions between verbal assaults and physical violence (Brown 2010:180). In the rare cases that females use physical violence, they use it to maintain social status, similar to their male peers (Brown 2010:180). Girls are also more likely to act aggressively within peer groups or with others they know. Females reported witnessing more relational aggression at school between

their peers than males (Goldstein et al. 2007). Violence research, therefore, should not overlook simple peer group relational effects for females, as they represent the highest occurrence of female violence.

With further research into the differential environmental risk factors experienced by females we begin to understand how females use violence in ways similar to their male counterparts. While males and females might use different kinds of violence, recent research has demonstrated that inner-city female teens use violence for similar social gain (Jones 2008, 2009). Female teens demonstrate an awareness and adherence to a “Code of the Street”, an adherence to an informal set of social rules for how to behave and respond if challenged, similar to their male counterparts. Teens interviewed by Jones (2008) expressed fears of being aggressed against at school and in their home neighbourhood, and how important it is to demonstrate outward displays of power and aggression for self-protection. She also demonstrates that the language used to discuss the code and violent situations does not differ across gender lines (Jones 2008). Gender does not save youth from violence. The risk factors and proportional involvement for violence are different for male and female youth in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods, but this does not insulate those females from necessity to use violence. As females and males experience shared circumstances of violence in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods it becomes equally important for women and men to work the "Code of the Street". Violence, therefore, is a potential tool females can use to mitigate their physical vulnerability. Social status and maintaining or elevating their positions in a social hierarchy is exceptionally important. Through violence they may gain independence and mobility within their social environments. Violence, therefore, emerges from an intersection of environmental situations and gender roles transposed and used in social survival situations.

## ***2.4 Gendered Bullying***

Youth enact violence differently according to gender. Research on bullying reported that males were more likely to perpetrate acts of physical aggression than their female peers within school environments (Viljoen et al. 2005, Aguston et al. 2007). Females, however, are more likely to perpetrate acts of verbal and social aggression, which are very much a part of maintaining or altering status hierarchies and networks (Viljoen et al. 2005). The differences between male and female bullying patterns are described by indirect and direct violence. Males are said to be more likely to use forms of direct violence, a means by which direct physical pain or injury is inflicted on another individual (Bjorkvist et al., 2002). Females, however, are more likely to use indirect means by which verbal backstabbing and manipulation of the social structure of their peer groups is used to inflict mental pain on their victim (Bjorkvist et al. 2002, Owens et al. 2000). Female aggression aims to disrupt one's social standing without there being evidence of an intention to physically hurt. Aggressive females were also likely to use considerable amounts of verbal aggression along with their exclusionary tactics, indicating that female indirect aggressive behaviours overlap with direct forms of violence. Teachers, however, were largely unaware of the extent of the exclusionary practices used by females in their schools (Owens et al. 2005). The invisibility of indirect violence might account for why aggressive behaviour is found to be much more prevalent in adolescent males than females. It is a misconception that females are less likely than males to use means of aggression for their own social ends. If definitions for bullying and violence are expanded to include forms of indirect aggression, than female adolescent violence will be better represented.

Indirect and direct violence is also influenced by age. Younger children are more likely to engage in acts of physical violence and begin to adopt forms of indirect violence as they mature (Collins 2008). The importance of social networks and hierarchies become more defined as youth age, dictating a change in aggressive behaviour from inflicting physical harm to social harm. Violence and aggression, therefore, are dependent on maturation and social development. Perhaps females are socialized to be attuned to status hierarchies within their peers groups at an earlier age than males, and therefore they enact their aggressions in different ways.

### ***2.5 Micro Contexts***

For this study the concept of micro geographies is also relevant. Micro geographies are concerned with “... the flow of meanings which are managed by small groups of people that meet on a regular basis” (Matthews et al. 1997). This extends the idea that there is a diversity of micro cultures that provide the basis for a temporal culture, into and out of which young people move (Percy-Smith & Matthews 2001). That is, micro geographies constitute how teenagers come into and interact in a variety of everyday spaces beyond the home and school (Matthews et al. 1997). Physical localities, networks and collective experiences have the potential to shape the interactions of those youth. The micro social contexts of youth environments create a spatio-temporal map of their collective experiences (Matthews et al. 1997). The differences between groups of youth and how they interact, therefore isn't solely based on demographic qualifiers, such as race, gender and age (Percy-Smith & Matthews 2001). Instead the content of their interactions are shaped by the unique geographies for which they engage. These are especially important as adolescent youth begin to experience independence through their local neighbourhoods. Through neighbourhood micro geographies “... teenagers live in a world apart for much of their free time, with their non-conforming uses of place appearing discrepant and at odds with adult expectations” (Matthews et al. 1997). Context and action are significant to the

production of micro cultures. How youth interact within their neighbourhoods create ongoing cues to peers about appropriate behaviour.

These micro geographies lead to the development of embedded identities. Embedded identities consist of identities inherent in the environments for which youth engage, that in turn shape their own identities (Matthews et al. 1997). Similar is Murray Milner's youth status. Instead of a permanent Code of the Street, as suggested by Elijah Anderson's research (1999), a youth status outlines a temporary structure of appropriate conduct for which youth and their peers engage (Milner 2006). Suggesting a link between these concepts, a Youth Code is shaped by the micro geographies for which adolescents engage in. These geographies and codes influence the identities youth adopt and interact from. According to Hugh Matthews (1997), local areas can be seen as cultural gateways, places where teenagers can meet and create their own identities. Relating to interpersonal youth violence, those youth who interact in physical environments that witness relatively high rates of violence might interpret that behaviour as a normative aspect of their social and cultural environment, as necessary to compete in those environments and in peer relationships. Environmental disorder therefore can signify a lack of Collective Efficacy within a neighbourhood, and can influence their sense of appropriate behavior. Neighbourhoods with large amounts of disorder, or disordered cues such as graffiti, reaffirm the separate identities of youth culture. They also signal the absence of external social control, perhaps relating to indicators of reduced safety. Therefore, it is not only important to examine the broad demographic indicators for youth violence, such as gender, but to also examine the dynamic environments in which youth develop themselves.

## **2.6 Dynamics**

While violence may be more prevalent in low-socioeconomic status neighborhoods, actual acts of physical violence are rare. Collin's writing on violence formations asserts that "violent interactions are difficult because they go against the grain of normal interactions"(Collins 2011). In contrast to pseudo-evolutionary beliefs that individuals are hardwired to combat one another over reproductive rights, Collins notes that individuals are far more likely to develop and benefit from bonds that are socially sustainable (Collins 2008). Because violence is not an easy or automatic process it is rare in occurrence. Humans are more apt to engage in fear responses than acts of aggression when encountering a violent situation (Collins 2008). Given a flight or fight response, it is far healthier to run from a violent situation than to confront it. Instead, preemptive violent interactions are more common. Collins (2008) suggests that instead of acts of physical aggression, individuals resort to boasting and bluster – actions of posturing or swagger that do not end in physical violence. However, when acts of actual violence do occur they are embedded in social dynamics related to the status of the individuals involved, immediate social networks, and the presence (or not) of spectators.

### **2.6a Boasting**

Posturing plays a large role in the engagement of violence. Within different social situation appropriate behavior can dictate the escalation of violent behavior or the balance of social status. The act of boasting is often the first step toward conflict. According to Collins (2008), boasting has a situational effect that is not necessarily appropriate for all occasions. Boasting has two forms; the first is a statement about one's social status, while the second is a comment about one's self to an immediate rival (Collins 2008). In many social situations, boasting is not viewed favorably. Especially when describing one's accomplishments in front of a rival, it often has same effect of stating "this is why I'm better than you". The loser in a



boasting challenge might take these comments as a direct threat against their dignity, escalating the situation to violence.

When boasting does turn to violence the individual who initiates the violence wins (Collins 2008). That individual has won a momentary victory over the boaster by successfully claiming attention (Collins 2008). Boasting competitions are often performed in front of a willing crowd of onlookers. In that verbal sparring match, the individual who gains the most support from onlookers is considered the winner. However, if that individual is the victim of violence, as a result of their comments, they are the loser because they couldn't defend themselves. Not only has the individual who initiated the violence won because they gained attention, but they have also won in defending their dignity.

Boasting competitions that result in violence, however, are rare. In polite conversations, the loser of a boasting competition often takes their situation with good grace (Collins 2008). Boasting competitions, when both parties are engaged, are often for intellectual, non-physical, sport and are rarely geared toward committing serious social slights. Therefore, situational circumstances for boasting competitions might be relevant to the escalation of violence. For violence to occur, boasting must directly (or be perceived to have directly) denigrated someone's social status. This might be more relevant in social situations where solidarity and social hierarchies are strong. High school youth networks are prime situations for boasting competitions to escalate toward violence. In these arenas, individuals engage in tight knit social circles where hierarchies determine one's social resources. To be verbally slighted in that environment could mean a threat to status. Boasting in different social circumstances can hold more or less social weight, dictating the likelihood toward possible violent youth behavior.

### **2.6b Bluster**

Beyond boasting, Collins (2008) argues that bluster is the final step before violence. Blustering is described as the final expression of a direct threat against an opponent (Collins 2008). While a boasting competition is comprised of statements about why one individual is better than another, bluster is a statement of one's ability to inflict actual harm against another. In these situations, bluster is the warning or signal before actual violence occurs. This warning can act as trigger or an escape. Individuals have the option of acting on the bluster or defusing the situation as a substitute for violence (Collins 2008). At this point one can make claims for how they would harm the other individual without actually inflicting that harm. If others step in, or an individual backs down, they have defended some part of their dignity by displaying their willingness to fight. These actions make individuals look braver and more competent in a violent situation than they actually are (Collins 2008).

Bluster is often associated with the performance of Andersons' Code of the Street (1999), but it can also be associated to the more temporary youth code. For the Code of the Street, verbal altercations are made up of messages of solidarity and dominance. While Murray Milner's (2004) Youth Code does not follow the same severe violent consequences for individual actions, high school youth continually engage in verbal demonstrations of status. Boasting and blustering are used to defend one's sometimes precarious social situation in a youth code's hierarchical structure. When one engages in boasting and their status is questioned, it can have the effect of limiting their social worlds (Milner 2004, 81). According to the youth code, an individual who has been insulted must defend their dignity or accept a lesser social status (Milner 2004, 79). In this case, bluster and boasting can be used to defend ones' self without escalating to violence. These actions can show someone's willingness and assumed conviction to violence without

actually committing such acts. They can have the effect of mitigating a situation or escalating it. Either way, the code dictates a situation for which boasting and bluster are the first steps in social preservation and defense.

### ***2.6c Audience Effect***

Beyond boasting and blustering, interpersonal youth violence has other dynamics. The willingness to engage in violence is often dictated by the support from others outside the immediate confrontation. If a crowd is present, supporting the altercation, violence is more likely to escalate from those violent precursors of boasting and blustering (Collins 2008). For individuals to engage in violence they must overcome their natural urge to resist personal harm. Given an innate fight or flight response, individuals are more apt to choose flight from a dangerous situation than engage. However, if there is an audience present to provide social support this response might be overcome. According to Collins (2008), an audience presence during an altercation can circumvent individual's response of tension and fear. Alone, individuals might regard the violent situation more rationally. The tensions and fear of being hurt in an altercation might actively deter them. However, with a crowd present, those individuals might be pushed to overcome fear through the effervescent emotions of the crowd to commit violence. An audience presence might also effect the inclination towards violence for individuals as they feel compelled to entertain them. If a large group of spectators are gathered to see violence, those engaged might feel forced into actions just to gain support from the crowd. Audience support can have the effect of escalating violence and detracting those violent actions from their root cause. If individuals feel compelled to fight based on audience support, they may not be fighting based on an original affront to personal dignity. Instead, they feel their actions are a duty to a code that is beyond their personal situation.

An audience not only has an effect on the initiation of violence but can also regulate its actions and end. The audience has the ability to determine what actions are fair in a fight (Collins, 2008). Spectators have the collective power of determining if a fight is evenly matched and when that violence should be intervened. Fights, therefore, have social limits according to their social situations. According to situation the audience has a different role and different regulations. In the case of equally matched fair fights, such as regulated boxing matches, the audience is in an agreed position not to intervene (Collins, 2008). However, if the match is somehow rigged or someone doesn't follow the rules, the audience has the right to question or contend. This is loosely the same for violent altercations between youth. There are implicit rules of conduct for both individuals participating in violence and for the audience witnessing.

### ***2.7 Types of Violence***

Although violence is rare, it is important to understand its social dynamics. Taking a multi method approach towards this investigation is helpful for unpacking those situations. Understanding youth violence through strictly quantitative survey methods can be problematic as it has the potential to conflate different kinds of youth violence. By investigating rates of violence using survey methods, then understanding student interpretations and actions through in-depth personal interviews I am able to understand the actual behaviors involved in different kinds of youth violence.

A key point in the violence literature by Randall Collins (2008) is that not everything is bullying. Bullying is a type of violent interaction with specific social qualifications. For Collins (2008), bullying is a repetitive action between two people. Those two individuals comprise of

one of middling and one of lesser social status, with the former inflicting social or physical harm on the later. Many times different forms of interpersonal youth violence that do not follow the definitional guidelines of bullying are lumped under that definition. Violent situations such as peer-to-peer honour contests, intergroup fights and scapegoating are all distinct forms of violence with social dynamics that are entirely different from bullying. Youth networks and the immediate micro contexts in which youth engage may also have direct effects on the types of violence they engage in.

Another key point, emphasized by Collins (2008), is that each of these type of violence have different impacts on their victims. Bullying is noted as the most harmful form of interpersonal youth violence because of the victim's social isolation and its repetitive nature (Collins, 2008). Honour contests are perhaps less harmful because both contestants have social support. Conversely, group fights can actually emotionally energize both aggressors, especially if their loss isn't great. For group conflict, there might be a residual effect of group bonding and collective effervescence. Coming together for a common goal creates an energy that can be used to alter individual behavior.

### ***2.7a Peer-to-Peer Honour Contests***

Honour contests most often occur for group entertainment. In these cases, an altercation is coordinated between two individuals who are equally matched on the social and physical spectrum (Collins 2011). As these events are often previously coordinated, audience support is often involved. From the perspective of a youth code, honor contests can be used to solidify or

defend someone's social standings. However, they are not used to move up in social rank within that hierarchy. Honor contests cannot be used to wager an increase in social status because their main premise is based on equal competition between peers. This form of violence also cannot be considered a form of bullying, as bullying is a top down situation. As explained by Collins (2008), an honour contest cannot involve a bully or the bullied because there is no honour in showing that you have beat someone of a lower status. The point of honour contests is to secure your social standing by beating someone of a higher or equal social standing. Because bullies pick on individuals of lower rank their own rank cannot move up as a result of those actions.

### ***2.7b Intergroup Fights***

Similar to peer-to-peer honour contests, sometimes conflict occurs between large groups of individuals. In a high school youth context, this can happen between two rival cliques or gangs. According to Collins (2008), these confrontations are especially prone to violence as they tend to take place in closed communities. The social code of individuals participating in these groups follows strict solidarity and honour within the group. If an outsider or rival group harms the integrity of that group, confrontation is often the solution. Because these altercations happen between more than two individuals, the numbers involved also make it easier to commit violence and overcome tensional fear (Collins 2011).

Similar to honour contests, intergroup fights are horizontal social confrontations between two socially equal groups (Collins 2011). Unlike bullying they are not a repetitive series of unequal social actions, but continual tit-for-tat advancements between two groups (Collins 2011). Intergroup fights consist of equal parties engaging in confrontation on agreed grounds dictated by a specific social code. Be it a Code of the Street or temporary youth code, individuals

who identify with a social group feel compelled to defend that group in similar ways that they would use to defend themselves. A slight to a group is equal to a slight against an individual. They both impact one's social standing and the need to defend it.

### ***2.7c Scapegoating***

Traditional bullying is often confused with scapegoating. Scapegoating is a form of interpersonal youth violence in which a single individual is victimized by a group of people (Collins 2011). Situations of scapegoating are often singular events. If they are repeated, they do not repeat themselves for long (Collins 2011). This is perhaps because scapegoating involves a level of group commitment that is not feasible in all social situations. The victim of scapegoating may also be an individual of high social ranking or a network isolate (Collins 2011). It is not necessary for the victim of scapegoating to be low in the social hierarchy. In fact, in many cases this would be counterproductive to the aim of scapegoating groups. For scapegoating groups, a victim must be one whose ideals or actions stand in contention with their own. That person must pose some sort of threat to the hierarchy of their created social network. In defense of that status network, individuals who partake in scapegoating strengthen their community solidarity by defending themselves against a perceived "other". According to Collins (2011), scapegoating is more likely to happen in tightly knit social communities where individual difference might pose a threat to their status.

Scapegoating is often confused with traditional bullying, as it has an isolating effect on its victims. Media has used examples of homosexual students persecuted by peers to the point of self-harm as examples of growing numbers of bullying within the school systems. In many cases these individuals were actually mistreated by a large number of individuals at once. Those

individuals were not seeking independent dominance over an isolated individual, but attempting to protect a tightly integrated community. While scapegoating and bullying both have the effect of isolating a single individual, the reasons for why that individual is harmed are not the same.

### **2.7d Bullying**

Bullying is distinctly different from intergroup fights and honour contests. Firstly, bullying is always based on unequal social situations. Bullies are those from middle rank in social systems and create their own networks by isolating victims and themselves from others (Collins 2008). Unlike honour contests or group fights, where status is slightly gained or stabilized through violence, a bully's status is never truly altered as they always target network isolates. Bullies isolate themselves from the greater social structure by concerning their actions with individuals wholly outside of that system. Their torment of isolates is also ongoing. Many individuals from different ranks of a social structure will use slights or social gossip against others on a regular basis. What is different for bullying is that those actions are dedicated to a single individual, continually, for a long term basis. It is easy to mistake the malicious actions of youth for bullying as they often take on similar forms of aggression. In some ways, students do use different bullying tactics against their peers to sustain a hierarchy. However, unlike individuals who use malicious actions against others to sustain hierarchical power within a social structure, the bullies' ability to gain power is limited because they only target the lowest ranked individuals.

Bullying can also include a variety of actions. Collins (2008) states that bullying behaviour can include such things as mocking, jeering, exclusion and physical beating. Originating from the practice of “fagging”, where first grade boys within elite British private



schools would be forced to perform menial tasks for older male students, bullying has traditionally been considered a male behaviour (Collins 2008). However, recent research has argued that if verbal aggressiveness can be considered a form of violence than females are equally likely to be bullies. Like male bullies, females will use subversive tactics to repeatedly harm individuals of lower social status. However, this behaviour is often less recognized as females use discrete verbal tactics, rather than overt physical violence. Bullying is also traditionally conducted within one's own sex, in that females are most likely to bully other females and males other males (Collins 2008).

Bullying most frequently occurs in social transition zones, where social networks and hierarchies are changed or newly created (Pelligrini and Long 2002). Intergroup fights and honour contests are more likely to happen when social structures are solidified; bullying occurs when individuals are vying for rank in new situations. This plays into Milner's (2004) concept of a Youth Code, where individuals entering high school quickly establish social hierarchies and codes of conduct. Students with low physical attractiveness or athletic prowess often fall to the bottoms of those social rankings, becoming potential bullying victims.

### ***2.7e Cyber Bullying***

Cyber bullying is a new term for interpersonal violence committed through e-media. Cyber bullying can be briefly described as sending or posting possibly harmful messages or images using the internet or another digital communication device, such as cell phones (Li 2006). Aggressive cyber bullying tactics, according to Willard (2004), can take on the form of harassment, cyberstalking, denigration (putdowns) and exclusion. The most common reasons given for cyberbullying are the targeting of an individual's appearance or the attempt to socially

harm an individual who that person has dated (Snell and Englander 2010). Cyberbullying is especially acute and persistent during middle and high school aged youth (Li 2006). Most North American public schools have internet access within the classroom, increasing the availability to cyber bullying tools for almost all students. Through social websites, students are also able to take personal issues that were once isolated to classroom settings and expand them into the broader social realm. Because cyber bullying now extends beyond schoolyard boundaries it is difficult for both researchers and school administrators to define and track its behaviour.

Research has reported that females prefer to use cyberbullying tactics more than their male peers (Li 2006). Females are also more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying than males (Dehue et al. 2008, Mesch 2009, Slonje and Smith 2008, Vanderbosch and Van Cleemput 2008, Jackson et al. 2009, Haque and Khatibi 2004). This form of aggression might be more appealing to females because of its indirect and anonymous nature. Females' preferred involvement in cyberbullying might be due to it being easily compatible with relational aggression, blackmail and gossip through discrete channels (Snell and Englander 2010). The anonymity involved in creating a fake online username might encourage students to act differently from school settings (Chisholm 2006). Students who would not normally act aggressively towards their peers might act out because they feel their actions cannot be tied back to them. Females are also found to use online social networking sites and emails more frequently than males (Dowell et al. 2009). The increased likelihood of females to use social websites may represent greater opportunity for cyberbullying behaviour from females. The more time spent interacting on these websites could also be related to a greater potential for disagreement between online peers.

According to Randall Collins (2011), cyber bullying is also a term used to encompass many different forms of interpersonal violence that do not hold the technical qualifications for being bullied. Through an increase in media attention for students who have committed severe cyber-attacks on peers, cyber bullying has not been defined to a specific term. He argues that cyber bullying is often confused with different types of internet violence like: intergroup fights, scapegoating or malicious gossip (Collins 2011). To be defined as actual cyber bullying, an individual of middling status must perpetrate harm against an individual of known lower status. Instead, many instances of online cyberbullying are actually cyber scapegoating, where a group of individuals gang up against an individual of lower status for sport (Collins, 2011). These actions are not aimed at gaining social status, but to simply torment or persecute an individual because of their perceived differences. Despite the definitional differences for cyber violence, it has the potential to generate serious emotional harm for its victims. Cybermedia networks project rumors and messages far more quickly than traditional peer networks. The actions of cyber violence have the potential to stretch further and faster than other forms of traditional interpersonal youth violence (Collins 2011).

Unfortunately, victims of cyber violence are unlikely to report their abuse to administrators or school officials (Li 2006). Students often feel that because cyber violence happens outside the boundaries of their physical school grounds it is not the responsibility of teachers to help them (Li 2006). Gender differences are also evident in the rate at which students report being victims of cyber bullying. Males are significantly less likely to report the victimization of cyberbullying than their female peers (Li 2007). It is hypothesized that the underreporting of victimization by males results from feeling as though asking for help puts them

in a marginalized social situation (Tanner 1994). By asking for help males feel that they are damaging their already diminished social status.

### **2.8 Status**

Changing or exchanging one's social status once they have entered into the social milieu of a high school is almost impossible. Social status is calculated almost immediately upon entry to youth social settings. That status can easily be lost by an individual, through inappropriate social interactions, and can rarely be regained (Milner 2004:76). Violent youth interactions often aim to satiate the social equilibriums of those hierarchies. When an individual has fallen out of line, challenged another's status or posed a threat to the ideals of group, aggression is used. However, it is rare that physical violence is used to mediate social situations. Instead, groups or individuals are more likely to use threats to mitigate differences. When these don't work, more extreme forms of intimidation are used, resulting in violent altercations. Bullying is unique in that saving status is not the aim of the perpetrator. The aim of a bully is perhaps not to change their own status, but is a demonstration of their frustration with the confines of a youth hierarchy.

From here, I have outline the various sociological aspects of bullying and the violence; the ways in which neighbourhoods and network settings can shape youth social dynamics. However, it is important to consider that we do not yet fully understand how contexts can influence the different types of violence youth engage in. This is extremely important for informing social policy, since those solutions may need to differ for different kinds of violence. Building a strong sociological account of bullying and youth violence is an empirical challenge; however, these challenges are addressed through my methodologies for this project.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

- 3.1 Quantitative Data Collection
- 3.2 Constructing a School Level Data Set
- 3.3 Construction of Scales
- 3.4 Dependent Variables
- 3.5 Independent Variables
- 3.6 Qualitative Methodology

This study consisted of a multi-method analysis of the prevalence, perceptions and types of interpersonal youth violence. By examining youth violence from a multi method approach, I believe a better understanding of youth behaviors can be gained. This thesis has both quantitative and qualitative components.

#### ***3.1 Quantitative Data Collection***

To understand the contexts of interpersonal youth violence, a quantitative analysis of the Safe Schools Surveys (2008-2010), a systematic social observations dataset and the 2006 Census data has been conducted and merged by Darren Cyr, Scott Davies and myself. The main source of data used for this study is the Safe Schools Survey (2008-2010). The Safe Schools Survey, comprised of surveys from Hamilton public elementary school students (2008-2009) (N=22334) and Hamilton public high school students (2009-2010) (N= 22334), focusing on student experiences with different types of interpersonal youth violence. Surveys were collected for students in both elementary and secondary schools through the years 2008-2010. The safe school survey is ideal for my analysis for several reasons. Firstly, the objective of the study was to understand the prevalence of different forms of interpersonal youth violence for students throughout the school board. The surveys collected are a representative sample of student opinions and experiences across economic and geographic lines. Secondly, the survey questions were broken down into the perceptions of school safety, types of violence experienced and perceptions of school preparedness to deal with violence. These sections aligned with my own

independent research questions. The survey was also used to collect data from students in both elementary and secondary school grades. This differentiation allows me to understand the age-based influence for youth violence.

To create measures for understanding neighbourhood and environmental effects of violence I helped construct a systematic social observation recording method with Darren Cyr. Similar to work performed by Robert Sampson (1999) to examine neighbourhoods in Chicago; we designated face-blocks surrounding each secondary and elementary school within the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board. Our face blocks were constructed for each neighbourhood block that bordered onto the school's campus via the North, South, East and West sides. This format created a square perimeter around each school for which different variables were observed. We also created a systematic social observation booklet for each school. From this we were able to record observations for 56 variables for each school. Each booklet was named, dated and recorded with a time for the observations. Observations for each public school in the Hamilton area were recorded from June to August 2008, while observations for Elementary Schools were collected between May to August 2009 with Darren Cyr and Kris Clark.

Within the systematic social observations booklet, first recordings were dedicated to school exterior/grounds measures. For these variables, yes and no indicators were recorded for questions like "Is the school's lawn maintained?", "Does the school have matching windows" or "Were there signs of disrepair to the exterior of the school?". To collect these variables we walked around the immediate building of the school, followed by a walk of the school grounds.

Following school exterior/grounds measures, we recorded neighbourhood measures. The neighbourhood measures were recorded by walking each faceblock independently. For each faceblock we began by indicating direction of traffic and traffic flow. After this, we recorded the physical disorder for each faceblock using the same methods. Independently, we each walked up and down a faceblock twice to record the amount of visible physical disorder. These measures were recorded by asking questions, such as: “Is there litter on the sidewalk?”, “Are there cigarette butts on the ground?” or “Are there empty beer and alcohol bottles discarded on the ground?”. A separate section for secluded areas was also created to correspond with neighbourhood measures. Secluded areas involved parking lots or alleyways that were connected to a faceblock. For these we recorded measures by asking “Is there visible graffiti?”, “Is there garbage or litter on the ground?” “Are there empty alcohol bottles on the ground?”.

Along with the physical disorder for each faceblock we also recorded the types of businesses and housing. For businesses we recorded the types of businesses (ex. franchise, independent, restaurant, liquor store, etc.) and the physical conditions of those buildings. We asked questions, such as: “Are there instances of graffiti on the businesses?” or “Are there hand painted signs on a business?”. We also recorded the types of houses on each face block. Some of the houses recorded included: bungalow, two storeys, above store apartment. Housing measures were qualified by physical disorder using questions, such as: “Are lawns maintained?”, “Is there litter or garbage on resident’s lawns?” and “Are there warning signs on houses?”.

Following the recording of physical measurements, we again divided and recorded the social disorder for each faceblock. This was done twice during a 24 hour period. For each faceblock we recorded instances of social disorder at 10am and 2pm. While recording instances

of social disorder we indicated for measures, such as: “Are there loitering youth?”, “Is there evidence of open alcohol consumption?” and “Are there examples of public intoxication?”.

These measures were recorded along with personal notes of general social observations for each facebook. Personal observations were not recorded in our final dataset.

In 2010 these systematic social observation measures were slightly altered to record for elementary schools. Included in our school exterior/grounds measure were: “Was there playground equipment for children?” and “Was the school yard fenced in?”. From May to August 2010, complete systematic social observations data was collected and recorded for all elementary schools (total 169 schools).

### ***3.2 Merging School Level Data***

All variables for secondary and elementary schools were coded and entered into separate excel files. These files were later merged together to be formatted for use with STATA statistical analysis software. When coding these measures, a yes response was recorded as 1 and a no was recorded as 0. For measures that included a count, such as “How many instances of graffiti were on the school exterior?” those counts were recorded and included in excel files. Once the data was recorded and amalgamated between high school and elementary school observations, it was merged with existing Safe Schools Survey, census and school catchments area data.

### ***3.3 Construction of Scales***

Similar to the scales created by Robert Sampson for concentrated disadvantage, I created scale models for census and physical disorder variables. To create my physical disorder scale I used variables that were indicators of negative aspects of the immediate environment. Those variables included instances of cigarette butts, discarded alcohol bottles, drug paraphernalia,



vandalism, broken glass, abandoned cars, waste bins, warning signs, dumpsters, school disrepair, school ground litter, school garbage bins, school smoking areas, cigarette butts on school property, school ground areas obstructed from full view, school security precautions, school surveillance cameras and school riot bars. The census data scale was created in a similar way, using multiple independent variables related to economic neighbourhood environments. The variables used to create my census data scale included indicators for median economic family income per neighbourhood, the number of individuals who owned houses per neighbourhood, the number of lone parent families per neighbourhood, the number of individuals who have moved into a neighbourhood within the past five years, the total number of females per neighbourhood, the number of unemployed individuals per neighbourhood, total number of individuals who use English as their mother tongue language per neighbourhood, and the total number of children per neighbourhood.

To create these scales all variables needed to be ordered in the same direction. For example, if a physical disorder question listed a 1 for a positive instance of disorder, but a 0 for the lack of public resources, those two variables would be indicating in opposite directions despite both signaling for disorder. It was, therefore, necessary to use a reverse syntax on a number of variables to switch their indicated direction before amalgamation.

I also standardized many of the census tract variables using z-scores. Unlike my physical disorder variables, which were coded with a 0 or 1, census data was listed in a variety of different ways. For example, some variables were listed in percent while others were listed as whole numbers. To regulate these differences I used a Z-Score syntax to standardize. Once all independent census and physical disorder variables were directionally representative and

standardized they were measured using an alpha command to determine the scale reliability coefficient. For my physical disorder variables the alpha value was .8148 and my census variables the alpha value was .9166. Once alpha values were determined I used syntax to create the scale variables. Statistical analysis was conducted using STATA 11. To test the associations between socio-environmental with being involved with interpersonal youth violence I included all variables into a multilevel logistic regression model.

### ***3.4 Dependent Variables***

In my initial descriptive analysis, I used variables from the Safe Schools Survey as dependent variables to examine the difference in violence participation. These variables were measured against systematic social observation measures for physical and social disorder, school demographic variables to determine age and gender, and 2006 census data providing information for socioeconomic environments.

### ***3.5 Independent Variables***

The independent variables used in this study consisted of a variety of markers to understand student demographics and environments. Firstly, general demographic information for student age, gender, grade and school level was used to determine the prevalence of reporting differences. These allowed for the interpretation of perceptions of school safety and engagement in different types of school violence by demographics. Following those variables, school level indicators were included. To understand the influence of school environments for interpersonal youth violence I used EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) test scores and the percentage of suspensions/expulsions per school each year. These variables provided insight into the socio-academic climate of schools and how this affects violent student behaviour.

My dependent variables were various measures of experiences and perceptions of different kinds of bullying and violence. The independent variables used included census demographics, physical disorder indicators, EQAO scores, gender, age, level of school, school size and percent of students suspended or expelled. Census level data was amalgamated into an independent variable “Census Scale”. This was used to examine socioeconomic indicators for youth violence.

The following descriptive tables outline my independent and dependent variables. Table 3.1 provides a descriptive summary of all independent variables and dependent variables. Listed are the number of observations, means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum limits in a five number summary. Table 3.2 provides percentages of students with positive responses for independent variables across dichotomized dependent variables. For example, 17.82 % of females and 21.37% and 35.54% individuals from schools with percentages of suspended or expelled students over 50% responded positively to feeling unsafe at school. These descriptive tables are helpful for understanding the sample population and average responses. These statistics are the first step to understanding how different contexts impact students’ experiences with violence.

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics For All Variables

Variables	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviations	Min.	Max.
Students Reported Often Being Bullied	23070	.08253	.2751796	0	1
Students Reported Being Physically Bullied	23070	.1187256	.3234724	0	1
Students Reported Being Cyber Bullied	23070	.1112267	.3144195	0	1

Students Reported Bullying Others	23070	.2142609	.4103175	0	1
Students Reported Physically Bullying Others	23070	.1237104	.3292581	0	1
Students Report Witnessing Physical Bullying	23070	.4152146	.4927697	0	1
Students Report Witnessing Social Bullying	23070	.2292154	.4203372	0	1
Students Report Witnessing Cyber Bullying	23070	.1331599	.3397549	0	1
Students Report Socially Bullying Others	23070	.1906805	.3928462	0	1
Students Report Cyber Bullying Others	23070	.0738188	.2614815	0	1
Students Report Their School Needs More Punishment	23070	.6864759	.4639354	0	1
Students Report Socially Bullying Others	23070	.1906805	.3928462	0	1
Students Report Witnessing Social Bullying	23070	.2292154	.4203372	0	1
Students Report Verbally Bullying Others	23070	.2559601	.436409	0	1
Students Report Being Verbally Bullied	23070	.3100997	.4625442	0	1
Students Reported Not Feeling Safe at School	22916	.1965003	.3973598	0	1
Female	23070	.483485	.499738	0	1
Grade	23070	7.790782	2.517695	4	12
Secondary	23070	.39987	.489882	0	1
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	23070	6.153702	7.317004	0	62.5
School Population	22716	700.4786	392.1598	68	1450
EQAO	22482	61.24102	14.36563	22	82.3 3334

PD Scale	23070	8.269864	4.040201	2.5	19.5
Census Scale	23070	48.1023	38.28534	-.4841	203.4478

Table 3.2 Prevalence of Bullying Types By Variable

	Students Reported Not Feeling Safe at School	Students Reported Often Being Bullied	Students Reported Being Physically Bullied	Students Reported Being Verbally Bullied	Students Reported Being Cyber Bullied	Students Reported Bullying Others	Students Report Physically Bullying Others	Students Report Verbally Bullying Others	Students Report Socially Bullying Others	Students Report Cyber Bullying Others
Females	17.82	9.11	9.84	32.85	14.26	20.22	8.56	24.96	22.38	8.09
Males	21.37	7.46	13.78	29.29	8.18	22.56	15.94	26.19	15.97	7.38
Prevalence for Schools with High Graffiti Counts	20.97	8.26	13.95	36.49	14.14	26.90	15.75	31.57	22.95	9.75
Under Grade Nine	18.59	8.25	10.20	26.59	8.69	17.01	9.65	20.79	15.94	5.48
Elementary Schools	22.69	12.50	18.11	23.70	6.93	14.58	10.55	37.98	12.68	3.73
Secondary Schools	15.09	5.49	2.51	41.98	17.41	31.71	15.11	17.34	28.66	12.87
Percent of Students Suspend or Expelled over 50%	35.54	17.77	49.59	63.64	16.53	49.59	35.54	51.65	32.23	11.98
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled Under 50%	19.48	8.10	21.13	30.66	11.07	21.13	12.13	25.32	18.93	7.33
School Population Over 700	15.09	5.59	4.07	42.49	17.30	31.87	15.68	38.26	28.82	12.83
School Population Under 700	22.79	12.52	17.22	23.14	6.88	14.26	10.10	16.91	12.38	3.65
EQAO	18.25	7.85	10.81	30.07	10.65	20.27	11.21	24.56	18.54	6.89

Scores Over 50%										
EQAO Scores Under 50%	24.13	9.41	13.67	32.08	12.39	24.05	14.60	27.99	19.97	8.95
Census Scale Over 40 Thousand	20.18	9.23	11.08	29.06	10.49	21.52	12.01	24.55	18.61	7.16
Census Scale Under 40 Thousand	19.31	7.72	12.38	32.25	11.53	21.36	12.60	26.26	19.36	7.52

	Students Report Witnessing Physical Bullying	Students Report Witnessing Social Bullying	Students Report Witnessing Cyber Bullying	Students Reported Their Schools Need More Punishment	Students Reported That Ostracism of Peers was Okay	Students Reported Being Aware of Fighting
Females	43.52	27.04	15.49	73.16	17.70	8.01
Males	39.65	19.07	11.28	64.43	26.19	8.57
Graffiti Count	49.47	28.01	15.92	66.70	26.83	10.38
Under Grade Nine	35.12	18.82	11.21	70.21	18.27	7.11
Elementary Schools	27.87	13.86	12.60	73.75	11.68	6.70
Secondary Schools	62.01	36.52	14.38	60.99	37.70	11.37
Percent of Students Suspend or Expelled over 50%	64.46	34.30	28.10	62.40	29.75	15.70
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled Under 50%	41.28	22.80	13.16	68.71	22.00	8.49
School Population Over 700	62.39	36.54	12.06	61.05	37.25	11.34
School Population Under 700	27.21	13.58	15.15	73.86	11.69	6.66

EQAO Scores Over 50%	40.55	22.49	12.94	68.91	21.61	12.69
EQAO Scores Under 50%	43.00	23.79	13.69	67.76	22.68	11.16
Census Scale Over 40 Thousand	39.13	21.81	12.78	70.52	20.13	11.70
Census Scale Under 40 Thousand	43.04	23.62	13.66	67.46	23.33	11.74

### ***3.6 Qualitative Methodology***

To supplement my quantitative statistical findings I conducted exploratory interviews with 15 Hamilton youth from a variety of different neighbourhoods. The aim of these interviews was to first understand the types of violence youth engage in and secondly the social dynamics of those behaviors. These interviews attempted to preliminarily answer the following research questions: In terms of culture, is there a recognizable Code of the Street in those schools, or does it resemble a more general youth culture?, In terms of dynamics, do forms of school conflict take the forms suggested by Collins; can we recognize differences between bullying, scapegoating and honour contests?, and In terms of gender, do each of the above questions vary significantly by gender? Are there different prevalence rates, cultures and dynamics for males and females?

By asking interviewees to recall a particular violent altercation between their peers that had previously been resolved, I hoped to dissect a number of different types of violent youth behaviour. According to Collins (2008), youth engage in a many types of violence, each with its own unique social influence and intent. By asking students to recall a single incident I was able

to describe both the environmental and social influences for that altercation, along with the specific type of violence used.

In my interviews I asked questions such as “What kind of assault was there?”, “How many people were victims”, and “How many people were the aggressors?”. These questions were aimed to specifically determine the definitional type of violence that those youth witnessed or engaged in. When asking how many people were the victims, I aimed to understand if that incident was an act of bullying. As previously defined, bullying is understood as a persistent act of violence between two individuals, an aggressor of middling social status and a single victim of lesser social status (Collins, 2008). If interviewees described an incident between a large numbers of aggressors then the situation is not considered true bullying. Similarly, if the incident had a large number of victims and aggressors I was able to typologize that violence in terms of peer-to-peer conflict more easily.

Expanding on questions of situational numbers, I also asked youth to describe possible social influences for that fight. Questions such as “Where did the altercation take place?”, “Was the location visible to all staff and students”? “What time did the altercation take place?” attempted to uncover the youth’s social environments. These questions allow me to understand the relationship between macro and micro social influences for types of violent behavior youth engage in. Building from quantitative analysis involving neighbourhood effects, I questioned if the environmental resources of their immediate school locations affect the types of violence they engage in.



Delving deeper into the micro social influences for youth violence, I asked questions such as “Was the conflict a result of aggression that had built up over time or did it just happen?”, “Was there social media involved in this incident?” , “Do you think it is socially necessary to fight? Why?”, “Can you explain why the violent altercation took place?”. These questions were aimed at understanding students own personal perceptions of violence. This allowed me a glimpse of how youth social backgrounds and demographics influence the different responses to social cues for violence, and whether macro or micro social contexts had a greater effect on their behavior.

These interviews were made possible through a referral (from another community education program in Hamilton) to a contact within the John Howard Society of Hamilton. Administration within that organization granted me permission to recruit possible interview participants from youth involved in their school outreach and probation programs. These students were from a variety of different Hamilton neighborhoods and all between the ages of sixteen to nineteen. They volunteered their time to participate in my interviews through recruitment brochures with my personal contact information. Interviews were conducted in an unused office located in the same building as the John Howard Society, out of convenience for my interview participants. Youth participants each read and signed individual interview consent forms and gave permission for their interviews to be digitally recorded. All fifteen interviews have been recorded and transcribed into an encrypted file on my home computer.

## **Chapter 4: Quantitative Data Analyses**

### 4.1 Contexts and Questions

### 4.2 Answering Research Questions

#### 4.2a Context

#### *4.1 Contexts and Questions*

The aim of this of research is to demonstrate how bullying literature can benefit from the inclusion of sociological perspectives. Specifically, interpersonal youth violence literature can benefit from the elaboration of research for three types of social contexts. Firstly, my research highlights the immediate networks of age and gender as influences for different types of youth aggression. I also address the influences of neighbourhoods and micro geographies, interpreted by the influence of physical disorder within immediate school environments, for youth violence. Finally status-threatening social situations are also addressed as influences for youth violence. These contextual influences are addressed through an examination of student self-report survey findings from the Safe Schools Survey (2008/2009). Following a discussion, these findings will be supplemented by qualitative research findings to understand both macro and micro contextual influences for youth violence. The quantitative research portion of this thesis attempts to examine broad contextual influences for interpersonal youth violence. I believe this multi-method approach is usefully for examining interpersonal youth violence in Hamilton.

My first set of analyses examines links between student's self-reported violence and their school demographics, neighbourhood disorder and family income backgrounds. In this section I answer the following research questions: In terms of contexts, what is the likelihood of interpersonal youth violence? Is violence more likely to occur within lower socioeconomic and higher disordered neighbourhoods? Does gender have a significant effect on the types of

violence used by students?. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 describe student's perceptions of school safety and Tables 4.3 through 4.16 demonstrate students own experience of violence. Model 1 acts as a baseline for student demographics and school indicators against my dependent variables. Model 2 includes my student demographics variables and my census data scale. The census data scale is used to examine neighbourhood background effects by using variables for family member highest education level and average household yearly income.

Examining tables 3.1 and 3.2, from the previous chapter, the proportional outcomes for students reporting violence are noted. The responses for experiencing, using and witnessing violence according to gender follow distinct patterns. More males than females report feeling unsafe at school, but less report actually being bullied. Females report more instances of witnessing and being verbally bullied, while males proportionally report more cases of being physically bullied and using physical bullying. Perhaps these proportional differences in self-reports are largely due to different types of interpersonal violence being more prevalent than others. More indirect forms of bullying, such as social and verbal are more prevalent because they cause less visible harm and cannot be monitored as easily by school officials. Males may not be under reporting their experiences of those types of violence, but simply experience it less than females. The proportional reports table also show that schools with a percentage of students suspended or expelled over 50% experienced large proportions of students reporting being physically bullied, being verbally bullied, reports of students bullying others and students verbally bullying others. These types of schools and their proportions for students reporting violence is perhaps a reflection of those cohorts being especially more violent towards their peers than others. School population size also plays a role in the proportion of violence, with students

in smaller schools feeling less safe and more likely to report being bullied and being physically bullied. However, more reports of using violence came from schools with higher populations. Smaller school populations might be more aware of the social situations of others, resulting in more awareness of violence between their peers. Students in smaller schools might also be more reluctant to report using violence against their peers such close knit social situations. Larger school populations might also encourage the use of more indirect forms of violence, as their social networks are larger and more complex. The navigation of larger social hierarchies might call for more social aggression against peers.

Examining the difference between students and age, a higher proportion of elementary school students report feeling unsafe at school.. However, while elementary school students report more cases of being bullied and being physically bullied, more secondary school students report being verbally bullied and using all types of violence against their peers. Similar to gender differences in the proportions of reporting, there is a divide between direct and indirect forms of violence being used. Students in secondary schools may have learned to adapt their violence to more indirect forms to avoid punishment. These proportions show that as students age they may be less likely to use direct physical violence, instead using indirect social and verbal violence against their peers. By examining the proportions of student responses we notice distinct patterns between the types of violence used by different cohorts and within different environments. My logistic regression builds on these findings to examine the likelihood of those types of violence being used in different social and environmental situations.

From tables 4.1 and 4.2 a strong gender and age relationship is noted. When asked if students often experienced bullying, female students were significantly more likely respond

positively and state that their schools require more punishment for violence. However, males were significantly more likely to report feeling unsafe in school. Different gendered perceptions of school safety might have been reflected in age responses. Students in higher grades were significantly more likely to report feeling unsafe at school; while younger students are more likely to report actually being bullied (See tables 4.1 and 4.2). These findings are consistent with previous research stating that younger students are more likely to bully and physically assault their peers (Collins 2011). Younger age groups have the highest incident rate of violence, where the ability to injury is slight (Collins 2011). The fact that younger children rarely cause serious injury to each other when they fight might also relate to students perceptions of school safety.

Table 4.1 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Feeling Safe at School

	(1) Students Reported Not Feeling Safe at School	(2) Students Reported Not Feeling Safe at School
Females	-0.22*** (0.035)	-0.22*** (0.035)
Grade	-0.15*** (0.014)	-0.15*** (0.014)
Secondary Students	0.41* (0.19)	0.41* (0.19)
Graffiti Count	0.0066 (0.0042)	0.0066 (0.0042)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.010* (0.0049)	0.010* (0.0049)
School	-0.00033	-0.00034

Population	(0.00022)	(0.00023)
EQAO Scores	-0.013*** (0.0027)	-0.013*** (0.0027)
Census Scale		0.00012 (0.00088)
_cons	0.47* (0.21)	0.47* (0.22)
lns1_1_1		
_cons	-1.31*** (0.10)	-1.31*** (0.10)
<i>N</i>	22334	22334

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.2 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Reports of Often Being Bullied

	(1) Students Reported Often Being Bullied	(2) Students Reported Often Being Bullied
Female	0.25*** (0.061)	0.24*** (0.061)
Grade	-0.12*** (0.025)	-0.12*** (0.025)
Secondary Students	-0.24 (0.21)	-0.22 (0.21)
Graffiti Count	-0.0022 (0.0045)	-0.0036 (0.0044)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.0060 (0.0040)	0.0067 (0.0038)
School Population	-0.00019 (0.00024)	-0.00024 (0.00023)
EQAO Scores	-0.0042 (0.0029)	-0.0034 (0.0028)

Census Scale		0.0016 (0.0010)
_cons	-1.08*** (0.25)	-1.17*** (0.25)
lns1_1_1 _cons	-1.95*** (0.35)	-2.08*** (0.43)
<i>N</i>	14564	14564

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The first tables also show significant effects in the expected direction for suspension rates and EQAO testing scores. Those tables suggest that school climate matters; students in schools with worse disciplinary and academic climates are more likely to report feeling unsafe. Significant effects for graffiti on school buildings also demonstrate that disordered environments cause students to feel unsafe. These outcomes, however, do not predict violence. Previous models demonstrate student’s feelings instead of predicting bullying behavior. My second set of variables focus on the actual measures of violence, exploring the more subtle forms experienced by students, such as relational bullying. Table 4.3 provides a summary of all significant effects, noting for each independent variable how many dependent variables it has statistically significant effects for.

Table 4.3 Summary Table of All Effects

	Female	Grade	Secondary Schools	Graffiti Count	Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	School Population	EQAO Scores	Census Scale
Total Number of Significant Dependent Variables	14	15	14	13	1	0	0	0

Tables 4.4 through 4.6, indicate the reports of students being victims of different forms of bullying. For these dependent variables, a strong gender relationship is noted. Males are significantly more likely to report being physically bullied, while females are significantly more likely to report being victims of verbal and cyber bullying (See Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6). The evidence of graffiti in their local environment also has a significant effect on the likelihood that a student will report being bullied. A micro social effect appears to be evident from these findings. While direct forms of violence are reported as a split between the sexes (females are significantly more likely to be victims of verbal bullying), these types of direct violence are most likely perpetrated at lower grade levels (See Tables 4.4 and 4.5). The use of indirect violence, such as cyber bullying, is more likely to occur at higher grade levels, and even significantly more likely to occur in secondary school than elementary school (See Table 4.6). Micro social contexts play into these experiences of violence in several ways. Youth in higher grades, or even secondary school, might have better access to internet social networking sites. Youth below the age of 16 are restricted from holding certain social networking sites, limiting their ability to cyber bully their peers. Students in higher grades also have increased social networks within and outside their school environment. Students that have conflict with peers might not be physically available to bully them on a daily basis. Therefore, older students become the victims of indirect forms of violence more often.

Table 4.4 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Physically being Bullied

	(1) <b>Students Report Being Physically Bullied</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Being Physically Bullied</b>
Female	-0.50***	-0.50***



	(0.051)	(0.051)
Grade	-0.11*** (0.021)	-0.11*** (0.021)
Secondary Students	3.27 (2.17)	2.97 (2.14)
Graffiti Count	0.098* (0.047)	0.099* (0.047)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.077 (0.056)	0.075 (0.055)
School Population	-0.0035 (0.0025)	-0.0031 (0.0025)
EQAO Scores	0.012 (0.030)	0.0026 (0.030)
Census Scale		-0.018 (0.011)
_cons	-4.12 (2.19)	-2.79 (2.28)
lns1_1_1 _cons	1.23*** (0.11)	1.21*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.5 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Being Verbally Bullied

	(1) <b>Students Report Being Verbally Bullied</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Being Verbally Bullied</b>
Female	0.26*** (0.033)	0.26*** (0.033)

Grade	-0.064*** (0.014)	-0.064*** (0.014)
Secondary Students	6.57** (2.34)	6.02* (2.46)
Graffiti Count	0.11* (0.051)	0.11* (0.051)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.087 (0.060)	0.083 (0.059)
School Population	-0.0037 (0.0027)	-0.0035 (0.0027)
EQAO Score	0.019 (0.032)	0.012 (0.034)
PDScale		0.052 (0.21)
censusSESscale		-0.020 (0.012)
_cons	-5.12* (2.36)	-4.05 (2.86)
lns1_1_1		
_cons	1.31*** (0.11)	1.29*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.6 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Being Cyber Bullied

	(1) <b>Students Report Being Cyber Bullied</b>	(3) <b>Students Report Being Cyber Bullied</b>
Female	0.69*** (0.046)	0.69*** (0.046)

Grade	0.097*** (0.019)	0.097*** (0.019)
Secondary Students	4.16** (1.51)	3.97** (1.49)
Graffiti Count	0.080* (0.033)	0.081* (0.033)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.049 (0.038)	0.047 (0.038)
School Population	-0.0024 (0.0018)	-0.0021 (0.0017)
EQAO Score	0.0077 (0.021)	0.0017 (0.021)
Census Scale		-0.012 (0.0075)
_cons	-6.13*** (1.53)	-5.26*** (1.59)
lns1_1_1 _cons	0.85*** (0.12)	0.84*** (0.12)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

In tables 4.7 to 4.11 I examine the instances of students bullying others. From these data we see that males are generally more likely to report bullying others (See Table 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9). Females are not represented on a significant level for reporting the use of direct violence, such as verbal or physical, against their peers. Females, however, are more likely to report the use of indirect forms of violence, such as cyber or social bullying against their peers. Physical environments also play a role in the likelihood of students reporting the use of violence. The prevalence of graffiti is significantly likely to indicate the use of different forms of bullying against their peers. There is also a strong correlation between students being in higher grades or

even secondary school reporting the use of violence over their peers. This might be explained as students feeling the need to adhere to a Youth Code to earn and maintain hierarchical social status. Students perpetrate different acts of violence against their peers to distinguish themselves from one another or gain status within a social hierarchy (Milner 2004:26). By bullying others, students set themselves apart and distinguish their social position. If there is a top rank in a social hierarchy, there must be a bottom (Milner 2004:26).

Gender norms also influence these behaviors as males feel the need to demonstrate masculine stances or adhere to masculine roles through the demonstration of their physical capabilities against their peers (Milner 2004:46). School hierarchies that follow heteronormative gender norms also associated strong female behaviour with a negative stigma. Therefore, female students might not only be less likely to perpetrate physical violence, but if they do, they are less likely to report it due to social pressures. Interestingly, the only variable that correlated with the percent of students suspended from a school was the likelihood that a student would use cyber bullying against their peers. In schools with higher percentages of suspension and expulsion, students were significantly more likely to use cyber bullying tactics.

Table 4.7 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Reporting Bulling Others

	(1) <b>Students Report Bullying Others</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Bullying Others</b>
Female	-0.13*** (0.036)	-0.13*** (0.036)
Grade	0.078*** (0.015)	0.078*** (0.015)
Secondary Students	5.38**	5.13**

	(1.92)	(1.90)
Graffiti Count	0.098* (0.042)	0.098* (0.042)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.076 (0.049)	0.073 (0.049)
School Population	-0.0033 (0.0022)	-0.0030 (0.0022)
EQAO Scores	0.014 (0.027)	0.0069 (0.027)
Census Scale		-0.015 (0.0095)
_cons	-5.67** (1.94)	-4.57* (2.03)
lns1_1_1		
_cons	1.10*** (0.11)	1.09*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455
Standard errors in parentheses		
* $p < 0.05$ , ** $p < 0.01$ , *** $p < 0.001$		

Table 4.8 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Physically Bullying Others

	(1) <b>Students Report Physically Bullying Others</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Physically Bullying Others</b>
Female	-0.77*** (0.046)	-0.77*** (0.046)
Grade	-0.035 (0.019)	-0.035 (0.019)
Secondary Students	5.16** (1.79)	4.93** (1.77)
Graffiti Count	0.094* (0.039)	0.094* (0.039)

Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.070 (0.045)	0.067 (0.045)
School Population	-0.0032 (0.0021)	-0.0030 (0.0020)
EQAO Scores	0.0085 (0.025)	0.0016 (0.025)
Census Scale		-0.014 (0.0088)
_cons	-4.57* (1.79)	-3.56 (1.87)
lns1_1_1		
_cons	1.02*** (0.11)	1.00*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.9 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Verbally Bullying Others

	(1) <b>Student Report Verbally Bullying Others</b>	(2) <b>Student Report Verbally Bullying Others</b>
Female	-0.049 (0.034)	-0.049 (0.034)
Grade	0.068*** (0.015)	0.068*** (0.015)
Secondary Students	5.80** (2.06)	5.52** (2.04)
Graffiti Count	0.099* (0.045)	0.100* (0.045)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.076 (0.053)	0.073 (0.052)

School Population	-0.0034 (0.0024)	-0.0031 (0.0024)
EQAO Scores	0.014 (0.029)	0.0053 (0.029)
Census Scale		-0.016 (0.010)
_cons	-5.52** (2.08)	-4.30* (2.17)
lns1_1_1 _cons	1.18*** (0.11)	1.16*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.10 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Socially Bullying Others

	(1) <b>Students Report Socially Bullying Others</b>	(2) <b>Student Report Socially Bullying Others</b>
Female	0.51*** (0.037)	0.51*** (0.037)
Grade	0.060*** (0.016)	0.060*** (0.016)
Secondary Students	5.73** (1.95)	5.46** (1.93)
Graffiti Count	0.095* (0.042)	0.096* (0.042)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.066 (0.049)	0.063 (0.049)
School Population	-0.0035 (0.0023)	-0.0032 (0.0022)

EQAO Scores	0.014 (0.027)	0.0059 (0.027)
Census Scale		-0.016 (0.0096)
_cons	-5.85** (1.95)	-4.69* (2.03)
lns1_1_1 _cons	1.11*** (0.11)	1.09*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.11 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Cyber Bullying Others

	(1) <b>Students Report Cyber Bullying Others</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Cyber Bullying Others</b>
Female	0.23*** (0.053)	0.23*** (0.053)
Grade	0.13*** (0.023)	0.13*** (0.023)
Secondary Students	3.08** (1.18)	2.95* (1.17)
Graffiti Count	0.071** (0.026)	0.072** (0.026)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.051 (0.030)	0.049 (0.029)
School Population	-0.0012 (0.0014)	-0.0011 (0.0014)



EQAO Scores	0.0053 (0.016)	0.00071 (0.017)
Census Scale		-0.0083 (0.0060)
_cons	-6.53*** (1.23)	-5.89*** (1.28)
lns1_1_1 _cons	0.58*** (0.13)	0.57*** (0.13)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

In tables 4.12 to 4.14 the likelihood of witnessing different forms of violence was recorded. For these variables, the presence of graffiti in a student’s local environment was significantly linked to the reporting of witnessed violence, as it is in all models. In all cases, female students were significantly more likely than male students to report witnessing different forms of interpersonal youth violence. Students in higher grades, especially secondary schools, were also significantly more likely to report witnessing more violence (See Table 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14). Just as females were less likely to report perpetrating violence, perhaps males are persuaded by perceived gender norms to not mention witnessing different forms of youth violence. According to previous research, females are also more likely to experience different forms of violence and this might account for the different rates by gender.

Table 4.12 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Witnessing Physical Bullying

	(1) <b>Students Report Witnessing Physical Bullying</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Witnessing Physical Bullying</b>
Female	0.32*** (0.034)	0.32*** (0.034)

Grade	0.037* (0.015)	0.037* (0.015)
Secondary Students	7.13** (2.50)	6.79** (2.47)
Graffiti Count	0.12* (0.055)	0.12* (0.054)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.084 (0.064)	0.082 (0.064)
School Population	-0.0039 (0.0029)	-0.0036 (0.0029)
EQAO Scores	0.018 (0.035)	0.0087 (0.035)
Census Scale		-0.020 (0.013)
_cons	-5.65* (2.51)	-4.21 (2.63)
lns1_1_1		
_cons	1.38*** (0.11)	1.36*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.13 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Witnessing Social Bullying

	(1) <b>Students Report Witnessing Social Bullying</b>	(2) <b>Student Report Witnessing Social Bullying</b>
Female	0.59*** (0.035)	0.59*** (0.035)
Grade	0.14*** (0.015)	0.14*** (0.015)
Secondary Students	5.54** (1.95)	5.27** (1.92)

Graffiti Count	0.096* (0.043)	0.097* (0.042)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.065 (0.050)	0.063 (0.049)
School Population	-0.0034 (0.0023)	-0.0031 (0.0022)
EQAO Scores	0.017 (0.027)	0.0091 (0.027)
Census Scale		-0.016 (0.0096)
_cons	-6.55*** (1.97)	-5.35** (2.05)
lns1_1_1 _cons	1.12*** (0.11)	1.10*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.14 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Report Witnessing Cyber Bullying

	(1) <b>Students Report Witnessing Cyber Bullying</b>	(2) <b>Students Report Witnessing Cyber Bullying</b>
Female	0.45*** (0.043)	0.45*** (0.043)
Grade	0.11*** (0.018)	0.11*** (0.018)
Secondary Students	4.02* (1.88)	3.75* (1.85)
Graffiti Count	0.092* (0.041)	0.093* (0.041)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.060 (0.048)	0.057 (0.047)

School Population	-0.0028 (0.0022)	-0.0025 (0.0021)
EQAO Scores	0.014 (0.026)	0.0061 (0.026)
Census Scale		-0.016 (0.0093)
_cons	-6.30*** (1.89)	-5.13** (1.97)
lns1_1_1 _cons	1.08*** (0.11)	1.06*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The final two groups of tables provide information on student's perceptions of safety. Table 4.15 describes feelings towards the punishments for violence in their schools. Female students were significantly more likely than males to report that schools required more punishment for student's violence in their schools. Age also had a significant effect for this variable; where students in lower grades were significantly more likely to express the need for more punishment within their school. This age effect might be a result of a lack of understanding of school rules and repercussions for violence. It also may be due to students in older grades adhering to a Youth Code that sometimes prescribes violent response. Those older students might be reluctant to request more punishments for violence if they feel they are more likely to perpetrate it. This dependent variable was also the only one with a significant relationship between school EQAO testing scores. Students enrolled in schools with lower EQAO testing scores were significantly more likely to feel their schools needed more punishment for violent behaviour. This perception might be a reflection of a lack of confidence in school administration.

Rationalized as lower standardized test scores being a result of a lack of administrative capability, reflected in an inability to properly respond to academics and school violence.

Table 4.15 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Reported Their School Needing More Punishment

	(1) <b>Students Reported Their School Needing More Punishment</b>	(2) <b>Students Reported Their School Needing More Punishment</b>
Female	0.42*** (0.030)	0.42*** (0.030)
Grade	-0.094*** (0.012)	-0.094*** (0.012)
Secondary Students	-0.23 (0.15)	-0.26 (0.16)
Graffiti Count	-0.0057 (0.0035)	-0.0057 (0.0034)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	-0.0061 (0.0040)	-0.0062 (0.0040)
School Population	0.0000066 (0.00018)	-0.000027 (0.00018)
EQAO Scores	0.0039 (0.0022)	0.0048* (0.0023)
Census Scale		0.00080 (0.00072)
_cons	1.30*** (0.17)	1.17*** (0.20)
lns1_1_1 _cons	-1.57*** (0.12)	-1.60*** (0.12)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.16 focuses on students' perceptions on the acceptability of isolating behaviour. According to those findings, male students are significantly more likely to state that it is okay to ostracize certain individuals within their school. Students in higher grades, especially secondary school are significantly more likely to use this form of behaviour. Again, this behaviour reflects findings by Milner, in which youth feel the need to compete with one another for positions within a localized youth hierarchy (Milner 2004:40). While competing with others, students will distance or isolate individuals that might negatively affect their social standing. As a result, the use of isolation links with previous forms of violence to sustain youth status.

Table 4.16 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Reporting that Ostracism of Peers is Okay

	(1) <b>Students Reported that Ostracism of Peers was Okay</b>	(2) <b>Students Reported that Ostracism of Peers was Okay</b>
Female	-0.57*** (0.036)	-0.57*** (0.036)
Grade	0.077*** (0.016)	0.077*** (0.016)
Secondary	5.57** (1.83)	5.31** (1.80)
Graffiti Count	0.085* (0.040)	0.085* (0.040)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.062 (0.047)	0.060 (0.046)

School Population	-0.0029 (0.0021)	-0.0027 (0.0021)
EQAO Scores	0.014 (0.025)	0.0063 (0.025)
Census Scale		-0.015 (0.0090)
_cons	-5.49** (1.84)	-4.38* (1.92)
lns1_1_1 _cons	1.05*** (0.11)	1.04*** (0.11)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The final table reflects student awareness of violence. Table 4.17 demonstrates students' awareness of fighting within their school. For this dependent variable, gender did not have a significant effect. Instead students in higher grades, especially students enrolled in secondary school were significantly more likely to state that they were aware of fighting within their schools. I did not record significant effects for my physical disorder or census level scales. I predicted that there would be neighbourhood level effects for different forms of violence within schools. Instead, the statistical findings for my observations indicate a micro social influence for violence.

Table 4.17 Multi-Level Logistic Regression of Students' Reported Being Aware of Fighting

	(1) <b>Students Reported Being Aware of Fighting</b>	(3) <b>Students Reported Being Aware of Fighting</b>
Female	-0.073 (0.061)	-0.073 (0.061)
Grade	2.22*** (0.056)	2.22*** (0.056)

Secondary Students	-5.58** (2.01)	-5.81** (1.98)
Graffiti Count	0.088 (0.046)	0.088 (0.046)
Percent of Students Suspended or Expelled	0.046 (0.050)	0.044 (0.049)
School Population	-0.00028 (0.0025)	-0.000052 (0.0024)
EQAO Scores	0.040 (0.029)	0.032 (0.029)
Census Scale		-0.015 (0.010)
_cons	-24.8*** (2.26)	-23.6*** (2.33)
lns1_1_1		
_cons	1.08*** (0.13)	1.06*** (0.13)
<i>N</i>	22455	22455

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 4.2 Answering Research Questions

### 4.2a Context

Many significant effects were noticed between gender and grade. These findings are consistent with previous research arguing that females are more likely to engage in more covert forms of verbal bullying, while males are more overt forms of physical violence. My findings are also consistent with grade influences, demonstrating that overt forms of physical violence and bullying were more likely to occur during younger grades. These findings support a hypothesis that students are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour during younger ages because their social environments hierarchies are smaller and more tightly knit, and that there is less risk



of physical harm. These general findings answer my first research questions: Does the prevalence of violence differ by gender? Dependent variables provided by the safe schools surveys, indicating for types of violence, show that females are significantly more likely to engage in social bullying tactics, while males are more likely to report using verbal bullying and physical bullying against their peers. Overall, males are more likely to report using different types of violence against their peers. Females, however, are significantly more likely to report being victims of different forms of bullying. Previous research has shown that violence between peers in school settings are almost always between the same sex (Collins 2011). Therefore, male students must be demonstrating a reluctance to report the victimization of violence. Gender differences for the experience of youth violence are evident.

Secondly, data also answers the question: Is the prevalence of youth violence higher in some schools than others? My data shows that violence between students is more likely to occur in secondary schools than elementary schools. This goes against previous research that students are less likely to commit acts of violence against one another at older ages because there is greater risk for self-harm (Collins 2008). However, many of the questions in the Safe Schools Survey were not solely concerned with physical violence. Many of the dependent variables in my study measured the likelihood of being involved with verbal, cyber and social bullying. These forms of aggression are less overt and risk less noticeable physical harm to both the victim and the aggressor. These findings also support evidence for a temporary youth culture with the school. If students were likely to experience a strong Code of the Street within Hamilton environments, that code would dictate more aggressive and physical forms of confrontation to uphold social hierarchies. Instead, it appears students are more likely to engage in verbal or social violence aimed at stabilizing social hierarchies within school settings. Because students

are more likely to use violence in secondary school settings, this supports previous suppositions that youth violence is mostly enacted in times of social change or in settings of closed social structure. In the formative years of secondary school, students establish strong status locations within their peer groups. The negotiation and stabilization of those structures sometimes involve different types of interpersonal violence.

The final research question focused on demographic influences for youth violence is: Is youth violence more prevalent in schools located in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods? Unfortunately, the Safe Schools Survey data was de-identified prior to my use. School names were not included in the counts for different types of violence. However, I included a scale variable to determine the influence of various indicators of socioeconomic level per neighbourhood to see if this had an effect on the reporting youth violence. While these variables do not indicate if there is a school effect for socioeconomic neighbourhood demographics, they do demonstrate an overall neighbourhood effect. My data shows that lower socioeconomic neighbourhood environments do not have a significant effect on the type of violence committed by students. Instead, students may be more influenced by micro indicators for disorder and inclusion in their neighbourhoods rather than overall economic levels. This is supported by findings that students were significantly more likely to report being victims of violence, witnessing violence or taking part in interpersonal youth violence if the school environments had more graffiti social indicator of graffiti was present in their school environment. Instead of macro neighbourhood economic influences for antisocial youth behaviour, my results suggest a micro-social geographies influence. Relating back to work by Sampson (1997,1999) and McLughan (1993), students involved in violence, from environments with many indicators for graffiti, might understand those symbols of disorder as a lack of overall Collective Efficacy.

Understood as an individual's willingness to engage in their environment in a positive way, disorder might signal to local youth that adults have become apathetic to their anti-social actions. Without symbols of adult supervision and care, youth interpret their relationships according to a socially deviant temporary youth culture rather than adhering to middle class social norms that regulate against violence. Supported by McLughan's (1993) theory of micro-geographies, youth from disordered neighbourhoods understand their social situations through interaction with others and their local environments. If environmental cues influence the ideals of individuals, the interactions of those individuals are further embedded in the social cultures of those environments. Therefore, certain behaviour according to different social environments becomes more prevalent or even more socially acceptable. Indicators of demographic and micro contextual influences will be further supported in the qualitative portion of my thesis.

## **Chapter 5: Qualitative Interview Analysis**

### 5.1 Dynamics and Questions

### 5.2 Descriptions of Accounts

### 5.3 Types of Violence

#### 5.3a Peer-to-Peer Honour Contests

#### 5.3b Group Fights

#### 5.3c Scapegoating

#### 5.3 d Bullying

### 5.4 The Role of Status

### 5.5 Confrontational Tension and Fear

### 5.6 Forward Panic

### 5.7 Types of Conflict According to Gender

### 5.8 Violence Cultures According to Gender

#### ***5.1 Dynamics and Questions***

The second set of analysis in this multi-method study builds on the previously discussed macro-contextual influences for youth violence to examine the micro-contexts, dynamics and types of in-school violence youth engage in. This particular research design allows us to accurately understand the many influences and types of violence youth engage in. This chapter will attempt to answer the following research questions: In terms of dynamics, does school conflict take the forms suggested by Collins? Can we recognize differences between bullying, scapegoating and honour contests? And, Are there different cultures and dynamics for males and females? The analysis of fifteen interviews, with students from a variety of different high school backgrounds, answers these questions. These interviews were conducted, with permission, through the John Howard Society of Hamilton.

Interviewed students describe instances of peer-to-peer honour contests, group fights, scapegoating and bullying. All in-school fights fit within the defined boundaries of those types of interpersonal violence described by Collins (2008, 2011). Compared to other instances of physical violence, peer-to-peer honour contests are most prevalent. Group fights and instances of

bullying are rare, as are violent altercations between females. Altercations were most commonly between individuals of the same sex and grade cohort, though this is partly a reflection of the sampling through the John Howard Society. Student who received aid from the John Howard Society of Hamilton were individuals who committed an illegal act in public. Those students were serving community service time or probation, facilitated through the John Howard Society. Social workers from the society referred willing interview participants to me from their different programs. However, the likelihood of this population having a larger history of personal violence than a general school demographic was not a hindrance to my study. My study attempts to understand the types of violence different youth engage in, not the amount.

### ***5.2 Description of Accounts***

Students commonly described altercations occurring between two friends. In one instance, an individual had been making fun of the other's little brother at school. In defence of his younger brother the older sibling punched his friend in the face. The altercation took place in the school, at lunch time, with a large number of people watching. There was no mention of verbal aggression between the individuals before the violence and witnesses did not attempt intervene. Other altercations between friends were similar in this way. Another instance of peer-to-peer violence involved two males who were similar in physical stature, fighting over the rumour of racial slurs. These two individuals were from different peer groups, but fought without support from their friends. Violence in that situation was extremely short lived and took place in the school hallway. Peers did cheer for their friends during the violence, but again, students did not intervene.

In another altercation between peers, former friends fought for the attention of a female peer. Their conflict began with name-calling and escalated to violence. This incident also took

place in a school hallway, during school hours, with a large group of students watching. Incidents of peer violence between females were also recorded. In one such incident, conflict began when a female had acted flirtatiously toward the male of interest of her friend. Name calling between the two females began off campus and continued during school hours. At the height of their aggression one of the girls yelled, “I’m going to crunch you!”. The second individual stood up to the challenge and pushed the other girl. Friends of the aggressive females only stepped in to break up the fight when one of the individuals was clearly losing.

All cases of fighting between friends or socially equal peers followed distinct patterns. Crowds of people are often present to cheer or witness youth violence, but they almost never stepped in to break them up. Individuals interviewed always fought on school property, during school hours, and where many students could be present. Examples of peer-to-peer fight locations included school cafeterias, entrances, parking lots and hallways. Those incidents of violence were very short lived, with only a couple of punches thrown before someone were knocked down or school administrators stepped in. Weapons were never mentioned in these cases. Student witnesses to those altercations also commented that the violence in those situations was unnecessary; the reason for their conflict wasn’t worth the risk of personal injury. Most interviewed students did, however, rationalize violence through a sustaining respect from peers or regaining something that was lost. As explained by one student witness, “It’s important for guys to fight, to earn their stripes” (D01). Violence between peers was regarded as a right of passage for teens, used to secure status and respect.

Fights described between large groups of students were less common than ones between peers. Perhaps this is because group fights required more collective organization between students than singular peer-to-peer violence. In cases of group fighting students described individuals as having a long standing beef with one another. Most described groups began instigating a fight several weeks before any physical violence occurred. In one instance, students were arguing about money owed from one group to another. The second group denied owing the other money, so a confrontation ensued. During group altercations every member of the group was described as a participant. Friends of group members also followed the conflict and cheered during their violence.

Groups of students aggressing against a single individual were less commonly described than peer-to-peer and group violence. Again, this may be because this type of violence requires a degree of coordination and commitment between peers. These altercations are not used to gain social status but to solidify hierarchies. With an absence of social gain rewarded to aggressive students, a lasting commitment to this form of aggression becomes unlikely. For example, in one instance a student was attacked by a large group of his peers after school. The victim was new to the school and not especially popular, but did have a small group of friends who he enjoyed skateboarding with. Aggressive students in this altercation were not of equal peer groups with the victim. They were known as strong “street kids” who had a reputation for aggressing against their peers. Before the physical altercation those individuals harassed the victim online, via Facebook. They made fun of his peer group and insulted his recently deceased mother. When those students finally aggressed against the victim the attack was not planned, but it did take advantage of the victim being outnumbered in a secluded area. Groups of witnesses were not present to encourage the violence. A similar incident also involved a female who was attacked by a group

of her peers. Again, this individual was not socially popular, being a new student to the school. However, she did have a small group of friends who were equally unpopular. The victim was aggressed against by her more socially popular peers because her artwork, for a class project, received a higher grade. The aggressive individuals spent three days verbally harassing the victim and socially alienating her from others. When the victim was isolated with her aggressors in an unused classroom they attacked, holding her down while another student punched her. Both the aggressors and the victim received school suspensions for their behaviour. There were no uninvolved student witnesses to this violence.

Cases of actual bullying, with a single individual becoming isolated and abused by another individual student were rare. One example provided by a witness described a younger smaller individual being picked on by a larger and more popular individual over a year and a half. The aggressor was not the most popular student in the school, but had several friends within different social groups. He was described as being in "...the middle of the food chain" socially (C04). The victim was described as a scrawny white male, while the aggressor was described as being a "tough guy" (C04). At school, the aggressor told the student that he was going to "smash him" during a lunch break the next day, and sought him out. In cases of described bullying, there were not witnesses and the violence was more prolonged. Social effects of this form of violence also seemed to be the most harmful than other forms of interpersonal youth violence. Victims were described as having no supporters and little social status following the violence inflicted on them.



### ***5.3 Types of Violence***

The types of violence described by students throughout my interviews follow the types of interpersonal youth violence outlined by Randall Collins (2011). Interviews were conducted with students from different social, racial and gendered backgrounds. Those interviews showed distinct patterns of behavior for the different types of violence youth engaged in. They also demonstrated attitudes toward violent behavior more in keeping with a temporary Youth Code rather than a more permanent Code of the Street behavior. These findings begin to uncover the social dynamics involved for the different forms of interpersonal youth violence in Hamilton.

#### ***5.3a Peer-to-Peer Honour Contests***

In cases of peer-to-peer honour contests, students described prolonged disagreement between two aggressive individuals. For example, a student described two individuals who physically fought as having a longstanding conflict with each other: “these two guys, everybody says that they have beef, like, problems with each other” (D04). In another case, two females became violent with one another in the school hallway after long standing verbal conflict fuelled by rumours. Prolonged conflict between individuals often drew attention from the student body. Peers supporting one student over another, or engaging in gossip about their conflict, fuelled individual aggression. Conflicting peers perhaps felt additional pressure and support to act violently toward their enemy as a result of attention gained by their prolonged conflict.

In recorded peer-to-peer honour contests a pattern of loss was also noted. Reasons for student aggression often involved the loss of money, romantic relationships, or respect. For example, two students described as having long standing conflict with one another resorted to violence over misplaced money. A witness to this violence explained, “So like, that guy just owes people money. So I guess the guy that I know, he like... he didn't take it, right? So he just wanted his money back. He wanted to fight” (C05). The described students became violent with

one another because one was upset with the amount of money the other owed to himself and others. Violence was rationalized by a witness as a way to solve the problem of unpaid debts.

Another individual described a peer-to-peer honour contest occurring over the loss of a former girlfriend. He explained,

*“The aggressor who was pushing for the fight was really angry and really upset because he just lost his girl friend to another guy who he didn't really think deserved her. The victim, who didn't really want to fight, was acting cocky because he was with the girlfriend. And then it just boiled over and ended up in a fight” (E03).*

Students also described peer-to-peer honour contests being fought for lost respect. One individual rationalized his use of violence against another by explaining that, “...he was giving me looks in the hallways and stuff and people was saying that he was talking about me, and that he could punch me out and all this.” (C01). Rumours between students formed the basis for these altercations. Students often described hearing their peers slander their physical or social reputations, and used those instances as grounds for physical aggression. An altercation between two females highlighted this issue, where one female student confronted a second asking “Why are you talking shit?”(C03). When the second female didn't respond the first became more aggressive, prompting the second to also become confrontational. As described by a witness, “... And then the other girl stepped up to her again and said ““Are you talking shit?” And then the girl said “No, I'm not talking shit.”, and punched her.”(C02). Other violent situations between students also described a loss of perceived peer respect, without verbal slander. While individuals described in these altercations did reportedly have conflict with one another, rumours were not the instigation for conflict. In one case a student accidentally nudged the second in a crowded cafeteria. One witness described the situation,

*“There were two guys who went to high school together and one of them had bumped into each other, and they had also had previous problems with speaking to each other... And the other one*

*knew he could take the other one, as in, the first guy swung and hit him. So, he felt obligated to hit him back.*” (D02).

In another case, when asked why his peers aggressed toward another, a student explained that “It seemed like the one guy was trying to show off to his friends.” (D04). Physical violence was used in these cases to sustain respect. Where one individual accidentally nudged another, the nudged individual felt the ability to defend himself was being questioned. In the second incident the aggressive individual took advantage of the opportunity of moral support from his peers. In both cases, individuals perceived a loss of respect, derived from the actions of the individual they were in conflict with and took an opportunity to gain it back.

For all peer-to-peer altercations, a perceived loss of social status was provided as a reason for violent conflict. Lost money or relationships were also described as a loss of respect. When a physical item was lost to someone, it symbolized a lack of ability to maintain social status. Where a student lost his girlfriend to an individual he was in conflict with, he argued that the new boyfriend was not of equal social status and did not deserve her. He did not aggress against his peer to gain back his former girlfriend, but was proving he could defend that loss. Similarly, the individual who lost money to his peer fought him to show that he couldn't be crossed. Situations where students fought in defence of negative social rumours about themselves were similar to cases of physical loss. In those cases they were also defending their social status to their peers. Students demonstrated that any loss amounted to a decreased social status in the eyes of their peers. Where verbal aggression didn't resolve status loss, physical aggression was used. Physical aggression was perceived as the ultimate tool for gaining status, as it not only proved one's physical strength but also the ability to suffer loss and prevail.

Because peer-to-peer honour contests occurred between people in the same social circles it was difficult for students to describe a clear victim. It was also difficult to distinguish a victim because both individuals seemed willing to engage in the violence. As described by one student, "... I couldn't choose who the victim was because they both started it. One of the kids was maybe smaller, but he could handle himself" (D04). Another student stated that "... there weren't really victims because... I think they were both like at fault for like trying to fight. So I wouldn't call like, anyone a victim" (C02). Unlike cases of bullying or scapegoating where a victim is clearly evident to all parties, peer-to-peer honour contests described very different social dynamics. The inability to define a clear victim or aggressor could have implications for a student's social status following the fight. Where no one is described as the victim, it would be inappropriate to characterize one student as the loser. Explained by one student, "They both ended up getting hurt, they both were victims in it because ... the guy who started it, got hurt too." (D02). With this result, students who engage in peer-to-peer honour contests are unlikely to lose large amounts of social status. Showing their commitment to fighting with a socially equal peer was unlikely to significantly diminish their social status.

Violent behavior in peer-to-peer honour contests were also prolonged after school intervention measures. Witnesses described altercations between students continuing during their off campus suspension and on their return to school. In one case, a peer attacked his enemy for a second time, in class, following a suspension. In this case, he attempted to strangle his peer from behind when he was trying to complete class work. As described by a student witness, "It was the first time he saw him, so he went up to him and tried to, I don't know what, crack him in the face and tried to choke him, just wanted to hurt him."(D02). Peer-to-peer honour contests

continued after suspension because the conflict was not resolved by the first act of violence or by school interventions. Students described school suspensions, in these cases, to be ineffectual, “Because it was just a suspension and so they were gone for a couple weeks and when they come back the fight just came again.” (D02).

There was also a limit to the amount of harm students could inflict through peer-to-peer honour contests. Fights were described as taking place “In the middle of the hallway.” (D01), “In front of the cafeteria”(D04) or “...Outside close to the parking lot”(D02). Because the violence often took place in visible school spaces, large groups of friends peers and school administration were on hand. The presences of peer support had the effect of inducing “forward panic<sup>1</sup>”. As one student explained, “... there was already a bunch of people chasing after me and shit because they knew what was going on. And then we started fighting” (C01). Congregating students perhaps generated a rush of emotion for that student. Not only do conflicting individuals feel social support from their peers, but also pressure to put on a show.

Peers support had an effect of limiting the types of violence used. For example, student witnesses intervened in a fight when a weapon was used. A witness explained, “He threw a couple punches but the kid kept going at him with the extendo<sup>2</sup> ... Then three other kids got in, and stomped on him and pinned him, and then he pinned him up with the extendo.” (E03). The use of a weapon for an in-school fight disrupted student power dynamics. Because the individual

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<sup>1</sup> According to Randall Collins (2008), forward panic is started with the tension and fear in a conflict situation. When aggressive tension is prolonged it has the effect of increasing over time.

<sup>2</sup> An extendo is a cylindrical metal shaft containing telescoping pieces that fit into one another when extended. This weapon is often carried by law enforcement and security professionals.

without a weapon was at a physical disadvantage his peers intervened. In a similar situation a student attacked another student from behind. This account took place in a classroom, where a student described the response:

*“It was in the classroom and the teacher turns around to like, break it up. But like, he can’t use physical violence because he’s like, a teacher. So one of the other students who knows both of them...broke it up because he was friends with both of them.” (D02).*

Similar to using a weapon, attacking a student when they were unaware provided an unfair physical advantage. Peer intervention was expected in these instances, to mitigate power imbalances and prevent serious physical harm.

Violent altercations between equal peers, without weapons, were also short lived due to a limit of acceptable harm. Students regulated the amount of harm they witnessed, inflicted or incurred through fighting. For one student, his altercation finished with first blood. He explained, “Like, right after I hit him in the nose, he started bleeding. And I backed up, and then, like I was done” (C01). Another student removed himself from the violence when the physical harm done to him was too great. A witness explained, “... well, he broke his hand and then he just went in” (C03). In other cases, students stepped in when the violence in an equally matched fight was too great. That situation was explained as, “It was broken up. There was like a huge crowd around and everyone broke it up.”(D03).

Students demonstrated an adherence to a temporary youth code. Unlike a Code of the Street, students were not inclined to bring or use weapons for personal protection in their fights. The amount of physical harm that was acceptable in those circumstances was also decidedly less severe than cases described by Anderson (1999) in North Philadelphia. Cases where students

required medical attention after a peer-to-peer honour contest were almost non-existent. While respect and social status (like in a Code of the Street) were the deciding factors in an individual's inclination to fight, minimal violence or harm was inflicted. The combatants also demonstrate little need for the escalation of violence, according to this code. Therefore, students who engaged in violence within Hamilton exemplify an understanding for the temporary nature of their social circumstances by limiting personal harm. Their behaviour demonstrates an understanding of the negative consequences for violent behaviour in their current and future social situations. As such, peer-to-peer honour contests, described by students, followed social patterns that differentiate from a Code of the Street.

### ***5.3b Group Fights***

Situations of group fights were similar to peer-to-peer honour contests in that they involved prolonged conflict. This conflict took place within the school and from home, via social media websites. Although the conflict was not always physically aggressive, interviewees described verbal aggression occurring between groups on a regular basis. In many of the cases, single individuals in conflict with one another within different groups, who later involved their peer groups for support, often initiated group fights. As one witness described an altercation, “It was him and three other people with him. And the guy that they went to attack, it was just him and two other guys”(C05). Peer groups not physically helped their friends during fights, but also helped them overcome situational tension and fear. The support of a large number of individuals allowed all members to react quickly when confronted. In a situation where a group of students accidentally crossed paths with their rival group, students quickly aggressed. One student recounted, “We were walking down the street, in front of the school, and twelve kids came at us

and just started jumping us” (E04). While members of the attacked group were at a disadvantage, they participated in the violence instead of running or seeking authorities.

Similar to similar to peer-to-peer honour contests, group fights involved the loss of a physical or symbolic possession. For one group altercation a student from one peer group owed the second money. Because the money was not returned in a timely fashion, the first group sought out the second. A witness explained, “. . .it was something about money. And then one guy is like, "I don't know what you're talking about" and then someone hit someone. . .”(C05). In this case, the issue of missing money was not a singular reason for aggression between the two groups. The first group was made up of a number of athletic popular students while the second were described as hippie skater students. Students from the popular athletic group showed a lack of respect for the second group in school. Having money owed to them by a large group of students, who they felt were of lesser social status, was an affront to their own reputations. Allowing those individual to take advantage of them exposed a weakness and reluctance to defend. Another altercation between peer groups was similar to the first, in that students from one group felt threatened by the actions of another. A new student, who became a part of a group of friends, was aggressed against by members of another group. The first group aggressed against the new member of the second group via facebook. A participant described those behaviors, “Yah, there was like the kids that was talking. . . on facebook and then all his friends were like, "Yah, I'll back it up. I'll smash on this..."(E04). A group of students aggressed against the new student's group because his inclusion upset previous social structures. Though the popular students remained popular, the news student drew attention away from that group To diminish the novelty of the situation the popular group verbally and physically harassed the



second. Group fights between students, therefore, stem from threats to situational social hierarchies.

While many interviewees argued that physically fighting was not necessary to gain popularity or maintain social status, in situations describing peer-to-peer honour contests students rationalized that behavior as maintaining respect between groups. This suggests a lack of understanding for the greater meaning of respect between peers, which ultimately result in a commitment to status hierarchies. In the case of unreturned money, students are fighting for respect in order to stabilize their social status. While the loss of physical property is an important issue, aggressing students expressed not wanting to be seen as incapable of defending their property or being weak. By aggressing against their peers they demonstrate a strength and commitment to maintaining social status not only to those they are in conflict with, but also witnesses to their aggression. Followed by a commitment to physical aggression, they demonstrate their physical and social power over other individuals participating in their closed social worlds, demonstrating an adherence to a temporary Youth Code of behavior. More than in peer-to-peer honour contests, individuals in group altercations can draw on large numbers of peers for support.

### ***5.3c Scapegoating***

Situations of scapegoating were commonly confused by students as situations of bullying. Scapegoating has many similar traits with bullying. It often involves the use of physical, verbal and social aggression. Because victims of scapegoating often feel socio-emotional stress as a result of a group's aggressive actions, instances of scapegoating are commonly confused with bullying by students. One interview student exemplifies this when explaining the reason and type of attack used against her,

“...I was pretty much getting bullied. They all held me back so I couldn’t hit her” (D03). Although this victim believed she was being bullied, because the attack came from several individuals at once, it was more likely a case of scapegoating. Aggressors in instances of scapegoating use the collective power of a large group against a single individual. With the support of numbers they find solidarity in their torment and are quick to physically aggress. As described in one situation, “They just got excited when they saw him... like, I know a couple of kids who roll with them and stuff. Like, they would smash kids and jump up on them, I don't know.” (E04). Groups of students who were aggressing against a single weakened individual often were described as becoming excited when they saw their victim alone. Given an opportunity where their power was greatest, groups easily attacked individuals. Perhaps this was because aggressors felt protected by an element of anonymity through their large group of friends. With so many students working against a single individual, it would be difficult for school administrators to place a singular blame. It would also be difficult to distinguish who caused the greatest amount of physical harm to the victim, as many individuals would attack the victim at once. This is exemplified in one case where a witness described an attack:

*“Like, one kid hit him and as he was backing up another kid hit him another way. So he got bounced around by being punched and then he fell to the ground and got stomped a bunch of times, got back up and got a knee in the face. Fell back down again.”(E04)*

The aggression of a group of individuals was also quick to grow; “It started from something small and then went to something big” (D03). The collective energy of a group against a single individual had the potential to take a trivial difference between the victim and the group and make it something substantial. For example, most instances began when a student became new to

the school. Small situational differences between the aggressors and victims acted as fodder for group aggression. However, instances of group aggression were not long-lived. Because scapegoating involved the active organization of a large number of individuals, that popular behaviour ended quickly as individuals lost interest or felt repercussions for their actions.

The victims of all instances of scapegoating were described as not being especially popular, but still having some sort of friend network. However, when friends gathered to watch the fight between aggressors and the victim, they did not interfere. For Collins (2008), the key aspect of scapegoating is that it creates for the aggressing group a huge rush of solidarity, a collective effervescence. The victim becomes a tool to unite the group.

### ***5.3d Bullying***

Accounts of bullying were not often described by interviewed students. Similar to scapegoating, students who described cases of bullying mentioned instances of social, emotional and physical violence. Both male and female students described instances of bullying, but females more frequently recounted situations where they were victims while males recounted stories of acquaintances. This may be a reflection of differences in rates of bullying by gender or that males are reluctant to discuss their own victimization.

Bullying accounts differed from accounts of scapegoating in many ways. Students described a single aggressor and victim who were in conflict for a long period of time. For example, one female student described her aggressor using social and physical aggression against her for almost two school years (E01). Another male individual described a bullying situation lasting several years, carrying over from elementary school to high school (E4). The lengthy timeframes for bullying behavior is different from incidents of scapegoating. Students

who described situations of scapegoating mentioned aggressive behavior lasting a few days or a week. Bullying behavior extended over a long period of time, exacerbating a victim's social isolation from their peer groups. These differences in timeframes may also relate to social and emotional development issues experienced by bullying victims, relating to the occurrences of mental health disorders. These potential outcomes highlight the importance of distinguishing between the different forms of interpersonal youth violence for understanding appropriate intervention and prevention methods in schools.

Victims of bullying were noted as having notable social or physical differences from their cohort. Victims of bullying were often described as being of weaker physical stature from other students. One female described herself as being physically smaller than her bully and most other students in her grade cohort (D03). Another male student described a victim of bullying being not only smaller, being annoying and never saying the right thing (E08). A notable difference from the status quo for each grade cohort seemed to make certain individuals potential targets for aggressive behavior. Coupled with the lengthiness of bullying behavior, student victims noted becoming extremely socially isolated from their peers. Students described being lonely and feeling afraid of returning to school (E03).

Bullies were described by students as having distinctive social and physical characteristics, as well. Bullies were often of larger physical stature than their victim. However, they were not described as the strongest student or the student with the most athletic prowess. Those students were noted as trying to keep up the reputation as tough or strong, but were not often involved in many athletic school activities. As described by one interviewee, a school bully

was known as a “tough guy” or someone “nobody messed with” (C04). Students described as bullies also lacked membership in the most popular social circles, or if they did associate with those groups they were not the most popular of them. One female student described her bully as “... A wannabee popular person. But, she was never like “in” with them.”(D03). Perhaps those students described as bullies aggressed against weaker individuals as an illegitimate means to gain social status. Collins (2008) argues that bullies are usually from middle status ranks, and sometimes use bullying, not to raise their status, but at least to maintain it by keeping those below them in their place. As bullies were never described as being the most athletic or popular students, their aggressive actions may have also been used to bolster social status they couldn't come by through legitimate social outlets. Unfortunately for bullies, real social status cannot be gained through those behaviors as they are continually aggressing against a weaker isolated individual who holds no social power themselves. Their performance of status acquisition is stagnant based on the social position of their victim.

Bullying behavior tends to not only be socially isolating, but also physically isolating. Cases of bullying were described by students as being “invisible” (E09). Students knew others were being bullied, but often saw only few accounts of actual physical aggression. Those individuals victimized by bullies rarely mentioned other students being present for their abuse. Victims of bullying have difficulty seeking peer or administrative support because the aggression against them is often hidden. Bullies do not have large peer groups to draw on for support, so to protect their violent behavior it is often done in private. However, there were several interviews where students described retaliation tactics by bullying victims. In these incidents victims tried to take a stand against their bullying in public environments. As described by those students, the

altercations took place “At the end of the day. As we were walking to our buses”, “...at wrestling practice” and “At the front of the school”. Perhaps their hope was that staying in more public locations would deter a bully or would provide social support if violence was used against them. However, in all cases where a bullying victim retaliated against their aggressor in a public space little social support was provided for them. One student described how he talked to the bullied student after the altercation ended:

*“Afterwards, I saw the kid later on. The victim. And I tried to talk to him about what happened. But we really didn’t talk much. We really didn’t get along.”(E08).*

Unfortunately, no students intervened in the violence between the bully and his victim in these situations. Instead interviewed students described wanting to intervene but also noting that the bullying victim was “annoying” or “weird”. As described by one student,

*“I think it was just because he wasn’t very liked and people thought he was weird. And you know, when he would try to sort of step up to something like that it would frustrate people and make them very angry with him.”(E09)*

In this incident the witness described the status threat posed by a bullying victim if they attempted to defend themselves. Because retaliatory behavior was understood as futile by his peers, witnesses were reluctant to intervene as their actions might have also been a threat to other’s social statuses. The actions of bullying victims to stay in public spaces or retaliate against their bully were, therefore, ineffective as status hierarchies prevailed in preventing peer intervention.

Unfortunately situations of bullying were often described as ending only when one student (victim or aggressor) left the school. School intervention methods of suspension were described by students as being inconsequential because students continued to be victimized after a bully returned. As described by one student, “Why does it matter, it just kept going when they

came back” (D03). Throughout all interviews, students expressed a frustration for the lack of effectiveness for school intervention methods in cases of youth violence. For bullying, however, those consequences seem to be direr. Where conflict between equal peers and group fights that continue after suspension, have the effect of developing peer support for all individuals involved, victims of bullying seem to become more isolated with time. This form of interpersonal youth violence appears to hold the most negative cost for its victims.

#### ***5.4 The Role of Status***

Understanding the importance of social status in a teenager’s social world is key to learning why they commit violence. According to Milner (2006), “... a teenager’s status is the eyes of his or her peers is extremely important to most adolescents”. Because youth lack strong economic and political influence in society, and spend most of their time in closed academic and social settings, their power over others is almost solely derived from the status they create through informal social worlds. In these settings they can evaluate one another and build power and rank. As a result, students become aggressive towards one another to secure social status and power. Status in secondary and elementary schools is inexpansible (Milner 2006). If someone moves up in rank within a social circle, someone must move down. Student fighting can have a direct impact on individual status. As explained by an interviewed high school student, “...the winner is the cool person. Because everyone is scared of them, they’re intimidated... and that other person, they all get laughed at because they say he’s weak or he can’t fight.”(D02). Though a fight may be used to stabilize one’s social status, it can also have the effect of decreasing it. Everyone cannot have equal social status because it would have little value otherwise. Students confront each other based on changing dynamics within their closed social worlds, and their statuses are re-shaped by those confrontations.

Many accounts of the peer-to-peer honour contests refer to losing a personal item and losing status. Most fights between peers revolved around lost money, friendship or romantic partnership. All cases that resulted in physical aggression made reference to a feeling of losing face or “toughness”. Other students perceived that student as being weak for not standing up for what they had lost. For example, when the winner of a boy’s former girlfriend began taunting him for his loss he felt compelled to physically confront him. Having something taken resulted, not only a loss of symbolic property, but also social status. A witness to that altercation explained,

*“The aggressor, who was pushing for the fight, was really angry and really upset because he just lost his girl to another guy who he didn’t think deserved her. The victim...was acting cocky because he was with the girlfriend”.* (E03)

The aggressor in this incident was not only upset because he “lost” his girlfriend, but because the second student was of a perceived lesser social status. The former girlfriend moving on to date the second male lessened the former boyfriend’s status. Picking a fight and showing aggression toward the new male allowed the former boyfriend to prove he could not be slighted.

Situations of scapegoating also involve the maintenance of social status and power. Scapegoating is a reaction to an individual who has somehow disrupted the social situation. Their introduction or unexpected rise in popularity disrupts the systems of power created within different social systems. Violence towards those individuals is aimed at restoring previous power and status roles. As explained by Collins (2008), violence toward a single individual has the effect of emphasizing the importance of the group. By uniting together at the expense of the scapegoat, they gain emotional energy (Collins 2008). An example provided by one interviewee describes a single individual who was jumped by a large group of students after school. As explained by a witness, the victim was “... tatted [tattooed], kind of different, a skater kid.”



(D03). Prior to the fight the aggressors began harassing the new student over Facebook, calling him names. The actual fight that followed the online harassment was not planned by the aggressors, but was a situation of convenience where the aggressors found the victim helpless and outnumbered. While the victim didn't pose immediate threat to his aggressors, his aggressors felt his inclusion in their social world required evaluation. Again, because social status is inexpandible for teens, those aggressors could not risk the introduction of a new student disrupting their finely constructed social system. Their actions against that student evaluated his threat to their power, and demonstrated his appropriate social rank according to theirs. This behaviour was supported by a witness to another in-school altercation who explained "You had to be with your own social group... if anyone went to a different group, they would get beat up."

(D02).

Situations of bullying are unlike peer-to-peer conflict, scapegoating and group fights in that the aggressor is not gaining or even maintaining social rank. Because the bully actively isolates themselves and the victim from the larger social hierarchy, the violence committed against the victim does not increase the bully's status. Both the victim and bully's social rank are stabilized within that situation, where the bully holds all power and the victim very little. An interesting example was provided by one interviewee, where a bullying victim retaliated against their bully. According to the report, the bully was a much stronger and larger student than the victim. The bully had a reputation for being "a tough guy" and actively tried to maintain it by pushing around a student of lesser social and physical stature. The victim had fewer friends and was not a member of any popular crowd. At the beginning of a new school term the bully began aggressing against his victim again. The bully told the victim he would beat him up the next day,

and he had better “watch his back”. When confronted the following day, on school property, the victim brandished a knife. As argued by another student witness, it was good that the victim was standing up for himself, but it was unfair that he brought a knife. It seemed that the victim’s willingness to finally defend himself was in conflict with the in-school student normative behavior. As explained by the witness, using a knife was not necessary and too extreme for a conflict between students. Although he believed the bully deserved some sort of retribution, the use of a weapon to gain power was outside the norm for aggressive behavior. As top down bullying does not interfere with the social hierarchy of student social worlds, due to its isolating nature, a change in that behavior had an effect of disrupting normal social patterns.

Relating back the temporary Youth Code described by Milner (2006), and Anderson’s (1999) more permanent Code of the Street, it appears that these student status structures more accurately resemble a youth code. While students expressed a tendency to use violence to protect status and power, they did not make reference to it being a regular occurrence. Students didn’t express the violent actions between peers as normal occurrences and often needed time to think about a specific violent incident. This is different from Anderson’s (1999) Code of the Street where participants in that social system express an adherence to violent behaviours or persona and the expectations of white middle class society to maintain status. Instead, interviewed students expressed those violent actions as completely unnecessary for social status maintenance. For example, when students were asked if they felt violence was justified they replied: “No! Its just a fucking phase!”(C04), “No, because there is a possibility that you can get in trouble.” (C05) and “Name calling is just their opinion. It might result in a fight... but I don't think they need to.”(D04). While some students argued that instances of aggression were justified as a

reaction to another individual attacking them, they maintained that violence wasn't necessary to maintain social popularity. Interviewees stated that physical fighting could not win status, because in-school popularity was only based on the number of friends one had. For example, when asked what being popular meant, many students replied: "Having a lot of friends I guess.(C03)", "You have to have a lot of kids that like you." (C05) and "Like, you have a lot of friends, a lot of people like to talk to you and hang out with you." (D04). Friendship was not gained by committing violence against their peers because it didn't involve broadening their social circles, but only stabilized current ones. Some students also expressed the temporary nature of their social structures, that perhaps it was necessary to fight and maintain social hierarchies now, but not when they left high school. The expression of a temporary adherence to violent social correlated with Milner's (2006) example of a youth code.

### ***5.5 Confrontational Tension and Fear***

The ability to overcome confrontational tension/ fear plays a large role in students' abilities to commit to violence. According to Collins (2008), the emotion of violent situations summed up as confrontational tension and fears have the effect of inhibiting most violent behavior. Humans are socialized to refrain from violence. Overcoming our natural inclinations to avoid violence and harm is difficult. However, Collins (2008) does outline several pathways around fear that were exemplified by many of my interview participants. According to Collins (2008), pathways around tensional fear include "... finding a weak victim, audience-oriented and controlled fights confrontation avoided by remote violence, confrontation avoided by deception, and confrontation avoided by absorption in technique". Those individuals who described peer-to-peer honour contests or intergroup fights often mentioned the involvement of large crowds. They described fights taking place in visible areas on school property, during school time, where large

numbers of students were present. Leading up to the actual violent actions most interviewees described students using verbal aggression towards one another. For example, “Like, he was a faggot, all of that dumb shit. ... He was fucking with him. He was sitting there trying to egg the kid on”. Taunting and “calling on” another student often had the effect of generating an audience. This highlights ideas of pre-fight bluff and bluster, where students gain energy and pose threats before or in avoidance of violence. Student also described the crowds as being composed of different types of witnesses. Most audiences included large numbers of passive witnesses who did not shout support or encourage the fight. Those individuals also made no attempt to stop the fight or seek administrative help. Smaller subgroups of audience members were more active in the conflict. They were often friends or acquaintances of the aggressors who shouted encouragements. The aggressor’s friends were also there to break up the fights, mentioned only when someone was “knocked down” or clearly losing a fight.

The combination of location and audience involvement in peer-to-peer honour contests may be a pathway used by students to overcome tensional fear. The emotional and verbal participation of aggressor’s friends in their one on one altercation generated emotional pressure for individuals to commit violence. The force of a large audience willing the individuals to fight is perhaps similar to a sporting event, where the audience’s expectations for a show provoke a performance. Choosing to stage altercations on school property, during school hours, also act as a pathway for overcoming tensional fear. Knowing that school administrators and even medical aid is close at hand has an effect of controlling the fight. A large audience within the school will quickly earn the attention of the school staff to break up the fight. Knowing this, students understand that the harm they inflict on one another is not substantial given the situation. It also

controls the types of violence they can possibly inflict on one another. As weapons are strictly prohibited on school property at all times, it is less likely that a student will produce a weapon in an in-school fight. Peer-to-peer honour contests situated at school provided many examples for how students control their environments to commit violence against one another.

Scapegoating is similar to peer-to-peer honour contests in that in many of the cases described by students used group support to overcome confrontational tension and fear. Because a case of scapegoating involves the active participation from several aggressive individuals toward one victim, the group participation and coordination against that individual creates solidarity and power. In the case where an audience gathers to watch an incident of scapegoating violence, there was no mention of peers interfering to support the victim. As described by one witness of a scapegoating event, “They were just watching. The kid was like, “Help me!”. So they were like, “Naw, I’m good” and didn’t say nothing.” (E04). The social dynamics of many against one make it easy for aggressors to commit violence against a single individual because they know they have the social, moral and physical support of the majority. Incidents of scapegoating violence might also be better able to overcome confrontational tension and fear because they involve a second pathway to violence: finding a weak victim. In one incident the victim was described as having a small number of friends, but when asked if he was socially popular a witness stated “No. Not really. Because he had just started going to the school.” (E04). Even if the victim of scapegoating is of equal or higher social status, by isolating them through group aggression they weaken that individual’s ability to defend themselves. Fortunately, all cases of scapegoating described by students were extremely short lived. Where cases of peer-to-peer honour contests were described as having “beef” or anger between students lasting weeks

and months with small acts of aggression between the two leading up to a final act, the torment of scapegoating only lasted a few days.

Similar to scapegoating, described cases of bullying were also able to overcome confrontational tension and fear through choosing a weaker victim. In almost all cases of bullying the victim was described as being a new student to the school. Their physical stature was smaller or even “scrawny”. Victims of bullying were also noted for not having many friends or acquaintances in the school, while their aggressors were known as being somewhat popular but having a reputation of being unpleasant (sometimes described as “a jerk”, “a douche” or “trying to be a tough guy”). However, these altercations did not involve large groups of witnesses and took place in more secluded settings (parking lot, empty classroom). While bullies are able to overcome tensional fear by aggressing against a disadvantaged peer, they often do not receive the extra support of audience participation. Unfortunately for the victim, the lack of audience also decreases the social control of the bully’s aggression. Where the violence of peer-to-peer honour contests are controlled by audience participation, the isolation of a bullying victim might allow for more severe violence to be committed against them.

The use of school settings and peer support to overcome confrontational tension and fear relates most accurately to a temporary youth code. While a few students show a commitment to physical violence, they regulate the severity of harm that can be committed through different social and environmental dynamics. In a sense, they are not fully committed to violence as those described by Anderson’s (1999) Code of the Street because they depend on a certain level of security within their environment. Youth participating in a Code of the Street express a lack of

security within their local neighborhoods resulting in an adherence to extreme forms of violence for protection. Those individuals must demonstrate their own willingness to react to violence with more extreme violence to serve as protection. Interviewees in this study showed a dependence on their peers and school administration as protection in their day to day lives. Therefore, not only do Hamilton youth contrast from inner city American youth cultures described by Anderson (1999) through a more temporary adherence to status and social power, but also in their means for overcoming tensional fear and commitment to enact violence.

### ***5.6 Forward Panic***

Forward panic is another element of violent behavior, described by Collins (2008), in which two sides or parties confront each other over time, during which tension and fear builds up. Through my interviews I found this type of behavior to be most prominent in peer-to-peer honour contests or intergroup fights. In these instances individuals or groups engaged in a sort of tit-for-tat behavior between one another, finally accumulating in a large act of physical aggression. Unlike other types of violence, many cases of peer-to-peer or group conflict continued after parties on both sides of the aggression were reprimanded by school officials or the police. In those instances, students described continued aggression during academic suspensions, off school property or continuing on school property after both parties suspensions were finished. These behaviors were never described for scapegoating, as those instances of violent behavior were brief. They were also not exhibited in cases of true bullying, where a higher status individual isolated and aggressed against a lower status student. While the aggressive behavior of the bully was prolonged, forward panic was not exhibited, as it didn't appear that the bully was moved to violence by a buildup of aggressive emotion antagonized by both parties. As the victim almost never showed aggression toward their bully, the two sides did

not engage in a continuation of confrontation against each other, but instead a top down system of aggressive behavior.

### ***5.7 Types of Conflict According to Gender***

Female interviewees and incidents of violence involving aggressive females were most frequently cases of peer-to-peer honour contest, scapegoating and bullying. Females were never described by my interview participants as engaging in group fights. Males were most represented through group fights and peer-to-peer honour contests.

Different patterns of violent engagement between males and females support previous research findings that females are more inclined to indirect forms of violence while males are more dedicated to direct forms. While all the above cases resulted in physical violence, the means of aggression, prior to physical violence reported by females, were often verbal and social. In one case, the female victim of scapegoating described how a group of aggressive females initially befriended her for a couple days, only to learn personal information that was later used against her through social media outlets. Another case of female aggression involved continual name calling and friend-stealing between two individuals, finally resulting in spontaneous physical aggression at school.

While males and females both used name calling as a means of aggression against their enemy, females more frequently used sexually oriented verbal aggression. One peer-to-peer fight between females revolved around one individual questioning the sexual promiscuity of her peer. The victim of those rumors confronted the other and started a physical fight. Males also used



verbal aggression involving sexuality, but to a different end. Males more frequently used derogatory slurs towards their enemies that questioned their sexual orientation, not exploitation. Females also seemed more inclined to confront an individual based on rumors or name calling than males. While verbal aggression was used in most male confrontations, it was not the root of their problem. In cases of male aggression, a deprecation of status through symbolic or physical loss was a frequently provided problem.

### ***5.8 Violence Cultures According to Gender***

From these interviews it appeared that both males and females were unlikely to exhibit traits associated with a Code of the Street. Instead, males and females both aggressed in mostly controlled situations, on school property, without weapons, that involved peer networks. However, while both males and females express a more temporary youth code, their behaviors when dealing with and confronting aggression are different. Females have shown a greater inclination to indirect forms of violence through both my quantitative and qualitative research findings. Males also adhere to more direct forms in both. What is important to understand from all findings, however, is that males and females both act aggressively and violently towards their peers. I would argue that there is perhaps a difference in violence cultures between the two genders based on forms of violence used, but in accordance to share ends for that violence. In all cases described by interviewees social status played a large role in shaping youth conflict. Aggression for both males and females is always explained as a retaliatory action to a perceived loss of status or power. Although many students didn't believe status was gained through physical aggression, they were eager to rationalize it this way.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### 6.1 Summary

### 6.2 Implications for Future Research

### 6.3 Implications for Future Policy

#### ***6.1 Summary***

The quantitative portion of my thesis answered a number of my research questions regarding macro contextual influences for youth violence. I first addressed the question: In terms of contexts, what is the overall prevalence of bullying/violence in Hamilton schools? Less than half of the students who participated in the Safe Schools Survey reported experiencing bullying themselves, and fewer reported using different forms of violence against their peers. However, almost half of the student population reported witnessing physical violence used by their peers in a school setting. Secondary school students also reported witnessing more physical violence than their elementary school peers. These findings suggesting more violence occurs in secondary schools is in contrast previous research findings that young children are most likely use physical violence. However, the secondary school population variable encapsulates the social transition period of grade 9 where the potential for violence is high. Students reporting violence while in secondary school may also have witnessed more violence because they have participated in school environments longer than elementary school students, lending to a higher reporting of violent incidents.

The quantitative portion of my research also noted that the prevalence for the different types of violence experienced, witnessed and used differed by student gender. Female students were more likely to use social and verbal bullying tactics against their peers, while males were more likely to use physical bullying. Males were also more likely to report using violence, where females were more likely to report witnessing or being the victims of violence. This may be due

to male students' reluctance to report victimization or that males are less likely to interpret social exclusion as bullying victimization. Violence between students was also more likely to occur in secondary schools than elementary schools, supporting previous proportions findings. However, these results include indirect as well as direct forms of violence, widening the scope of potential violence used by secondary school students. These findings addressed my research question: Is the prevalence of different forms of violence notably higher in some schools than others?

My quantitative research portion also addressed environmental contexts for the different types of violence used by students. Reports from the Safe Schools Survey did not indicate that students attending schools located in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods were significantly more likely to report witnessing, using or experiencing violence than youth from other neighbourhood settings. However, students attending schools with large amounts of graffiti on their physical exteriors were significantly more likely to report being victims of, witnessing and bullying their peers. School graffiti, as a form of physical disorder, therefore has the ability to shape student's social perspectives of acceptable behaviour within school settings. Students participating in disordered settings engage in micro geographies that foster a lack of Collective Efficacy, resulting in the potential for anti-social behaviour.

Building on broad contextual findings outlined by my quantitative research, my qualitative research examined more micro-contextual and social dynamic influences for youth violence within Hamilton Schools. Through in-depth interviews with student participants at the John Howard Society I found that those types of violence experienced by students resemble the types of violence described by Randall Collins (2008, 2011). There were no deviations from the

violent incidents described by students and those in Collins' (2008,2011) research. There were no new forms of interpersonal youth violence noted. The types of violence experienced by Hamilton youth also demonstrate patterned differences between peer-to-peer honour contests, group fights, scapegoating, and bullying. These differences include the social dynamics between violent individuals, the length of violence encountered and the reasons for violence. Students involved in peer-to-peer honour contests and group fights described similar social situations between peers. Those students in conflict were of similar social background and status, despite physical stature often being different. In those cases it was often difficult for the interviewee to describe a victim or aggressor, as both individuals and groups were considered equals. The social dynamics for scapegoating and bullying, however were always based on inequality. Length of time dedicated to violence was another major difference between the types of violence. Physical violence between students in peer-to-peer honour contests and group fights was extremely short lived. While the bluff and bluster between students or groups could continue for extended periods of time before an act of violence, students described the acts of physical violence lasting minutes, resulting in minimal injury. Scapegoating and bullying were different from those forms of violence in that more extreme harm was reported. Violence for those types of conflict was also prolonged. Reasons for engaging in violence between peers were also distinctly different for each form of violence. Often peer-to-peer honour contests and group fights were reported as a reaction to a loss. Students aggressed against one another, in these instances, to maintain or recover social status. Scapegoating and bullying were different because they aimed at gaining social status. This, however, was rarely achieved due the isolating nature of their violence.

Finally, the qualitative research portion for this study attempted to uncover whether the dynamics for different forms of violence differ between male and female students. For both quantitative and qualitative findings, female behaviour strongly represented as indirect while male violence was direct. These findings also demonstrated that while females do engage in more invisible forms of indirect violence, they used violence for similar means as males. Females used violence to maintain and gain social status similar to males. The cultures of male and female violence also both follow a more temporary Youth Code of behaviour, than a permanent Code of the Street.

Many of the findings in this thesis tend to support established ideas in the area of gender patterns in bullying and the importance of status in triggering episodes of youth violence. However, my research began to generate new ideas by examining statistical links between bullying and disorder. I also tried to build on those findings by explicitly and qualitatively examining violent situations through micro social perspectives. My aim has been to empirically contribute to the study of youth violence through a multi-method approach by addressing both the contexts and dynamics of interpersonal youth violence.

### ***6.2 Implications for Future Research***

Future research may build upon my findings by examining the psychological, social and educational outcomes of students who have participated in different types of violence. Different types of interpersonal youth violence experienced within the education system have a wide range of social implications. According to numerous researchers, emotional distress is persistent among adolescence (Aneshensel and Sucoff 1996, Bird et al. 1990, Flemming and Offord 1990, Garrison et al. 1989). Violent experiences can have an effect of exacerbating difficult

psychological situations resulting in stunted social, education and psychological outcomes.

According to Carrol Aneshensel and Clea Sucoff (1996), mental health disorders experienced during adolescence often persist through adulthood and are negatively correlated with social outcomes. Adolescents, who are more likely to commit violent acts during their youth, are also likely to commit acts of violence as adults (Johnson et al. 2000). Therefore, pre-adult onset of emotional disorders in youth is predictive of downward social mobility. As these disorders are also not often distributed evenly throughout society, it is socially necessary to pinpoint their influences (MacMillan 1997, Anechensel 2009)

Understanding the different types of violence experienced by youth within the educational system is necessary for creating healthy learning environments. It seems that highly situational and “peer equal” forms of violence are less likely to result in longer term health consequences, since they are likely to be shorter in duration, less sustained, and less isolating. However, bullying and other forms of hidden violence that are more sustained are more likely to likely to have longer emotional and social developmental consequences. Coupled with findings showing higher rates of violence experienced in disordered neighbourhoods, youth from different environments may also experience varying levels of stress resulting in different mental health disorders.

Findings from this thesis may be drawn upon to develop future interpersonal youth violence survey methods that are more representative of different types of aggression. The qualitative portion of my thesis supports a supposition that bullying surveys fail to disaggregate forms of violence. That those surveys tend to accumulate the accounts of many different forms of

violence under the label of bullying. This has the effect of overestimating the prevalence of bullying behavior in local schools by conflating a number of different forms of violence with bullying. Future survey research should, therefore, aim to distinguish bullying from different forms of violence. This can be done by asking questions about the number of individuals involved, individual social statuses, the types of violence used and the duration of that violence. For example, interviewed students were asked the following questions: “What kind of assault was there?, How many people were involved in the incident? Was the victim more or less socially popular than the aggressor?, Was the conflict a result of aggression that had built up over time? and Was the incident planned or did it just happen?”. Including questions such as these in student violence measures will be beneficial for accurately determining the types of violence youth engage in without conflating the term bullying.

### ***6.3 Implications for Policy***

This thesis demonstrates four major types of in-school interpersonal violence used by Hamilton youth. As the term “bullying” becomes increasingly ubiquitous within our culture, programs and school officials create unspecified anti-violence programming. As a reflection of these research findings, schools would also benefit by delineating between peer-to-peer honour contests, group fights, scapegoating and bullying in both intervention programming and survey research methods. Each form of violence follows different patterns of escalation and hold different social consequences for involved students. Recognition of gender differences for the use of violence is also important. Understanding that male and females sometimes use different forms of violence for similar social means is vital for effective programming. Quantitative findings highlighting grade related differences in violence youth are also important for policy

implications. Recognition of different violent behaviour used at different times throughout one's educational career will benefit education policy.

Almost all interviewed youth noted that current violence intervention policies were ineffectual. Zero tolerance policies for violent behaviour, resulting in suspension or expulsion, are unsuccessful because violence often continues between students during or following those disciplinary measures. Perhaps these methods are ineffective work because they do not change the social dynamics or environmental contexts that influence violent youth behaviour. School anti-violence measures may, therefore, benefit from investments in school infrastructure. As physical disorder is correlated with the use of violence in schools, the removal of that disorder may result in reduced violence rates. Framing violence intervention and prevention methods in terms of local youth dynamics and contexts may also have beneficial consequences for future students. Implementing intervention and prevention policies that focus on youth status hierarchies and gender difference could be more effective. Work by Sandra Bortolin (2013) has demonstrated that school based network organizations, such as GSA's (Gay Straight Alliances) have protective abilities against bullying. Future ant-violence methods could benefit by challenging existing student status hierarchies and developing broader social networks. Not only could these intervention methods help develop more inclusive school environments, but may also be effective in building stronger Collective Efficacy among school students.



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## **8. Appendices**

### ***8.1 Letter of Information/Consent***



#### LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT:

#### A Study Examining Youth Conflict

#### **Investigators:**

Principal Investigator:

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#### **What am I trying to discover?**

As a graduate student at McMaster University, I am writing my Master's Thesis on school bullying and the different types of youth conflict. Bullying is a topic that has received a lot of attention. My research is trying to understand if there are types of youth conflict that are different from bullying. It is important to understand the different types of youth violence to create useful violence intervention and prevention programs.

### **What will happen during the study?**

You will be asked to take part in an interview of 30 questions, lasting 45-60 minutes, on youth conflict. My aim is to understand the different types of conflict Hamilton youth experience and our schools responses to conflict. However, you may only answer questions about a conflict that your teachers or the police have already resolved. Please do not tell me about conflict that has not been formally resolved by officials. I cannot protect your personal information if this incident has not been resolved.

I am going to ask questions like:

- **Have you witnessed a violent conflict between your peers that has been resolved by the school?**
- **How did the school fix that problem?**

I will also ask you for some background information like your age and education. With your permission, I would like to tape record these interviews so that I can take notes at a later time. If you are not comfortable being recorded please say so.

### **Are there any risks to doing study?**

There are some risks involved in participating in this study. You may find it stressful to discuss possibly violent situations that you have seen or been a part of. It might be also be uncomfortable to talk about altercations between you and your friends. Recalling violent encounters may cause you some emotional stress. If so, I have counseling information available for you before and after the interview.

You may worry about how others will react to what you say in these interviews. These interviews will be completely private. Information you give will not be given to your peers, teachers or program supervisors. However, you might experience some stress if your peers know you are conducting an interview about conflict. If this is a problem, you are free to quit the interview at any time or schedule the interview away from your program setting or community.

### **Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

The research will not benefit you directly. However, I hope to learn more about how youth

experience conflict. This is important because it can help make better anti-violence programs in your community, that understand the situations you are all involved in. These programs might help reduce violence and bullying in your school for future students.

I also hope to better understand how schools react to different youth conflict. If schools do not understand the different types of youth conflict or how it begins, they cannot respond to those situations properly. Not only do I hope to understand youth conflict better, but I hope to help schools and anti-violence programs solve these problems.

### **Who will know what I said or did in the study?**

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. No one but my research supervisor at McMaster University and me will know whether you participated unless you choose to tell them. Since your community is small, it is possible that others might be able to identify you on the basis of references you make. Please keep this in mind in deciding what to tell me.

The information you provide will be kept in a locked cabinet where only I will have access to it.

### **Legally Required Disclosure**

Although I will protect your privacy as outlined above, if the law requires it, I will have to reveal certain personal information (e.g., child abuse or if someone is at risk of harm). In this case, only the information directly relating to the individual at-risk will be given.

### **What if I change my mind about being in the study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw), at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Your school officials and program co-coordinators will not know of your participation or withdrawal. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study. Your decision whether or not to be part of the study will not change the way you participate with the Pathways to Education Program or the

John Howard Society.

**How do I find out what was learned in this study?**

I expect to have this study completed by approximately August, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please indicate how you would like me to send that information to you.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

Nicole Malette  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23124  
malettn@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

**CONSENT**



- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Nicole Malette, of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately August, 2013.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

... Yes.

... No.

2. ... Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to this email address \_\_\_\_\_

or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

... No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

## 8.2 Interview Questions

### Basic Information:

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) What gender are you?
- 3) What school do you attend?

**I would like to ask you some questions about fights between students. If you can, please think back to a fight that took place between students. This can be a fight that you witnessed or were directly involved in. However, this must be a fight that has already been resolved by the school. Please do not discuss a fight that has not been resolved or is in the process of being resolved. I cannot protect your personal information if this incident has not been resolved. (This will be repeated throughout the interview)**

- 1) Have you witnessed a fight between students, which has **already** been resolved by the police or a school?
- 2) Can you briefly describe that altercation?
- 3) How were you involved in that conflict?
- 4) What kind of assault was there? [Probes: Was there physical assault? Was there verbal assault?]
- 5) Can you describe the physical assault in this resolved incident?
- 6) Can you describe the verbal assault in this resolved incident?
- 7) How many people were involved in the incident? [How many people were actively involved? How many people were egging on the fight? How many people were completely passive witnesses?]

**\*Remind interviewee that this conflict must be previously resolved\***

- 8) How many people were victims?
- 9) How many of those victims were male or female?
- 10) How many people were the aggressors?
- 11) Can you give a physical description of the aggressors and the victims?
- 12) How many of those aggressors were male or female?

- 13) Were the victims of the already resolved altercation socially popular?
- 14) Were the aggressors of the already resolved altercation socially popular?
- 15) Was the victim more or less socially popular than the aggressor?
- 16) How many of those aggressors acted physically violent?
- 17) Did any individuals provide social support for the victim?
- 18) Did any individuals provide social support for the aggressor?

**\*Remind interviewee that this conflict must be previously resolved\***

- 19) Where did the altercation take place?
- 20) When did the altercation take place?
- 21) Was social media involved in this incident?
- 22) Was the incident planned or did it just happen?
- 23) Was the conflict a result of aggression that had built up over time?
- 24) Can you explain why the violent altercation occurred?
- 25) Do you think the violent reactions were justified in this situation? Why?
- 26) Do you think it is socially necessary to fight? Why?
- 27) Can you recall the school's response to those actions?
- 28) Were any parties suspended or expelled?
- 29) Were the school responses helpful?

**Provide debrief and remind the interviewee about the youth-councilor contact information on the information/consent sheet. This information is provided if they need to talk to someone about the emotions they are feeling before or after the interview.**

### ***8.3 Systematic Social Observation Protocols***

**Name:**

**Date:**

**HWDSB School:**

**Time:**

**What year was the school constructed?**

---

#### **School Exterior:**

**1) Is the school lawn maintained?**

Yes

No

**2) Did the school have matching windows?**

Yes

No

**3) Were there signs of Disrepair to the exterior of the school?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**4) Is there ground litter? (5+)**

Yes

No

**5) Are garbage receptacles available?**

Yes

No

**6) Are there student sitting areas?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**7) Are there designated smoking areas?**

Yes

No

**8) Are there cigarette butts present on the ground? (5+)**

Yes

No

**9) Is there graffiti? (# of instances)**

Yes

No

# \_\_\_\_\_

**10) Is there a presence of painted over graffiti?**

Yes

No

**11) Are there areas obstructed from full view?**

Yes

No

Where:

**12) Are there obvious renovations or extensions to the school?**

Yes

No

**13) Is there evidence of security precautions?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**14) Are there surveillance cameras on property?**

Yes

No

**15) Are there riot bars on windows and doors?**

Yes

No

**16) Does the school have a uniform?**

Yes

No

**17) Are there educational advertisements?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**18) Is there evidence of landscaping?**

- Yes
- No

**19) Are their bike racks for students?**

- Yes
- No

**20) Is there a sports field on site?**

- Yes
- No

**21) Are there portables on site?**

- Yes
- No

**22) Is there an elementary school in close proximity?**

- Yes
- No

**Extra Notes:**

**What Block?**

- North
- West                      East
- South

**Street/Traffic:**

**1) Which way is traffic moving?**

- One-way
- Two-way

**2) How many lanes is traffic?**

- 2 lanes
- 2+ lanes

**3) Are their parked cars on street face?**

- Yes
- No

**4) What is the flow of traffic?**

- No traffic

Moderate traffic (careful crossing)  
Heavy traffic

**5) Are their cars with visible parking violations (tickets)?**

Yes  
No

**6) How are you regarded by the people on block face?**

No people around  
Paid little attention  
Treated with suspicion  
Friendly responses

**7) How would you characterize land use on the block? (circle all that apply)**

Residential  
Commercial  
Industrial  
Vacant houses  
Vacant lots/open space  
Institutional  
Recreational facilities  
Undeveloped rural  
Construction  
Rural farm land

**Extra Notes:**

**Physical Disorder:**

**8) Was there garbage/litter on the street/sidewalk? (5+).**

Yes  
No

**9) Are there cigarette butts on the ground? (5+)**

Yes

No

**10) Are there empty beer/liquor bottles?**

Yes

No

**11) Is there evident drug paraphernalia?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**12) Is there graffiti? (# of instances)**

Yes

No

# \_\_\_\_\_

**13) Is there any vandalism?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**14) Is there broken glass on the street?**

Yes

No

**15) Are there abandoned cars?**

Yes

No

**16) Are there available public waste bins?**

Yes

No

**17) Are there warning signs (beware of dog/no trespassing)?**

Yes

No

**18) Are there dumpsters?**

Yes

No

**19) Is there evident street maintenance?**

Yes

No



**20) Are there street lights?**

Yes

No

**Extra Notes:**

**Social Disorder:**

**Time:**

**Stake out position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**21) Are there loitering adults?**

Yes

No

Where:

**22) Is their evident alcohol consumption in public?**

Yes

No

**23) Are there examples of public intoxication?**

Yes

No

**24) Are there adults fighting/arguing in public?**

Yes

No

**25) Are their youth fighting or arguing in public?**

Yes

No

**26) Are there individuals selling drugs in public?**

Yes

No

**27) Are kids playing unsupervised?**

Yes

No

**28) Is there loud music?**

Yes  
No  
Where:

**29) What is the predominant style of clothing worn in area?**

Urban  
Cultural  
Business  
Business casual  
Casual  
Other

**30) Is a police officer visible? (circle all that apply)**

Foot patrol  
Mobile patrol  
Horse patrol  
Traffic patrol  
No police visible

**31) Are there police sirens?**

Yes  
No

**32) Are there any stray animals?**

Yes  
No

**33) Are there any visible homeless individuals?**

Yes  
No

**34) Are there visible prostitutes?**

Yes  
No

**35) Is there a presence of children? (5+)**

Yes  
No

**36) Is there a presence of teens? (5+)**

Yes  
No

**37) Is there a presence of adults? (5+)**

Yes  
No

**38) Which age group has the majority prevalence?**

Children

Teens

Adults

**Extra Notes:**

**Residential Area:**

**39) What are the types of buildings on this block? (circle all that apply)**

High-rise apartments

Low-rise apartments

Above store apartments

Bungalow houses

2+ story houses

**40) Are the majority single dwelling homes?**

Yes

No

**41) Are there any visible vacant houses?**

Yes

No

**42) Do the houses display cut grass and maintained gardens?**

Yes

No

**43) Is there evidence of garbage/litter on ground? (5+)**

Yes

No

**44) Are there riot bars on doors/windows?**

Yes

No

**45) Are there markers of defensible space (barriers, fences, walls, bars)?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**46) Are there properties for sale?**

Yes

No

**47) Are there public alley ways?**

Yes

No

**48) Are there public parks?**

Yes

No

**49) Is there an attempt to maintain a green appearance?**

**(5+ trees)**

Yes

No

**50) Are there bus stops available?**

Yes

No

**51) Are there in-home businesses?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**52) What races/ethnicities are evident in the area? (please list)**

**53) Are there signs of social control (neighbourhood watch)?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**Extra Notes:**

**Parks:**

**54) What types of park(s) are present? (circle all that apply)**

Play ground

Open field

Public garden

Bike and walking trail

Sports field

Public pool

**55) Is there evidence of park maintenance?**

Yes

No

**Secluded areas and Parking lots:**

**56) Is there visible graffiti? (# of instances)**

Yes

No

# \_\_\_\_\_

**57) Is there garbage/litter on the ground?**

Yes

No

**58) Are there empty bottles of alcohol?**

Yes

No

**59) Are there cigarette butts on the ground? (5+)**

Yes

No

**60) Are there indicators of youth loitering?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**61) Are there indications of drug use?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**Extra Notes:**

**Businesses:**

**62) What kinds of businesses are located in the area? (circle all that apply)**

- Franchises
- Mom and pop shops
- Boarded/closed down
- Bars
- Liquor stores
- Drug paraphernalia
- Pawn shops
- Thrift stores
- Tattoo parlours
- Unemployment office
- Educational centers
- Religious centers
- Health centers
- Emergency response
- Cheque cashing
- Addiction centers

**63) What types of Franchises are in the area? (List)**

**64) What types of mom and pop shops are in the area? (List)**

**65) Are there hand painted signs?**

- Yes
- No

**66) Is there use of riot bars? (5+)**

- Yes
- No

**67) Is there graffiti on exterior walls? (# of instances)**

Yes

No

# \_\_\_\_\_

**68) Are there obvious businesses that cater to students?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**69) Are there non-English and non-French advertisements?**

Yes

No

Examples:

**70) Are there damaged signs?**

Yes

No

**71) Are there markers of defensible space (barriers, fences, walls, bars)?**

Yes

No

**Extra Notes:**

**What Block?**

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West                      East

South

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- Recreational facilities
- Undeveloped rural
- Construction
- Rural farm land

**Extra Notes:**

**Physical Disorder:**

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**Social Disorder:**

**Time:**

**Stake out position:**\_\_\_\_\_

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**Extra Notes:**

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- Examples:

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Examples:

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- No
- # \_\_\_\_\_

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- No
- Examples:

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- No
- Examples:

**Extra Notes:**

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Examples:

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No

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