

KIDS WHO FIGHT:
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates student perceptions of the nature of school violence. School personnel are reacting to perceived increases in school violence by implementing violence prevention programs, but there is a dearth of research to support the effectiveness of such programs or their relevance to the "root causes" of violence. The literature suggests a multitude of factors contribute to youth violence. This study focuses on selected aspects of the literature, specifically those addressing issues of psychological and social factors pertaining to family and peer relationships and exposure to violence through the media.

Nine participants were selected for individual interviews on the basis of participation in a physical fight while on school premises, during designated school hours, for which they had been reprimanded by school administrators. Three participants were selected for a group interview, based on their observations of their peers fighting. Interviews were approximately forty-five minutes in duration, and were conducted in a private room on school premises. An equal number of males and females participated in the study. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed and qualitatively analyzed with specific themes and categories emerging from the words of the participants.

Results indicated support for the literature with respect to exposure to violence through family members, some aspects pertaining to peer influences, and media. A number of themes that emerged were not addressed in the reviewed literature: these

included issues pertaining to boredom; the need for power, control and respect; ways that youths conceptualize violence; and gender differences in fighting. Participants in this study indicate that peer pressure is a major factor in fighting: the majority of fights involve "fight watchers" who often cheer, crowd and push the participants. Participants display less empathy for those students they label "geeks" and for others they strongly dislike. Males and females tend to have similar social rules; females, however, perceive that males have more power and control. Results of this study indicate a need for further exploratory research, and the need to apply research findings to factors specific to school sites such as organization, structure, and teacher-student relations.

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the problem

Educators have long held the belief that schools are safe places for children to learn and that all the necessary steps are in place to ensure a student's right to safety is being exercised. Recent episodes of violence in Canadian schools may be posing a threat to such safety, forcing educators to take joint responsibility for a social problem that previously fell in the hands of law enforcers. The media have recently drawn public attention to issues pertaining to rising youth crime, and in doing so, have stirred heated debate as to whether such crime is on the increase. This debate, although somewhat irrelevant to this study, helps to put the problem of youth violence in perspective, and is therefore discussed briefly in this chapter. Certainly, my interest in researching school violence was based on my perception that violence in Canadian schools is increasing and needs to be addressed.

According to Canadian Crime Statistics (1992) youth violence has more than doubled between 1986 and 1992, with a 117% increase among youths, from ages 12 to 17. The Toronto based Safer Schools Task Force reports an almost 40% increase in crimes taking place on school grounds between 1987 and 1990. In a survey of 4,392 B.C. high school students, the McCreary Centre Society (1993) found that 40% of males in Greater Vancouver had reported being in a fight in the previous year. It also claimed that 27% of males and 5% of females reported carrying a weapon on one or more days in the

preceding month, with knives or razors being the weapons of choice. The BCTF Task Force on Violence in Schools (1994) reported such trends as increased aggressive behavior at a younger age, an increase in the severity of violent attacks such as unprovoked random attacks involving group attacks on individuals, increases in female involvement, lack of respect for authority and verbal abuse. These trends have contributed toward increased feelings of fear and intimidation among students in B.C. schools.

The National School Safety Centre (1986) reviewed the results of several U.S. reports evaluating the extent of the problem of violence in schools. The report concluded that almost 8% of urban junior high and senior high school students missed at least one day of school every month because they were too afraid to attend school. The study concluded that for teenagers, violence was a bigger risk in school than anywhere else. Twenty-one percent of high school students indicated that they were afraid of something happening to them while at school. Twelve percent of teachers indicated that they hesitated to be involved in a confrontation with students who were misbehaving for fear of reprisal. A Boston Public Schools Survey reported that 30% of middle school and high school teachers had been somehow victimized on school premises at least once. The California School Employees Association Survey (1984) indicated that 36% of the staff had been physically attacked on school premises and 46% indicated that they felt fear for their safety while at work.

While violence and aggression has especially increased among adolescents, the incidences of youth violence are relatively low compared to adults. Only 13.7% of young people, ages 12-17, were

responsible for all violent crime in Canada, while 86% of those charged with violent offenses were adults. While increases of youth violence may be a reality, youth crime is certainly not out of control compared to the degree of adult violence. In fact, "youth" gangs generally consist of young adults, 18 years and older, as opposed to young offenders, and 48% of so-called "violent" youth crime involves minor assaults. One exception to the trend of increasing levels of youth violence is homicide. Silverman (1990) and Silverman and Kennedy (1993) found that there was no increase in the per capita rate of youth homicide in Canada between 1970 and 1990. This research is important, given the constant media attention devoted to youth homicide. Young offenders account for only about 7% of homicides in Canada, and the Canadian rate of youth homicide is only one-tenth the rate of New York City. In fact, in the U.S., homicide is the leading cause of death for all 15-24 year olds and the leading cause of death for all black males in the U.S. in this age group. (Centre for Disease Control, 1983).

Public perception that Canada is becoming as violent as the U.S., therefore, seems unfounded. While there may be many cultural differences between the nations to account for such significant differences in homicide rates, one reason is with respect to differences in firearm regulations. Canada has much stricter law enforcements with respect to obtaining firearms. According to the National Centre for Health Statistics in the U.S., (1987) 75% of the homicides in the U.S. involving young males, were committed with firearms, as compared to the mean of 23% for a sample of other technologically advanced nations. Even though Vancouver, B.C. has

similar rates of criminal activity as Seattle, Washington, the homicide rate is considerably higher in Seattle than in Vancouver. Such differences may be partly attributable to gun-related killings. As Berkowitz (1993) points out, the majority of homicides are prompted by impulsive, emotional reactions, occurring most often between family, friends or acquaintances. The presence and availability of a gun during an impulsive outburst may tempt the aggressor to pull the trigger without thinking of the consequences. Moreover, he argues that the mere sight of a gun may serve to intensify an aggressor's violent urge.

While such statistics clearly indicate cause for concern regarding student safety in schools, some people argue, such as Frank (1992) that such statistics are based on media-driven "moral panic." He claims that the increase in sensationalistic media coverage of youth violence has stirred strong anti-youth sentiments among the public, and statistics that show increases in youth violence, are merely reflecting such sentiments. The public is much more aware of youth violence today than they were a few years ago and consequently, they have developed a greater social intolerance to such violence and are reporting crimes more often. Frank states that police officers and courts are responding to this growing intolerance and increased reporting by charging and convicting youths more often. Corrado and Markwart (1994) argue against the "moral-panic theory" claiming that it is difficult to attribute such substantial increases in youth violence to increased social intolerance, and not likely that police officers would have ignored violent offenses prior to such media coverage. Certainly, terms such as "curbing" "home

invasions" "swarming" and "drive-by shootings" were not part of our vocabulary twenty years ago, or even five years ago.

School violence, although receiving greater attention in the last few years, has been a serious concern throughout history. In fact, some argue that violence was more prevalent and severe centuries ago than it is today. For example, Aries (1962) reports that in 17th century France a large number of students carried arms and teachers commonly had to check them upon entering the school. In England, between 1775 and 1836, mutinies, strikes and violence were so frequent and severe, that the masters had to call upon the military for assistance. One such incident occurred in 1818 when two companies of soldiers armed with bayonets were called in to control a mutiny. In 1797, some youths blew up the door of the headmaster's office, set fire to his books and to school desks. (Rubel, Baker, 1962) In the 19th century, there was a growing public concern in both America and England, about youth violence. In 1791, 1821, and 1822, for example, concerned Philadelphia citizens met to discuss the problem of teenage gangs. In 1805, the New York Society emphasized the important role schools played in overcoming delinquency:

Children thus brought up in ignorance and amidst the contagion of bad example, are in imminent danger of ruin; and too many of them, it is to be feared, instead of being useful members of the community will become the burden and pests of society. (Bourne, 1870 in Baker & Rubel, 1962)

In the early 20th century, America was characterized by increases in immigration and methods of schooling. In 1917, in

reaction to imposed educational changes, a series of violent student demonstrations occurred. Between 1,000 and 3,000 students picketed and stoned a school, beat those students who did not join the demonstration and burned their school books. The riot spread to include over 5,000 students who engaged in direct battle with the police.

Throughout history, teachers have reacted to student violence by resorting to corporal punishment, and physical humiliations. In 1830, an American schoolmaster, Hauberle published a list of the punishments he had given in 51 1/2 years as a teacher. Included were 911,527 blows with a cane; 124,010 blows with a rod; 20,989 blows with a ruler; 136,715 blows with the hand; 12,235 blows on the mouth; 7,905 boxed ears; 1,115,800 raps on the head; 22,763 nota benes with Bible, grammar or other books; 777 kneelings on peas; 1,707 instances of holding up the rod; 613 kneelings on a triangular block of wood. Other writers mentioned dungeoning in windowless closets, tying children to chairs, and ear twisting. (Baker, Rubel, 1962)

While it is clear that school violence has been a re-occurring theme throughout history, it is difficult to assess whether such violence has increased, decreased or stayed the same throughout the centuries. Educational practises, methods of instruction, social and cultural values have changed considerably over time, making it difficult to compare one point in time to another. In addition, schools have not kept accurate records of student assaults. With the abolition of corporal punishment, however, in some jurisdictions such as

Europe and B.C., it would seem that schools are somewhat less violent places.

While current statistics and media coverage suggest that youth violence is a concern, another question arises: is school violence exclusively a manifestation of societal violence or are there characteristics specific to schools that contribute to violent behavior among students? While a student's fighting behavior - hitting, kicking, threatening, intimidating - may be similar both at school and outside of school, his or her motivations and intentions may be very different. This is an important question with respect to further research and in designing strategies for reducing school violence.

Those who support the notion that schools are a subsystem within societal macrosystems, believe that changes in schools would need to follow changes in society. (Jencks et al., 1972) Such thinking shifts the locus of explanation away from the school and onto other social systems. Moreover, it implies that misbehavior, in the form of violence and vandalism, are intolerable acts and must be modified to match institutional expectations.

Those who support the notion that characteristics of schools influence school violence, point out numerous ways in which the nature of the schools contributes to the problem. For example, landscaping and lighting (Pablant and Baxter, 1975), architectural design (Mallowe, 1976), newness, oldness and size have been cited, (Berger, 1974) as have curricula and grades, lack of student input to school governance, (McPartland and McDill, 1977), teachers (Werthman, 1971), and authority structures (Spady, 1973). Herndon (1971) implies that students' frustrations - which may lead to violent

behavior - develop as a result of perceiving that educational institutions are designed to work "against them." Students experience feelings of disempowerment as they attempt to function in an institution that imposes middle class values and a position of power and authority. Students perceive that such a position sets them up for failure and feelings of alienation. Kozol (1967) notes that students who perceive schools to be dehumanizing may believe their only recourse is one of rebellion. Student violence, while unacceptable, may be justified according to student perspectives, and perhaps changes in school policy need to be implemented to reflect student needs.

While such characteristics may have an influence on student behavior, school personnel argue that they are constrained by forces such as political climate and they must function within a framework that is often beyond their control. Rather than trying to decide whether to hold school personnel, politicians, parents and other community members responsible for reducing school violence, many schools and communities are taking joint ownership and responsibility, working collaboratively to find solutions to this complex social problem.

One of the difficulties with this collaborative venture is the lack of collaborative research by researchers and educators. For example, despite a long tradition of investigating juvenile delinquency and youth gangs (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Hirschi, 1969; Miller, 1958), social scientists have done little research on such disruption peculiar to school settings. While schools have

been viewed as causes of delinquency (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Miller, 1958) they are seldom studied as sites for deviant behavior.

Some of the research concerned with school deviance pertains to classroom discipline. This line of research is, however, of limited value to administrators who decide on school policies for two reasons. First, it rarely deals with serious acts, such as physical assault or homicide, and second, it tends to use the classroom as the unit of analysis, while much school disruption occurs in common areas such as hallways, cafeterias, and school grounds. Such areas are not constantly patrolled by school personnel, but need to be viewed as part of the entire system. While juvenile delinquency and discipline are related, they have not been jointly addressed by researchers and educators with respect to school violence.

The majority of school violence literature is written by practicing educators for other educators. These articles are frequently anecdotal accounts of presumably successful methods of dealing with school disruption, and consist of testimonials to the effectiveness of the programs. Yet systematic evaluation of such programs is almost nonexistent. In a review of over 130 programs designed to limit violence in schools, Marvin and his associates (1976) encountered few which were evaluated by carefully assessing data. School personnel argue that they lack the luxury of time, to theorize and systematically investigate their actions, while social scientists seldom implement the results of their studies. Educators claim that researchers generate information that is not relevant to school settings and can not realistically be implemented within the educational setting. Education, then, seems to be characterized by a

separation of the research from the policy making and implementing function. This study is an attempt to help bridge the gap between policy and research.

The problem of definition

One of the difficulties in understanding the nature of school violence is due to the difficulties in conceptualizing violence in the larger societal framework. Violence and aggression have been referred to as one and the same thing; yet these terms have very different meanings, both in scientific communication as well as in everyday speech, further complicating the process of definition. One dictionary definition of aggression refers to "the forcible violation of another's rights," while another refers to "an offensive action or procedure," and still others refer to "boldly assertive behavior," "striving for independence," and "a forceful assertion of one's own opinion." The BCTF Task Force (1994, p.4) defines school violence as "a continuum that includes such things as aggression, vandalism, verbal slurs and threats, as well as physical acts of violence such as assaults with weapons" and "the threat or use of force that injures or intimidates a person (makes them feel afraid) or damages property." While this definition focuses on the behavior of the perpetrator, it ignores the motivation associated with such behavior. For example, is a student who acts in self-defense, or who accidentally breaks a window or bumps into someone, considered violent or aggressive? A definition that includes the intentions of the perpetrator is offered by Berkovitz (1993, p.3) He defines aggression as "any form of behavior

that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically." Such behaviors include verbal threats and slurs, intimidations, acts of extortion, pushing, hitting, kicking, and assaulting with a weapon, such that the perpetrator intended to harm the assailant.

Violence and aggression are often defined as separate entities. Neufeld (1994) distinguishes violence from aggression by defining violence as "an aggressive act that violates social norms." This definition implies that many forms of aggressive behavior are not necessarily violent because they are socially acceptable forms of behavior. Global warfare, for example, demonstrates aggressive, but not violent behavior, because such acts are valued as patriotic, heroic, and politically correct. Likewise, corporal punishments in schools, such as strapping and caning, were once considered socially approved disciplinary tactics. By today's standards, in some Canadian provinces, however, such tactics are viewed as a form of violence because they violate our laws and social norms.

The "rules" of fighting, as described by the participants in this study, seem considerably different today than ten or twenty years ago when I attended school. In the late 60's and early 70's, students who participated in fights earned respect from their peers for "fighting fairly" which meant "don't hit someone wearing glasses," "fight until you win" - which usually meant until the opponent was on the ground - "no kicking between the legs," use of weapons, or beating on someone considerably smaller or younger. Today's youth, in contrast, seem to value "dirty fighting" techniques instead, such as a group of two or more students assaulting one student, kicking where it hurts the most, such as the groin, stomach or face, kicking

their victims long after they're on the ground, and using weapons such as knives or razor blades. It seems that students from the sixties fought over a specific issue or conflict and sometimes became friends after the fight. Many of today's youth, according to participants in this study, seem to fight for the sake of fighting. They seek provocation, and use "dirty fighting" techniques as a way to gain respect from their peers. "Fighting dirty" while socially approved by youths in the 90's, violates the social norms of those adults who valued "fighting fairly" in the 60's. Therefore it is violent, as opposed to aggressive in nature. The rising public intolerance of youth violence may partially be in reaction to this increased severity of violence and this violation of social norms. Because there is not always a consensus on what constitutes socially acceptable behavior, the differences between aggression and violence are not always clearly defined.

Neufeld (1994) claims that specific "scientific" definitions may over-simplify the issues, often making research unpublishable. Research that is published may appear too narrow in focus, ignoring the larger societal issues and how they relate specifically to schools. He argues that "putting the pieces together in a way that makes sense is the issue, not more research." This challenging proposition requires consideration from biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives. Yet even within these domains, social scientists are not in agreement on the nature of aggression or violence.

Behaviorists may argue that aggression is a behavior motivated by incentives and rewards. Cognitive theorists may claim that constructed thoughts and their relationship to unpleasant feelings

may contribute to violent behavior. Social learning theorists state that children learn aggressive behaviors from role models, such as parents, peers and the media. Freud's psychoanalytic theorizing referred to aggression as an "instinctive drive," an innate and spontaneously generated urge to destroy someone. This innate "aggressive drive" could explode in uncontrollable violence unless it was released through socially appropriate substitute activities. Berkowitz (1993) argues that there are two distinct forms of aggression - emotional aggression and instrumental aggression. Instrumental aggression refers to those assaults that are committed in hope of attaining a particular goal or reward, such as social status, power, recognition or monetary gain, and are often provocative in nature. Emotional aggression, on the contrary, is very reactive. It refers to those forms of aggression that are prompted by intense emotional arousal, are committed impulsively, and are primarily seeking to harm or destroy the victim.

Statement of the problem

This thesis explores student perceptions of the nature of school violence and the factors that contribute to such violence. By understanding the meanings that students attach to violent episodes in schools, educators may be better equipped to answer the questions posed below. For the purpose of this study aggression and violence will be used interchangeably. School violence can be defined as "any student act that intends to cause physical harm toward another student during designated school hours and within school

perimeters." Physical acts of violence will include assault as well as fighting by mutual participation, expressed by slapping, punching, kicking, or the use of weapons. Fights related to sexual assault and those occurring between teachers and students or between intruders are excluded from this study. Designated school hours are generally between 8:00 A.M and 4:00 P.M. Schools must, therefore, take responsibility for acts of student violence that occur during these times, even when such acts occur off of school premises, such as coming to or from school, or during lunch hour at a corner store.

Educators are currently addressing violence in schools by implementing conflict resolution and peer mediation programs, increasing the degree of parent and teacher supervision and police liaison, imposing "zero tolerance" policies and tightening security. But how can educators effectively reduce student violence when there is a lack of consensus of what violence means? Secondly, how effective are such programs or tactics and to what extent are they addressing the underlying issues that trigger acts of violence? Few conflict resolution programs, for example, target the relatively small group of students who commit acts of serious violence. Programs such as Second Step may be extremely useful for teaching the necessary negotiation skills to middle class students whose interpersonal disputes result from conflicting interests or values, but not for the "high risk" students who may often engage in violent behavior due to factors unrelated to interpersonal conflict. Some of these factors, discussed in chapter 4, relate to the need for belonging, status, power, respect, and increased self-esteem. They may relate to drugs and alcohol, boredom, poverty, or frustration. Perpetrators seeking

provocation to satisfy these needs may create conflicts as an excuse for their violent behavior. In fact, one grade 8 respondent participating in the Second Step program commented, "We don't want to resolve conflicts. We want to start them." (Alex)

Many school based violence prevention programs lump together a broad range of behaviors and people, ignoring the fact that different types of people turn to violence for very different reasons. Such programs may, therefore, appear too simplistic and narrow in focus for addressing an issue of such complexity and magnitude. In addition, few school personnel have the resources or the expertise to assess the extent that violence is occurring in their schools, to judge whether a particular program is appropriate for their students, or to find evidence that the program actually works in reducing school violence. A survey of 51 conflict resolution programs at the Education Development Centre in Newton, Massachusetts, found that fewer than half claimed to have reduced levels of violence (Webster, 1993).

Wilson-Brewer (1991) argues that one function of these programs is to provide "political cover" for school officials and politicians, and that they may do more harm than good by distracting school personnel and the public from the "real causes" of student violence. In fact many school personnel may perceive that violence is a minimal concern for their students and consequently invest little time developing strategies and programs for reducing violence. They may not be fully aware of the extent of the problem because many situations go unreported due to embarrassment, lack of faith in the school system's ability to intervene effectively or for fear of reprisals from the offenders. They may insist that schools offer a safe learning

environment while students may hold contrary views. Students may skip classes, arrive at school late or drop out of school altogether to avoid victimization. In fact, violence may be a bigger risk in schools than outside schools as victims must meet their victimizers on a daily basis.

Thirdly, when designing and implementing violence prevention strategies, to what extent are educators involving the perceptions of students, especially those who are involved in violent behavior? The BCTF Task Force, for example, based their report on the perceptions of teachers and parents - not students. It seems that educators have consistently decided what is best for students, thus increasing the communication gap between students and school personnel. By understanding what violence really means to students, and their perceptions of how they get triggered to participate in violent acts, educators 'may bridge the gap between student perceptions and those of school personnel. This will provide an opportunity to design more effective strategies and programs in reducing violence - strategies and programs that students will accept and participate in willingly. By consulting those teenagers who commit acts of violence in our schools, educators can then be assured that their conflict management programs and other strategies are indeed related to the issues they are claiming to address.

Organization of Thesis

This chapter discusses the rationale for exploring student perceptions of school violence. Chapter 2 discusses the relevant literature on youth violence specifically as it pertains to psychological and social factors, media influences and gender differences, and how such factors impact schools. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology including selection of the participants, the process of data collection and analysis, the role of the interviewer, and ethics and confidentiality. Data was collected through using unstructured interviews then analyzed according to emergent themes and related categories. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the results. It explores the relationships between categories and themes, such as peer pressure, respect, power, control and social status, media influences, anger and frustration, family dynamics, empathy and labelling, boredom, drugs and alcohol, and gender differences. Chapter 5 discusses the findings with respect to the literature, and also the implications of the findings with respect to future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

While understanding the nature of violence is a complex and formidable task, equally challenging is the answer to the question, What causes violent behavior among youths? Many attempt to answer this question, with a solution orientated, linear process that is often based on cause and effect thinking. Such thinking, however, undermines the complexity and multidimensional aspects of violence and prevents educators from understanding some of the underlying issues and factors that work systemically to trigger episodes of violence.

The literature suggests, for example, an association between youth violence and exposure to media violence. Not all youth who are exposed to media violence behave violently, however, nor are all violent youths influenced by the media. Those youths who behave violently in reaction to media violence, may be more receptive to violent role models portrayed in the media, due to a combination of other risk factors, such as lack of positive parenting, low socio-economic status - which may encourage escape through the media, lack of involvement in meaningful activities, or anti-social behavior. It is the combination of risk factors that heighten the likelihood of violent behavior but do not always cause this behavior to occur.

Cause and effect thinking may encourage quick-fix solutions that can distort or cover up the underlying issues concerning youth violence. A prevalent example of such thinking is with respect to the

Young Offenders Act. Advocates for tougher sentencing believe that youth violence would be reduced if only politicians enforced tougher laws. Focusing the blame on one particular group takes away the pressure from other social groups for taking some responsibility in developing social programs that may prevent youth violence. The literature presented on school violence, therefore, is not presented to support causes of youth violence, but to represent some of the predisposing factors that may, in combination, contribute to youth violence.

The literature primarily discusses the contributions from social science researchers. While this research is based on societal issues pertaining to youth violence, I will briefly discuss how such issues may pertain specifically to schools later in the chapter. The main foci of this review are on psychological and social factors pertaining to youth violence such as personal development, peer relations, family influences, socioeconomic background, media, and gender differences. The study excludes any discussion of issues pertaining to youths with psychiatric disorders, such as attachment disorder and anti-social personality, or issues pertaining to youth with learning disabilities such as attention deficit disorder. It also excludes discussion of biological and genetic factors.

I reviewed a wide range of theoretically diverse literature to provide some varied perspectives on youth violence. I purposefully chose to review the literature from a non-critical standpoint, with an eclectic theoretical perspective, in order to emphasize the complexities associated with the etiology of youth violence, and the need to explore violence within a multi-dimensional framework.

Psychological factors

The most popular theory of aggression in the social sciences proposes that people are driven to attack others when they are frustrated. This theory first took shape in 1939 with the work of Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears as the "Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis." Dollard and his associates basically defined aggression as an external condition that prevents a person from obtaining the pleasures that he or she had expected to enjoy. When people expect to reach a certain goal or to obtain a certain reward, they are anticipating the pleasures that goal or reward will bring them. When they are unexpectedly deprived of such goals, they are inclined to behave aggressively and hurt someone. For example, economic hardship may be considered a source of frustration to the degree that it prevents poor people from getting what they have been led to expect in a consumer society. In short, those who lack hope for an economically brighter future, cannot be frustrated, while those who expect their socio-economic situations to improve, may become frustrated, resentful and aggressive when such expectations are thwarted.

Miller (1941) modified this theory by recognizing that not every frustration leads to aggression. A person who is prevented from reaching a goal may want to do several things at the same time, such as wanting to escape from the unpleasant situation, overcoming the difficulty, developing alternative goals, and attacking the perceived obstacle. These other non-aggressive inclinations may be stronger than the aggressive urge, thus masking the aggressive

tendency. Miller's modification implies that people can learn non aggressive ways of reacting to frustrations. Davitz (1952) supported this claim by stating that children who have been rewarded for acting in a non aggressive manner are relatively unlikely to become assaultive when they cannot get what they want. Likewise, children who get what they want when they attack others who thwart them, may learn that such behaviors pay off and are more likely to become aggressive when their expectations are not met.

Pastore (1952) attempted to further modify this theory by suggesting that people become frustrated and aggressive only when they perceive that a thwarting is attributed to one's deliberate wrongdoing. Pastore argued that people are not frustrated by a failure to reach their goals unless they perceive that the wrongdoer intentionally and unfairly sought to interfere with their efforts. Not only are one's expected pleasures not obtained, but the thought that the frustrater was personally offensive can intensify one's aggressive response. For example, students who perceive that their teachers graded them unfairly, especially after they exerted their best efforts, may exhibit increased frustration and aggression.

Contrary to Pastore's theory, Berkowitz (1993) argues that people can behave aggressively even when they perceive that they are legitimately or accidentally kept from their goals. One such legitimate avenue is with respect to competition. He suggests that a contestant's opponents might deprive him or her of a desired outcome, and this anticipated thwarting could contribute to frustration and aggression. In many competitions, rivals actively interfere with each other's progress towards the goal and such

interference leads to frustration and aggression. Such antagonism arises even when the competition is legitimate and the rivalry takes place within established rules of conduct.

Psycho dynamically orientated theorists, however, hold contrary views with respect to competition. They contend that rivalry can be beneficial because it allows a safe outlet for accumulated aggressive urges. Menninger (1942) claimed that competitive games can bring about a needed release from the tensions created by "instinctive" aggressive impulses. Though this view of competition is widely accepted, studies have repeatedly shown that competition is more likely to produce hostility and aggression rather than friendship.

Berkowitz (1993) argues that negative feelings aroused by unpleasant experiences produce aggressive tendencies. The stronger the feelings of displeasure, the stronger will be the resulting instigation to aggression. Initial feelings of sadness or depression, for example, may trigger a variety of expressive motor-reactions, feelings, thoughts and memories. One's awareness of these reactions triggers rudimentary feelings of anger, which in turn, triggers further thought processes. Such thoughts deal with attributions, anticipated outcomes of the event, previous experiences, and social rules pertaining to the appropriate emotion with respect to the situation. These thought processes then trigger more elaborate feelings, such as hurt, loneliness, disappointment, emptiness or rejection, which then triggers anger. The full emotional experience, then, is constructed. Berkowitz argues that anger is an emotional experience that is constructed from people's awareness of their

aggression - associated physiological changes, expressive motor reactions, ideas and memories. Anger, then, accompanies other emotional states, such as sadness and depression. It also accompanies aggression but does not cause it to occur.

Many researchers support Berkowitz's claim that there is an association between depression and anger, and an association between depression and aggression. Freud's psychoanalytic formulations maintained that depression grew out of inward-directed aggression, but most theorists today, such as Poznanski and Zrull (1970) Berkowitz (1983) and Seligman (1975) support the notion that depressed feelings can sometimes generate aggressive inclinations. Izard (1977) noted the frequent mixture of anger with sadness during the grieving process. People who experienced the loss of a loved one described themselves as both sad, distressed and angry. Berkowitz and Troccoli (1990) further argue that people who are experiencing negative feelings, such as sadness, depression and anger, are more likely to act on their aggressive inclinations when they are not attending to their feelings. Hynan and Grush (1986) conducted an experiment with university men and found that depressed individuals, who did not attend to their feelings, behaved more impulsively. Heightened awareness of one's unpleasant feelings curbed impulsivity by encouraging self-control.

Neufeld (1994) supports these findings through his work with young offenders. He found that aggressive youths who had committed violent crimes, were often impulsive and egocentric and incapable of "moving from mad to sad." Such youths tended not to use feeling words such as frustrating, sad, hurt, lonely, and

disappointed, although they were sometimes capable of recognizing their angry feelings. They tended to resist thinking and feeling about aspects of their lives that contributed to feelings of anger by acting "cool," and unaffected, hardening themselves, and denying their feelings of hurt and rejection by distracting themselves. Neufeld claims that such feelings can only be recognized when the process of grieving begins.

Grieving is the process of "attending to, symbolizing and experiencing that which is missing or not working in one's life." Lack of grieving leads to residual frustration which can trigger aggressive behavior. Grieving reduces the internal level of frustration by transforming frustration into sadness and grief. Neufeld claims that a lack of adult orientation, especially secure parent-child attachments are primarily at the root of frustration. Adult relationships, he claims, are "the most important weapon in the crusade against violence." Youths who fail to form attachments with significant adults, may transfer attachments to their peers, and imitate their aggressive behaviors and conform to their social norms.

Youths who have hardened themselves and denied their own feelings, are less likely to express empathic feelings towards others. Aggressive delinquents were found to exhibit less empathy than non aggressive delinquents. (Aleksic, 1976; Ellis,1982) According to Feshbach, (1984) empathy may be a significant factor in the control of aggressive behavior. Because empathic people apparently approach an understanding of others' points of view, they are less likely to misunderstand and become angry about others' behaviors. Due to the affective nature of empathy, empathic people also tend to

inhibit aggressive behavior; observation of pain and distress in others elicits their own distress responses.

The research discussed with respect to the frustration-aggression relationship, is primarily an expression of emotional aggression; that which is impulsive, reactive and often directed towards family, peers or acquaintances. The next section discusses some examples of instrumental aggression; that which is motivated by the anticipation of gaining specific rewards or attaining particular goals. These goals and rewards primarily centre around gaining approval from parents and peers, and often involve the attainment of power, control, status, recognition, belonging and love. Rewards that influence behavior are considered social re-inforcements.

Social influences - parents and peers

The majority of research on aggression has focused, almost exclusively, on male subjects - and for good reason. Approximately 90% of violent acts are committed by males. (Canadian Crime Reports, 1992). By understanding this male phenomena educators may better understand some of the core issues pertaining to all forms of violence, committed by both young offenders and adults. Issues of gender are discussed in more detail later in this study. However, a great deal of research concerning gender differences with respect to aggression, pertains to socialization, which is the focus of this section. All of the studies discussed in this section were conducted with male subjects, and, therefore, they cannot be generalizable to the small percentage of females who participate in violent acts.

Repeated studies have shown that males who are rewarded for aggressive behavior are more likely to behave aggressively, while males who are rewarded for constructive behavior are more likely to behave non-aggressively. Behaviors tend to be repeated when they have previously led to favorable consequences, sometimes in anticipation of obtaining these positive outcomes again, and sometimes because the behavioral tendency has become habitual. For example, a father may instruct his son to behave aggressively towards a particular bully, to "stand up for himself" and "be a man." The boy may fight the bully in order to seek his father's approval. Such behavior, however, may eventually be transferred to other situations where the boy perceives he needs to "stand up for himself." Parents may, unknowingly, re-inforce a wide range of aggressive actions in their children, not realizing that aggression becomes a habitual behavior that may be generalized to a variety of situations.

Much aggression in the home arises out of attempts to control other members of the family. Furthermore, the aggressor's attempted coercion is often aimed at ending the target's annoying behavior. For example, a boy who is angered by his sister's teasing, may strike her as an attempt to get her to stop pestering him. If she then stops pestering him, the outcome is rewarding. The brother's hitting is negatively re-inforced, in that his action has ended an unpleasant event.

Patterson and his colleagues (1967) conducted a study whereby boys who had been victimized had the opportunity to punish their assailants. In approximately 65% of the cases, their

counter aggression successfully convinced the perpetrators not to repeat their attacks. However, this negative re-inforcement increased the likelihood that these victims would later transfer their aggression by attacking other children who were not provoking them. Even though these boys understood how it felt to be a victim of violence, their rewarded aggression encouraged them to victimize other boys.

Another example showing re-inforcement and transferability of aggression is with respect to a victim's display of pain and suffering during an assault. Sebastian (1978) conducted an experiment dealing with provoked men's reactions to their assailant's pain. Subjects were first provoked by an experimenter, then had the opportunity to inflict pain on him as a means of getting revenge. The higher the level of pain the subjects had supposedly inflicted on their tormentors, the more they reported enjoying the experiment. Furthermore, the more they enjoyed their retaliation, the more inclined they were to hurt another innocent person on a later occasion, even though there was no incentive or desire for revenge.

✦ One's peers are also powerful socializing agents. Peers serve as models for one another and reward one another's behavior through acceptance and approval. Individually, a student may feel powerless and insecure but once accepted into a peer group he may gain status and respect and feel more empowered through his sense of belonging. Such peer groupings are especially important for anti-social youths who typically behave aggressively towards their peers and consequently have difficulty making friends. Cairns & colleagues (1988) observed that anti-social youths often befriend one another because they are similar in aggressiveness and lifestyle. As their

anti-social inclinations are re-inforced through the group, they become reassured that their shared perceptions and attitudes are right and may threaten the social order in schools and other social structures.

Such group characteristics are particularly true of many youth gangs. Gang members establish rules of conduct which define how each member should behave in specific situations. A gang member may win the approval of the other gang members by committing violent acts or be rejected by them for not measuring up to their expectations. Their code of personal honor emphasizes the value they place on manhood. A member's degree of toughness and masculinity is largely measured by the severity of violence that he commits (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Pugh, 1986). While gang behavior seems primarily a symptom of violence, it may also contribute to school violence by its influential means of recruitment, especially with respect to anti-social youths who seek belonging to a particular group. Such characteristics of youth gangs seem to be an exaggerated form of those characteristics and values that exist in other more loosely structured male groups. As Neufeld pointed out earlier, individuals who lack strong attachments to their parents, may be more inclined to form attachments to peers and become more susceptible to peer pressure. Much of the research indicates that ineffective parenting contributes to aggressive behavior in young people.

Effects of parenting

With respect to Berkowitz's theory discussed earlier, that unpleasant events can trigger unhappy feelings which lead to frustration, aggression and anger, it follows that children who are victimized by an unhappy family life as they grow up, are more likely to become emotionally reactive aggressors.

Poor parenting is often expressed in a variety of ways - through inconsistent and inappropriate discipline methods, permissiveness with respect to aggressive behavior, displays of coldness, indifference and rejection, and resorting to highly punitive measures such as verbal and physical abuse. In many studies that show a correlation between poor childrearing practices and aggressive behavior in offspring, it is unclear which particular parenting deficiency contributed towards the child's aggressive behavior. Each of these deficiencies may be considered risk factors; the more deficiencies present, the greater the chance that a child will become violence prone. However, the presence of one deficiency can be counteracted by other influences.

In a study by McCord (1983) half of the participants who claimed they had been rejected in childhood by unaffectionate parents had been convicted of serious crimes by the time they reached adulthood - even though they had not been physically abused. However, boys with unaffectionate mothers were not likely to become criminals if these women were also self-confident and consistent in their discipline. (McCord, 1986) Therefore, it seems that parental rejection in itself does not contribute to violent offspring; it

is the combination of parental rejection and other adverse influences. Extremely aggressive youths are especially likely to react aggressively when they are beaten by one or both of their parents. The more children are hit or beaten by their parents, the more frequently they assault, not only their siblings and peers, but also their parents. (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) Approximately 46% of abused children will continue the cycle of violence by becoming abusive parents (Widom, 1989). Even children who witness domestic violence may develop aggressive inclinations.

According to Patterson's Social Learning Theory (1989), many children are trained to become aggressive through their interactions with other members of the family. Although he recognizes that other factors, such as unemployment, level of income, ethnic background, and education level, can contribute stress on family relationships and have an impact on the developing child, he contends that these factors influence how the child is reared. Patterson's formulation of the development of aggression in children can be summarized in the following way: when a child develops aggressive or anti-social behavior at home, he will tend to behave in socially inadequate ways outside the family, especially at school. His conduct problems, largely pertaining to impulsiveness and distractibility, may lead to academic failure and rejection by "normal" peers. He may then join a deviant, anti-social peer group which will re-inforce his aggressive inclinations. Finally, he may turn to delinquency as a means to maintain social approval from his peer group. The first step in this chain of events, concerns poor parenting skills. After a decade of home observations, Patterson's group concluded that parents of

aggressive youths are deficient in four essential parenting functions: (1) they fail to effectively monitor the activities of their offspring both inside and outside the home; (2) they fail to discipline aggressive behavior adequately; (3) they do not reward prosocial behavior sufficiently and (4) they are ineffective at problem solving. These deficiencies tend to occur together, somewhat like "traits;" the presence of one deficiency ensures that the other deficiencies are present.

Many social scientists claim that broken homes lead to delinquency. However, according to McCord (1986) it is parental conflict rather than having only one parent at home that heightens the likelihood of childhood aggressiveness. The important issue is understanding how the separation of parents came about. For example, a study comparing boys with divorced parents to boys with non-divorced parents, showed that the boys from conflict-ridden intact families, displayed more aggression than the boys with peacefully divorced parents.

Media

The effects of media violence on the behavior of children have been examined by many researchers, in many countries, using many different methodologies, and a great deal of consistency in results has emerged. Repeated studies have indicated that an association exists between exposure to media violence and violent behavior in children and adults. Despite such consistency in studies, there is still controversy among scholars. Some skeptics, while a minority, claim

the association is small and perhaps insignificant, and may only pertain to young children or mentally deranged viewers. The majority of researchers, however, believe otherwise. Rosenthal (1986) argues that where a problem as serious as violence is involved, even a small association must be taken seriously, especially when one considers that many millions of people are ordinarily exposed to the media. Skeptics question the generalizability of controlled laboratory studies to the real world, and criticize field studies because of the number of variables that can influence the causal relationship. While there is some agreement among researchers that a relationship exists between media violence and the viewer's behavior and attitudes, the controversy seems to be related to when and why this effect comes about and to what extent this effect represents a serious threat.

A considerable body of experimental research indicates that violent movies can increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior to an extent that ranges from small to moderate. Anderson's (1977) statistical analysis of the findings obtained in thirty-one laboratory experiments summarizes some of this evidence. The majority of these experiments demonstrated that after exposure to human acts of aggression in films or on television, children, adolescents, and young adults behaved more aggressively in situations ranging from play, to teaching, to dispute resolution. These effects were more pronounced when the media aggression was rewarded, as evident in the Bandura et al Bobo doll experiments. (Bandura,1965)

Because many doubts have been raised about the supposed artificiality of laboratory measures of aggression, Wood and her

associates (1991) reviewed twenty-eight separate field studies in which the subjects had been able to assault other persons "freely" and "naturally." The Leyen's Belgian Experiment was one such study that was examined. This study investigated aggression levels of teenage boys residing within 4 cottages in a Belgian minimum-security penal institution. Observers compared the boys' levels of aggressiveness towards one another before and after exposing them to regular evening movies. One group was exposed to violent films while the other group was exposed to neutral films. Leyens found that youths exposed to violent movies increased their level of aggressive behavior while those exposed to neutral films either decreased or remained constant in how often they assaulted each other. Woods and her colleagues found that watching violent movies led to greater aggression than watching control films, in approximately 70% of the experiments.

Critics of these studies question why only some kinds of aggressive scenes are apt to have aggressive affects, why some acts of violence actually dampen a viewer's urge to behave aggressively, and why violent scenes in movies affect some people and not others. Berkowitz (1993) addresses these issues with respect to his "priming effect" concept. This concept suggests that depictions of violence can activate aggression related ideas, thoughts, memories and action tendencies in viewers, providing the media-presented material has relevant meaning to the viewers. When people encounter a stimulus or an event that has particular meaning, other ideas may occur to them that have much the same meaning. These thoughts in turn can activate yet other semantically related ideas and the tendency to act

accordingly. Even though the primed ideas and behavioral inclinations usually subside with time, later happenings can reactivate the thoughts and action tendencies. Situational cues that remind viewers of violence they have previously seen, read about, or heard about can reawaken earlier aggression-related cognitions and impulses. This is only true, however, if viewers interpret the actions they see as relating to aggression. For example, a football game may be perceived as a violent sport, depending on how viewers interpret the game. Viewers who perceive that the players are trying to hurt one another are likely to perceive it as an aggressive sport while those who focus on the skill of the players are more inclined to perceive it as a non-aggressive sport. Observed aggression, then, is at least partially, in the mind of the beholder.

Berkowitz's "priming" concept can be understood with respect to some of the other research. Other researchers indicate that people who are exposed to media violence are more likely to increase their aggressive behavior if they do not see the aggressor being punished for his or her actions; if they do not regard the violence as improper or unjustified; if they identify with the observed aggressors, imagining themselves to be the aggressors; and if they do not distance themselves psychologically from what they see or hear.

Children who witness violence are less likely to behave violently if they see that the aggressor was punished. For example, news of a murderer being executed or sentenced to life imprisonment apparently can produce a short-term drop in homicides. (Philips, 1986) Children who witness violence are more likely to behave violently if the aggressor does not suffer any

consequences for his or her violent behavior. Such acts of violence may be perceived as morally acceptable, especially when the perpetrators are treated as heroes, and resort to violence for what they perceive as "a just cause." Comparisons of media violence in the U.S., a country with a high rate of aggression, with Japan, a country with a very low rate of aggression, reveals significant differences in the consequences of media acts of violence. Iwao et al (1984) analyzed fictional acts of violence on television programs from Japan and the U.S. They found that the number of violent acts was similar across countries, but the consequences of the violence varied greatly. Japanese television depicts more suffering and blood following an act of violence, which leads American visitors to perceive Japanese programs as particularly gruesome. According to Iwao et al, violence on Japanese television is something that arouses distress and sympathy, not something to be cheered.

Berkowitz (1993) found that children who viewed violent shows were more likely to behave violently if they identified with the observed aggressors, imagining themselves to be this person. As a consequence, they react emotionally to whatever happens to the character, which activates a broad range of aggressive ideas and action tendencies. Eron and Huesmann (1984) suggest that such identification with violent characters may partly be related to the observation of violence in the child's own home. Eron (1982) found that children whose parents use physical punishment are more likely to be aggressive themselves or become more aggressive after exposure to television violence.

Children exposed to violence in the media may be less likely to behave violently if they distance themselves psychologically from the fighting on the screen. Such distancing may help children separate reality from fantasy. According to Liebert & Sprafkin, (1988) children are inclined to believe that the world they see portrayed on television is a reflection of the real world. Although the ability to differentiate fact from fiction increases with age and maturity, it is also a function of the child's particular social environment - a large proportion of teenagers from low income families believe that people in the real world behave in similar ways to characters portrayed in the fictional world of television. Perhaps this is partly due to the desire to escape the reality of their lives and to believe that fantasies can be true to life. More likely it is due to a lack of parental censorship and education with respect to exposure to media violence. The more often children encounter the media's negative image of the social world, the more strongly this picture becomes implanted in their minds, particularly because they are not acquiring other contradictory information from their real worlds. Underprivileged children are, therefore, most at risk when exposed to media violence.

The aggressive thoughts and tendencies activated by the depictions of violence in the mass media usually diminish in strength fairly quickly with the passage of time. Copycat crimes, for example, which often occur after watching violent news stories, usually subside after approximately four days. (Philips, 1986) John Hinckley's case, concerning the attempted murder of President Reagen, was widely reported in the press and television, and

consequently it prompted others to imitate his aggression for a few days afterwards. Some violent behaviors, however, are not so short-lived. Those exposed to violent images may internalize such images and engage in violent fantasies, thus keeping the aggressive-tendencies alive for a longer duration of time. Make-believe aggression is much more likely to perpetuate aggressive thoughts and inclinations, and may even strengthen them, than it is to bring about a cathartic reduction of violent urges. (Buvinic & Berkovitz, 1976)

Eron & Huesmann (1972) conducted a cross-national longitudinal study on the long term effects of media violence on children. They tracked the relationship between exposure to media and aggressive behavior in grade three students, over a ten year period. Their results showed that the most aggressive third graders were the ones who most preferred violent TV programs ten years later. Other longitudinal studies have shown similar results.

People who are repeatedly exposed to media violence over long periods of time may eventually become desensitized to its effects. Thomas & Drabman (1977) found that people who watch the greatest amount of violent television in their daily lives tended to exhibit the weakest physiological arousal in response to both fictional and realistic aggression. This suggests that desensitized viewers become indifferent to aggression. They may begin to view violence as an everyday occurrence and believe it to be socially acceptable and appropriate behavior. They may also need exposure to increased levels of media violence in order to be entertained. Since they are

less anxious about violent behavior, they may be more likely to assault someone who provoked them earlier. (Thomas,1982)

Huesmann's script-theory formulation suggests that youngsters who are frequently exposed to violence in the media can learn aggressive scripts. Such internalized messages convince them that aggression is a common and appropriate way of dealing with interpersonal problems. Because the majority of aggressors portrayed in the media are males, it seems that boys will be much more likely than girls to internalize these scripts and behave aggressively.

Gender differences

There has been much controversy concerning the role that biology plays in accounting for differences in aggression between the sexes. Because males are generally recognized as "the aggressive sex" many assume aggression is a biological or genetic trait. However, much of the literature suggests otherwise. Differences in socialization practices between the sexes seems to largely account for the gender differences with respect to aggressive behavior. North Americans live in a culture that rationalizes and even glorifies male violence. The benefits of male aggression are constantly amplified to boys through fairy stories, educational literature, the media and daily conversations. The developing male child learns very early in life that the successful use of force not only gets him what he wants without suffering any consequences, but he can also expect some admiration and esteem for his actions. As he matures into adulthood

and fatherhood he may associate this tough, aggressive image with a macho identity. He may then teach his sons to be "manly," so that in narcissistic fashion, he may see his masculine image in his sons.

Statistics on male violence certainly reflect significant gender differences with respect to aggression. Recent increases in female aggression, however, especially among juveniles, and female participation in violent and delinquent activity has been reported in the Uniform Crime Reports of the United States and of other Western industrialized countries such as Great Britain. Between 1970 and 1979, the reports indicated a 75% increase in juvenile female's involvement in aggravated assault and a 107% increase for weapon possession (Campbell, 1984). The rate of increase was substantially greater for females than that of males, but the percentage of females compared to males who were charged for such crimes was a modest 15%, and 6% respectively.

While such aggressive behavior continues to be predominantly male-based, Campbell claims that readers may anticipate a more egalitarian distribution of aggression in their adolescent society if such a trend continues. However, the extent to which this change reflects a true increase as opposed to changes in criminal justice policy towards females over the last two decades can not, perhaps, be accurately measured.

As noted earlier, aggressive behavior in females has received little academic attention, relying mainly on anecdotal and journalistic accounts. Because of its double-deviancy (aggression is not law-abiding nor is it characteristic of female sex-role expectations) it has mainly been acknowledged in the context of extreme and atypical

offenses such as murder and homicide. (Jones, 1980; Rosenblatt and Greenland,1974). The historic and widely held assumption that violent behavior was primarily masculine in gender has had important implications both in the kind of theoretical work that has dominated the literature as well as in the continued choice of males as preferred subjects of empirical research. (Giordano,1978) The recent rising interest in women's studies has focused primarily on females as victims of violence and there has been an ideological unwillingness to explore females as perpetrators of aggression. (Brownmiller,1975). And although social scientists have acknowledged the male factor in aggression, as indicative of their studies, North American culture has not accepted responsibility for re-socializing masculine roles into non-violent identities. Until this process begins, people, especially feminists, may be reluctant to explore female delinquency, for fear the issue of male violence be forgotten.

The literature suggests some distinct differences between the sexes with respect to the causes of violent behavior in adolescents. Female delinquency, due to its double-deviancy, has been considered a psychological maladjustment. Short (1968) summarizes the pre-1968 literature on female juvenile delinquency and says a common theme concerns the lack of social skills and "normal" boy-girl relations among the girls studied. Cohen (1955) also suggests that female violence is related to difficulties in heterosexual relationships. While for males, long range goals centre around the acquisition of material possessions, the primary goal for many females is "catching a man." And while it is widely recognized that coming from a single

parent home is related to a higher incidence of delinquency, this variable is thought to have an even greater impact in girls. Studies show a more profound sense of loneliness and low self-esteem in girls who have a poor home life (Konopka, 1966). Female delinquents, characterized as having psychological problems, are unable to adequately abide by their "proper" sex role and suffer deeply from the ill effects of a bad home life.

Another explanation, which attempts to explain increases in female violent crime rates, relates to women's liberation. Adler (1975) suggests that changing sex-roles have encouraged females to participate in aspects of life that were previously controlled by men - including violence. Adler perceives the increase in female participation in violent crime is part of the price society must pay for greater involvement by females in both legitimate and illegitimate activities.

Like her legitimate-based sister, the female criminal knows too much to pretend or return to her former role as a second rate criminal confined to "feminine" crimes such as shoplifting and prostitution. She has had a taste of financial victory. In some cases, she has had a taste of blood. (Adler, 1975)

Giordano (1978) argues that such a direct link between the women's movement and increases in female delinquency is somewhat simplistic. It suggests a causal link instead of considering the multi-dimensional aspects of changing sex roles. She claims it is more useful to "conceive of these women and girls as recipients of the effects of broad based as well as micro-level societal changes, rather than themselves being responsible for a new era of sex role

equality." Giordano discarded the psychological explanation for female violence for a sociological one, which allowed her to re-examine traditional male theories, and try to apply them to females.

The most frequently expressed conceptualization of youth violence pertains to what many theorists refer to as the "subculture of violence." The subculture refers to specific urban neighborhoods where people, usually of ethnic minority, live well below the poverty level. Trapped in an underclass of social isolation, these people face not only economic stress, but the social stresses of illness, drugs, poor schools and housing, and an unsafe environment. This oppressive environment normalizes violence as a routine part of everyday life, and such normalization contributes to the formation of a subculture.

Cohen (1955), a subcultural theorist, accounts for such delinquency with his Restricted Opportunities theory. He claims that youth who resort to violence within their subculture, are reacting in frustration to "middle class America" which has denied them the opportunity to succeed by the means promised. It is not the low standard of living that causes the frustration, but the discrepancy between what a consumer society teaches one to expect as a mainstream citizen, and what one actually achieves. Disadvantaged youths discover that legitimate means of attaining material goods and acquiring employment and formal education are not accessible to them, due to discrimination, lack of skills, and a variety of other factors. Frustration emerges with the knowledge of restricted opportunities, despite one's best efforts.

A second theme to support the concept of subculture violence, is related to "differential association." Miller (1958), in contrast to

Cohen, argues that disadvantaged youths are exhibiting their preferred behaviors based on their own values and cultural history, without concern for middle-class values. Wolfgang's (1973) version of this theme relates to differences of attitudes about violence and other crimes. He claims that some neighborhoods and communities are so ravaged by poverty and crime, that violence becomes a fact of life, and one's attitudes towards death, injury, law enforcement and stealing are very different from those living in non-violent communities. Violent acts are more tolerated and one's values reflect such tolerance.

Campbell (1993) argues that it is not so much an issue of a violent subculture as it is an issue of masculinity, because the majority of these violent participants are male. She argues that minority males, in the U.S., have the highest rate of unemployment in the nation. With the usual economic and social signs of successful masculinity denied them, these men must find other ways, such as violence, to gain recognition and power, and win back the pride and identity that society has denied them. Even in higher socioeconomic communities, males look upon economic success as a reflection of their masculinity.

Hirschi (1976) found that peer influences and male friendship networks played a significant role in male violence, but claimed that such influences were non-existent with females. Giordano (1978) found otherwise. Her study attempted to determine what kind of social network seems to be associated with high levels of female delinquency. She administered questionnaires to 108 incarcerated juvenile offenders and 83 questionnaires to randomly selected urban

high school students from a lower socioeconomic area. The high school sample was added to provide a wider range of delinquent involvement - primarily to increase the number who are more "law abiding." The average age for both the school and the institutional sample was 17 years. Several items derived from the literature on male friendship networks were used in this study to measure the extent of peer group involvement.

Results showed that there was a significant association between group affiliation and self-reported delinquency. Especially with white females, the friendship networks that were composed of both males and females were particularly conducive to delinquency. In the black subsample, there was a somewhat greater likelihood that "trouble" could involve a group of girls alone. These results suggest that white females have the opportunity to learn techniques, values and motives regarding violent behavior from male friends, while black females may have had a longer tradition of independence and freedom of action than their white counterparts. Giordano also found a significant correlation between the perception of approval from other girlfriends with actual delinquency involvement. Female friends were found to be the most important reference group with respect to approval. These findings are consistent with male subculture theories.

Campbell (1984) conducted a study of 251 schoolgirls, who were on the average, sixteen years of age. Students completed a questionnaire in a classroom setting in a variety of geographical locations including London, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Oxford. The questionnaire covered four main areas. The first section covered

personal information, such as age, police contact, peer group, and the degree of involvement in fighting. The second section dealt with attitudes to fighting, such as moral values associated with physical aggression. Section three explored various kinds of fighting behavior while section four asked for specific details of a fight in which the respondent had been involved.

Results showed that 88.8 % of females reported that they participated in a physical fight at least once, 58% had their first fight at age ten or less, 25.5 % had been in more than six fights, and 100% had witnessed a fight. Of the 88.8% who had been in a fight, 48% had participated in their last fight within the preceding twelve months. With respect to fighting behavior, the majority of fights occurred as a one-on-one, with other girls, and when friends were watching. The opponent tended to have the last remark and the participant tended to strike first. In answer to the question, "What was the last remark," most girls made reference to verbal slurs related to sexuality such as "tart", "whore", and "slag".

The main reasons for fighting were related to personal integrity and loyalty. Personal integrity included instances of false accusations, gossip behind the participant's back or suggestions of promiscuity or delinquency. Loyalty refers to the above instances but with references to a friend, sibling or parent. There was a "surprising" low response rate to questions concerning how the fight stopped and who had won. Campbell suggests that winning a fight may not be as important as participating in a fight. Participation allows one to demonstrate such qualities as toughness, which are recognized by peers, regardless if one wins or loses. The majority of

girls had some form of a relationship with their opponents which was restored after the fight.

The primary means of fighting for both parties was kicking punching, and tearing clothes, while the opponent was reported as also resorting to "dirty tactics" such as slapping, biting, scratching or using weapons. The most common injuries to the opponents were bruises, (46%) cuts (24.7%) and scratches (20.3%) A few participants claimed to have knocked out the opponents' teeth (2%) or broken their bones (6.8%). The main rules of fighting were; you should not take on more than one person at a time, ask your friends to join in, get your friends to call the police, or report it to the school or police yourself.

In the majority of cases, the girls fought according to what they perceived the rules to be. However, Campbell points out that the girls may have lied in the questionnaire in order to maintain consistency with these two factors. With respect to attitudes, the majority of girls had a negative view of fighting with respect to the statements, "I think fighting is the best way of settling some disputes" and "I think fighting is a laugh." This study shows that girls both engage in and agree upon social rules of conduct in fights. According to Campbell, this study strongly suggests that female involvement in aggression is considerably more prevalent than criminal statistics suggest.

To better understand male and female violence, and their relationship to one another, Campbell (1993) claims readers are asking the wrong questions. Instead of asking, "Are males more aggressive than females and are females becoming as aggressive as males, they need to be asking, "How is female aggression expressed

differently from male aggression? She argues that both genders experience aggressive inclinations and are capable of expressing violent acts, but that aggressive tendencies have traditionally been expressed in different ways due to gender differences in socialization. For example, Neufeld (1994) states that "boys will physically attack the opponent, while girls will attack the very existence of the person," such as giving "the silent treatment." When females become frustrated and angry they are more likely to use tears as a release, while males are taught that expression of such feelings is unmanly. With respect to Neufeld's theory as discussed earlier in this thesis, delinquent boys were incapable of "moving from mad to sad;" they "stayed with mad." This transformational process is essential for reducing frustration and "understanding what is missing or not working in one's life."

School violence

While much of the literature discussed may be helpful in understanding societal violence with respect to the young offender, how is such research relevant to violence that occurs in schools? This section attempts to relate some of the theories discussed to some of the factors that are specific to school settings. In addition, I will discuss two theories not yet mentioned, the Labelling Theory and Theory of Prolonged Adolescent Dependence both of which relate to school settings.

Given that students spend the majority of their time in school, schools may act as symbols for other societal injustices and they

become convenient targets at which students can direct their aggressions. Cohen's restricted opportunities theory and the frustration-aggression theories can be applied to school settings in much the same way they are in larger societal settings. Many schools reflect middle-class values, competitive standards, and a power structure that can disempower well meaning but vulnerable students. Students who do not conform to such standards and structure, may commit violent acts as a way to express their frustrations with a structure that is excluding them from the success they desire and expect. For example, emphasis on academic training and standardized letter grading systems may set many low-achieving students up for failure. Not only must they compete with their peers, in standardized grading systems, but their continual failure throughout their school lives is a constant reminder that the educational system has not fulfilled its promise to provide educational success.

The authoritarian structure of many schools sets up a power imbalance between students and school personnel. Students who experience powerlessness and lack of control in their personal and home lives, may feel easily threatened by this structure. Consequently they become conduct problems which can hinder their educational success. The Prolonged Adolescent Dependence Theory (McPartland and McDill, 1977) looks at the adult-child relationship as a means to understand this power structure. It suggests that modern society has taken a different view of the adult-child relationship than have other societies throughout history. It has created a new stage in the life cycle between childhood and adulthood called

adolescence - a time when individuals have the talents and energies to assume adult responsibilities but are not provided the opportunity to do so. According to this view, when young people cannot fulfill their need for autonomy by contributing to the workplace or to some needful activities in the school or home, students may rebel against the authority structures that attempt to restrain and control them. The evaluation structure is almost always controlled by teachers, and is often used to control students' classroom behavior.

Schools use a variety of punitive and disciplinary tactics as a means to deter violence. However, many of these tactics, such as suspension and expulsion may, in fact, contribute towards increases in violent acts. Because the majority of violent episodes are impulsive, and prompted by intense emotions, they cannot be shaped by consequences. Neufeld (1994) argues that punishments and consequences often increase a student's frustration level, especially those that separate him or her from significant others. This in turn, increases aggression. Gibbons (1987) and Sherman & Berk (1984) support such claims with their Labelling Theory. This theory maintains that many students become deviants as a consequence of being labelled wrongdoers. Because they perceive that they are treated as bad students by school personnel and as bad people by society, their self-identities become altered. They come to think of themselves as being outside the law or outside the jurisdiction of the school, and they behave accordingly. Punishment may then heighten the likelihood that they will commit further acts of violence as they live up to their new self-identity. Assignment to special programs in schools may contribute further to the labelling

process, as segregation tends to re-inforce the students' negative self-image, and reminds them of the discrepancy between the successful mainstream student that he was expected to become, and his own level of failure.

While the issues pertaining to school violence may be largely a reflection of societal factors, schools may be able to counteract some of these influences by making some structural and organizational reforms. For example, school size has been shown to have an influence on student behavior.(Leggett et al, 1970) Smaller schools encourage involvement and commitment to student activities, and higher visibility and closer personal associations promote a greater sense of belonging. Also, from a disciplinary standpoint, behavior is more visible in small schools and subject to more control. While it may be inconceivable for school districts to rebuild their schools, school personnel can create "schools within schools," by, for example, organizing groups of students and teachers who work together into specific areas of the school.

This chapter addresses some of the psychological and social factors that contribute towards youth violence. It discusses the relationship between frustration and anger, as originally proposed by Dollard, and the relationship of these feelings to other unpleasant feelings and events, as further researched by such others as Berkovitz and Neufeld. Social influences were discussed with respect to parents, peer groups, and media influences. Social learning theorists claim that young people are trained to behave aggressively through their interactions with other members of the family. Poor parenting through ineffective discipline and monitoring contributes

to learned aggression. Peers also serve as models for one another and reward one another's behavior through acceptance and approval. Some researchers claim that exposure to violence in the media influences aggressive behavior in youths. Youths most at risk are those who identify with the characters, are unable to distance themselves psychologically from the fighting on the screen, and experience repeated exposure such that they become desensitized. Labelling, subculture theories and gender issues were discussed especially with respect to the socialization of masculinity. Finally, social issues pertaining specifically to schools were discussed such as structure, organization and school size.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Changing roles -- from counselor to researcher

When I began working as a school counsellor in a junior high school three years ago, I encountered a large number of students who were either victims or perpetrators of violent behavior. My sense of helplessness at being unable to ensure a student's safety triggered my interest in researching school violence.

My role as a researcher, although different from that of a counsellor, shares many similar concerns and gives a sense of a continuum. I was able to carry out my research in the same school where I work as a counsellor and to interview many students that were on my counselling load -- students with whom I had already developed a rapport and some knowledge of their backgrounds. In this regard, there was an immediate comfort level between the participants and myself which encouraged them to tell their stories in a genuine and unguarded manner.

There were many advantages to my dual counsellor/researcher roles in terms of conducting this research and acquiring data. This research is concerned with how the participants attach meanings to their experiences of fighting. Quantitative researchers may "objectify" this process by regarding such meanings as being intrinsic to the thing that has it, as being a natural part of the objective make-up of the particular thing being studied. My position, however,

suggests that knowledge and meaning is created through the process of social interaction. (Blumer, 1969) This view of symbolic interactionism suggests that "the meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing." (Blumer, 1969, p.4) This process of social interaction is guided by the relationship that is established between the researcher and participant.

Negotiating entry and gaining the participants' trust are crucial components to conducting qualitative research. According to Marshall & Rossman, (1989) entry negotiation requires time, patience, and sensitivity to the rhythms and norms of a group. As a counsellor, I had developed awareness and sensitivity to the school culture, and was able to gain entry as a researcher very quickly. Wax (1971) has emphasized the importance of the researcher's initial contacts with those chosen for study. Building a trusting relationship is essential for successful data collection as she explains in her study of Native American reservation society. Wax sought to understand the relationship between cultural patterns and under achievement of the children expressed in the home. However, she found many women embarrassed and hesitant to open their doors to the scrutiny of a researcher. Wax made family members comfortable with her presence by permitting some of the children to play with her typewriter and employing some of the women as interviewers. In essence, she established a "woman to woman" relationship prior to establishing her role as a researcher. Likewise, I had established a "counsellor to student" relationship with the participants prior to becoming a researcher.

I took a leave of absence from my counselling position six months prior to beginning my research. My reappearance in the role of researcher six months later may have made the shift from one role to the other easier for the students to accept. At the same time, it was important for the participants to understand the differences between my role as researcher and that of counsellor.

As a school counsellor, my responsibility is to help students make appropriate changes to solve their particular problems, and to support the school's mandate, that all students have the right to safety. This mandate often conflicts with the needs of the students that I am trying to support. As a counsellor, I may attempt to encourage a perpetrator to change his or her behavior to ensure a victim's safety. As a researcher, however, I am in a position to accept and investigate the perpetrator's perspective, having more freedom and opportunity to balance the power relation between us. As researcher, I emphasize my role with the university as opposed to that of the school.

A student is generally assured confidentiality with a counsellor with the exception of any disclosures that indicate a threat to one's personal safety. Determining which situations jeopardize a student's safety is often a judgment call and sometimes open to interpretation. Consequently, students who disclose information concerning their participation in the victimizing of other students may feel betrayed when such information is passed on to the administration who may then contact the students' parents or suspend them from school. Likewise, students who are victims of school violence often disclose their stories but insist that I not intervene for fear of reprisal from

their victimizers. This poses the question as to whether students have the right to privacy with respect to their victimization and whether counsellors are obligated to protect students and ensure their safety even if it means acting against the students' will. As researcher, the ethical issues seemed less complicated. I was able to assure students that their stories would be held confidential with the exception of any disclosures concerning future provocations such that another's safety would be jeopardized. I advised participants to keep such stories to themselves if they were concerned about a breach of confidentiality.

Identification of participants

Students were identified and selected according to their degree of involvement in physical violence during designated school hours. Physical violence involved fighting or assault such as kicking, slapping or punching by one or more students against one or more students. It excluded any form of sexual assault. Some students had been involved in numerous fights which resulted in severe injury to their victims. Others had been involved in only one fight and did not severely injure their opponents. Regardless of the degree of violence, all participants were subject to some form of disciplinary action such as parental contact, detention, informal or formal suspension or transfer to another school in the district. Such incidences occurred coming to or from school, during lunch hour, in hallways or classrooms or on the school grounds.

The two vice principals at the school, who are responsible for disciplining such students, keep records of all incidences where disciplinary measures were taken. Students were identified for this study according to such documentation. I checked with each counsellor for additional information on these students to try to ensure that the interview process would not be detrimental to any of the participants. One student was omitted from the interview for this reason. His counsellor believed that his misbehavior and violent episodes would escalate as a result of the attention he would receive during the interview.

Selecting the participants

As part of the selection process I discussed each identified student with administrators and counsellors in order to understand the context of each violent episode. The main criterion I used for selection was based on each student's degree of involvement in violent activity. I wondered to what extent varying degrees of involvement would reveal different perceptions of the nature and causes of school violence and whether there were any significant differences between the perceptions of an extremely violent offender and those of a "mildly" violent offender. For example, one identified student with an "at risk" profile had severely assaulted other students on many occasions, been charged by the police and suspended from school. Another student who is considered "a good kid" participated in only one fight where "only two or three punches were thrown." This student was not charged by the police nor suspended from school. The "at risk" student was described as being

a "behavior problem" to teachers, performed poorly in academic classes and showed a high absenteeism. The "good" student performed well academically, attended school regularly participated in extra-curricular activities, and was not a behavior problem. As I explored this labelling process, I initially considered selecting only the "at risk" students for interviews - students who had committed assault on numerous occasions - but I realized that by doing so, I would be supporting such labels and making the assumption that "at risk" students behave violently because of the factors associated with their "at risk" profile.

When I thought about the "good kids" profile I became more intrigued. Often there were no immediate or highly visible factors that seemed to influence their violent behavior. They often came from "good" homes with two parent families, affluent and stable environments with parental support and positive role modeling. They may do well academically, get along well with peers, attend school regularly and refrain from taking drugs or alcohol. Yet some of these "good kids" act violently on occasion while others continue their "goodness" uninterrupted. While some of these "good kids" may eventually become "bad kids", many may never act violently again in their lives. I decided to interview a range of students such that both of these profiles could be included in the study. In addition, I included some other individuals which I'll call "the fringe kids." I decided on these categories prior to selecting the participants. By exploring various degrees of violent behavior my understanding of the nature and causes of violence will be more enriched and not entrenched in predetermined labels.

Another aspect of the selection process involved my initial meeting with each identified participant. I approached students individually during designated school hours by discussing the nature and procedure of the study with them in the hallway outside their classes. Some students were already in the hallway wandering around when I came looking for them. On one occasion, I was explaining the procedure to a student when some of his friends came wandering down the hall. The student proudly bellowed out that he was going to get interviewed for fighting. This created some excitement as his friends joined us asking why this student was being interviewed and why not them as they were also violent and could say a lot more than their friend could say. Two of the four students were on my list and I explained that I would speak to them at a later time. Later on, as the word seemed to travel about the nature of my study, other students approached me asking if they could be interviewed. It became very clear that violent behavior was looked upon as an exciting topic that provided some prestige for the selected participants.

I decided at that time to interview a few students who had not been in a fight themselves but who had witnessed some fighting. I selected three boys who were friends of one participant and conducted a group interview with them. These were the only students interviewed who had not been in a physical fight themselves. This gave me the opportunity to diffuse some of the excitement among the students by explaining that selected participants were from a range of students, that some have been in fights and some have not been in fights but everyone has a point of

view on fighting. This explanation may have helped to change the perception that fighters receive special treatment and recognition, which in turn, may contribute to some of the reasons teenagers fight. It may also have prevented participants from embellishing or fabricating stories during the interview because there was not a great expectation for them to subscribe to the role of fighter. In addition, it maintains the confidentiality of the participants. Students who know of other students being interviewed are not informed of their fighting status and can not pass judgment on that student.

I explained the nature and purpose of the study with participants on an individual basis. I summarized some of the general questions that I planned to ask them as a way to help them feel prepared and in control of the interview. I explained that I was interested in their personal experiences involving physical fighting, fights that they had seen or heard about, reasons for fighting, differences in fighting between boys and girls, some of the consequences of fighting and some solutions to fighting. Some students began to share some stories during this initial meeting which helped to qualify them for the interviews. Students qualified by their degree of interest in sharing their stories and if they were willing to talk about them.

One student that I approached to be interviewed commented that he did not care if he was interviewed and he did not " have much to say about violence." He had been suspended on two occasions - once for headlocking another student who pushed him in the hallway at lunch and stole some of his french fries and on

another occasion for punching a student in the face for slamming a classroom door in his face. He discovered later that the door slamming incident was an accident. On both of these occasions he perceived himself as a victim and reacted impulsively. He was upset for being suspended on those occasions because he didn't feel it was justified and didn't perceive himself as a fighter. I chose not to interview this student because of his reluctance to discuss the incidences and because of the nature of the fight.

I realized at that moment that I was qualifying fighting behavior in terms of degree, duration and motivation. This could provide an interesting perspective for future research. This student did not like fighting or believe that it solved problems. He was primarily a victim rather than perpetrator and the fight didn't last long enough to provide enough information on its dynamics. Finally, with respect to the selection process, I selected an even number of girls and boys to help with the gender analysis.

Ethics and confidentiality

I assured students of confidentiality with the exception of any disclosures that indicated criminal activity and/or where another's safety may be jeopardized such as proposing to assault another student after school or breaking school windows on the weekend. I reviewed the student permission form with each student and had them sign it. I gave them each a parent permission form and asked them to return it to one of the counsellors once their parents had signed it. Both forms explained that students were able to withdraw

from the interview at any point without explanation, that all transcribed information would remain confidential and anonymous and could be returned to them upon request. Parent forms were returned within three days. None of the parents contacted me with concerns regarding the study. The majority of participants were not concerned about confidentiality. None of the participants were concerned about having the tape returned after transcription and none of them seemed concerned about whether I would break confidentiality. This may have been because I was a counsellor to the majority of the participants last year and students have already discovered that I will keep their stories confidential.

The participants

Twelve students participated in this study; six females and six males. I deliberately selected an equal number of boys and girls to help with gender analysis. Two female participants were in grade eight, four were in grade nine, and one was in grade ten. Five of the male participants were in grade nine, one was in grade ten. Each of these participants is described below according to the fights they were involved in. Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality. All of these students attend school and live in a middle class socioeconomic area. All are Caucasian with the exception of two girls, indicated below.

Alice, Abbey (grade 8) and Nancy (grade 9) were part of the same fight that occurred one lunch hour off school premises en route to

the corner store. This fight began when Alice and Abbey (who are close friends) began punching another girl in the face. A crowd soon gathered around. Then Nancy, who did not know any of the girls but happened to be in the crowd, began punching the other girl as well. Alice and Abbey are considered "good" kids, this being the only fight that either of them have participated in. They are average students, attend classes regularly and get along with peers. Alice comes from a single parent home, while Abbey comes from a two parent home. Nancy is considered a "fringe" kid, a bright student, but a low achiever, posing a discipline problem for some teachers. She comes from a black single parent family.

Elaine and Lisa (grade 9) were involved in the same fight. Their fight occurred at lunch hour in Lisa's backyard. This fight was organized beforehand and consequently 20-25 people were present. The victim was lured to her house and both girls, along with two or three other girls, began punching and kicking, Nicole, the victim. They are both considered "at risk" students. Both girls have been involved in numerous fights and often intimidate and bully other students. They have sporadic attendance, are often in the hallways and counselling office, are moderate drug users and both come from single parent families. Lisa is an average student. Elaine refuses to work in class and consequently is failing the year. She is of Jamaican ancestry.

Carla (grade 10) is a "fringe" kid; she is a weak student who attends school regularly. She has difficulty with peer groups, and is often

victimized by them. She comes from a two parent family. She has been in a few fights and has threatened other students on numerous occasions. Her fights have occurred during lunch hour and after school across the street from the school near the community centre. Her last fight was a "one on one" with a girl she was formerly friends with. This fight attracted a crowd of 15-20 students.

Jason (grade 9) is an "at risk" student who has been involved in numerous fights. He has been suspended on numerous occasions for violent behavior and for disciplinary problems in the classroom. He is academically very weak, has some learning disabilities, has a high absenteeism record and is an active drug user. Jason has a history of fighting since kindergarten. Both parents are at home.

Allen (grade 9) is a "fringe" kid; an average student. He has regular attendance but is very disruptive in most classes, does not complete assignments and often arrives late to classes. He has been involved in numerous fights. He participates in some team sports at school and in the community. He has a two parent family.

Dave, Sam, Cory (grade 9) are friends of Allen who have never been in a fight but have witnessed many. They are very disruptive in most classes but attend school regularly. They are average students, get along with peers and participate in some extracurricular activities.

Scott (grade 10) a "good" kid. He became a peer helper and showed very strong leadership skills. Scott is an average student, attends school regularly and often bullies other students verbally but has been in only a few fights.

Method

Given the scarcity of literature on school violence, particularly with respect to student perceptions of violence, this study is qualitative and exploratory. This approach stresses the importance of context, setting, and the subjects' frame of reference, and is especially relevant when key variables have yet to be identified. (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). To understand student perceptions of school violence, it is crucial to understand how they define the situations that they find themselves. Thomas (1949, p. 301) states, "If men define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences." One cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions. The "objective" scientist, by coding and standardizing, may destroy valuable data while imposing his or her world view on the subjects (Wilson, 1977). My particular approach, therefore, allows for exploration of student perceptions without imposing adult labels and theories.

One challenge with this method is to provide a credible research design, while maintaining flexibility, such that the research can "unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 210). Such flexibility allows the research to be designed as it evolves,

permitting the researcher to modify, alter, and change the design during data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 1987). The concept of reflexivity considers the relationship between the researcher and the subject, such that the presence of the researcher necessarily influences and modifies the data collected. (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1992) I therefore, have made every effort to articulate personal values and biases and include them throughout the research process.

Exploratory research, which is aimed at discovering problems and hypotheses, requires a data-gathering technique that maximizes the possibility of such discovery. The more structured a technique, the less likely the researcher is to find facts whose existence he or she had not previously considered, or to develop hypotheses he or she had not formulated when beginning the study. (Becker and Geer, 1969) I, therefore, gathered data through an unstructured interview format, which, according to Kahn & Cannell, (1957, p.149) is often described as "a conversation with a purpose." A respondent in an unstructured interview is more likely to provoke a discovery by saying something unexpected than is the respondent who can only check one of six precoded replies to a questionnaire item. Unexpected responses that are unrelated to a particular question may also help to verify authenticity and credibility of the respondents, as they frame and structure their responses and ideas according to their own perspectives, without trying to please the researcher. (Becker & Geer, 1969)

Interviews took place in the Parent Conference Room at the junior high school where students were in attendance. Interviews

were conducted during classtime through special arrangement with the administrator and classroom teachers. This ensured that the participants were committed to the interview and not anxiously thinking about alternate activities such as meeting friends. All interviews were audio taped, transcribed, then analyzed according to emergent themes and categories, and their relationships to one another.

I interviewed six girls and six boys using an individual and one group format. The individual interviews ranged from forty to sixty minutes and the group interview lasted for ninety minutes. The group interview consisted of three boys of the same peer group who had witnessed many fights but had not participated in any fights. These boys normally behave in a very immature fashion and I was concerned that they may embellish stories during the interview to impress one another and attract attention. I was surprised when the converse appeared to occur. They took the interview very seriously, occasionally contradicting and correcting one another. This process seemed to help verify the authenticity of their stories.

The authenticity and credibility of the participants' stories could be verified in a few other ways. First of all, as a counsellor in the school where I conducted the research, I was familiar with the majority of these fights by personal involvement or through other school personnel and students who had either witnessed a particular fight or heard a version of it through their peers. In one incidence, later called, "A fight at noon hour", I counselled both the perpetrators and the victim, then became the researcher 6 months later, at which point the victim had dropped out of school for fear of reprisal. The

victim and her perpetrators were consistent in their stories which verified the authenticity of the data. However, participants with different perceptions of the same event were not necessarily fabricating their stories. On the contrary, such differences often provide richness to stories, and a deeper understanding of what violence really means to them.

A second way I attempted to verify authenticity was to be wary of any contradictions in the participants' stories. For example, on one occasion a student told me that he liked fighting because it was fun, but later in the interview he claimed to feel sorry for the victims and really didn't like to fight them. When I brought these two contradictory comments to his attention, he was able to clarify their joint meaning in more depth. He explained that he felt badly after he fought them, but during the fight he enjoyed it.

Before beginning the interviews, I reviewed the nature of the study, the ethics and confidentiality, the types of questions that I would ask and the opportunity for them to ask questions. I reviewed the interview with each participant afterwards for approximately ten minutes. I also used this time to summarize some of the ideas that I thought I heard. This provided the participants with the opportunity to clarify, change or add information without being recorded on tape.

Results of the interviews were organized through the process of data analysis. Data analysis is a non-linear process that brings structure, order, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. (Marshall & Rossman, 1987) The process of category

generation and analytic procedures has been discussed by a variety of researchers in a variety of ways. Glasser and Strauss (1967) suggest that data collection go hand in hand to promote the emergence of substantive theory grounded in empirical data. The researcher is guided by initial concepts and guiding hypotheses but shifts or discards them as the data are collected and analyzed. While grounded theory has its merits, its process of "theory building" may distance the researcher from the data. Miles & Huberman (1984) suggest several schemata for recording qualitative data, which may seem more objective and "scientific" than some methods. While such sophisticated coding techniques may streamline data management and help ensure reliability across several researchers, much design flexibility may be lost. Marshall & Rossman, (1989) suggest that overly mechanistic data analysis could make qualitative researchers into nothing more than objective observers and coding specialists. I proceeded with the process of inductive analysis as Patton (1980, p.306) describes, where "the salient categories emerge from the data." After a few readings of the transcripts, I identified "meaning units" which were sentences, phrases or keywords that had discrete meaning and were drawn from the data. These meaning units became central themes and were coded by writing them alongside the left margin. I reread the transcripts searching for subordinate themes and categories and continued the coding process. (see following pages.) When I had coded all of the principal themes and categories, I organized the data by cutting and pasting into the appropriate category, then searched for new "pools of meaning" and their relationships.

One central theme that emerged was that of "image." A related theme was that of "peer pressure." Participants were more inclined to fight when "peers" and "friends" were spectating, especially when they were "cheering," "pushing" and "crowding" the participants. These subcategories were therefore assigned under the category "fight watchers." Participants distinguished between "cool" people, who had plenty of friends and "back-up", and "geeks," who had few friends and minimal "back-up." Participants felt pressured to fight to maintain their "cool" image and feared being labelled "geek", "chicken" or "wimp" for choosing not to fight. These subcategories were assigned to the category "labelling" which became associated with peer pressure and image. All of these category names, with the exception of "labelling" were identified by the participants. Below is a sample of an interview that shows this coding process. The participant is identified with a "P", the researcher with an "R".

P: Basically the cool people pick on them (geeks)
 [P] ch because they're bored. They have nobody else to bully
 [B] gk around and stuff. "Let's go beat up a couple of geeks
 el. or something. You know. "Fight, fight!" Everyone
 ad. gathers around. Someone scraps. Cause everyone's like,
 [L*] F "Duke em out. Duke em out." All the cheering gets your
adrenaline pumped up. And then the fight begins.

R: So you partly fight because your friends are cheering you on and partly because you're bored. What would happen if you didn't fight?

[L*] P: It would make you look like an idiot. Kind of like a geek.

Keywords and phrases were circled, then coded in the left margin. Main themes were coded in capital letters to the far left,

then bracketed. In this example, [P] refers to the theme "peer pressure." Another theme, "boredom" is identified by a [B]. The category "labelling" is indicated by an L.* The asterisk indicates that this category name was identified by the researcher, and not present in the data. Subcategories and meaning units such as "geek" "cool people" "cheering" "adrenaline pumped up" and "everyone gathers around" are indicated by lower case letters. A different participant identifies the category "Fight watchers" which is indicated by an F, and refers to the statement "everyone gathers around."

When all of the interviews were coded, the data was organized under the appropriate categories and themes, as indicated in the example with peer pressure.

Peer pressure

their friends always psyche them up to fight. They think "yeah man, yeah man, like fight, fight. " Like even if the other two parties don't but their friends really psyche them up to do it. (Lisa,5) **friends**

you can't just walk away from it or everyone will know that you're chicken...you'll just get picked on for the rest of your life. (Jim,16) **labelling**

I had no reason to fight her. I was just kinda thrown in there. (Nancy,1)

a whole bunch of people were yelling at me and stuff. Yelling "Yeah, go do this. Do that." There was so many people around us right, and it was like pretty loud. (Nancy,5)

I think it's basically just peer pressure. And anger. It's not as much - you know how people say - oh um, drugs get you into fights and all that. I don't really think so. (Nancy,21) **drugs**

When it comes to peer pressure, it's not just one or two people. It's when there's like twenty or thirty people peer pressuring you. That's when it gets - I think that's when it gets fights started. (Nancy,23) .

Some of the "meaning units" were organized under two or more categories. These categories were highlighted after each quote to help search for relationships between categories. The participants' name and page number were indicated in brackets for quick reference to the interview, to understand the quote in the context that it was used. All of the themes and categories were mapped in a web format, showing their interrelations. Finally, each theme and category was described and supported by participants' statements. The other categories that emerged in relation to the theme of "image" were, "status," "respect," "power" and "control." Some subcategories that emerged were "recognition", "fear", and "fighting properly." Other themes generated were, "gender differences", "media," "anger", "boredom", "drugs and alcohol" and "family."

I reconstructed some of the participants stories to provide the reader with a better understanding of how the participants conceptualize fighting. These fights are described on the following pages. I provided a title for each fight for the purpose of making reference to them throughout the chapter. The first of the four fights, "A fight with an ex-friend, " is described from the point of view of three different participants. The other three fights are described from the point of view of the individual participants who took part in the fights.

A fight with an ex-friend

This fight occurred during lunch hour, off school premises while en route to the corner store. Three grade eight girls, all close friends, initiated a fight with another grade 8 girl who had formerly been a friend of these girls. The girls were angry with her for starting rumors and calling their other friends names. As they began hitting her, approximately 50 - 60 other students, who were also en route to the store, encircled the group and began yelling and cheering. One of these spectators, a grade 9 girl, became involved in the fight even though she did not know any of these girls. Two of the grade 8 girls, Alice and Abbey, and the grade 9 girl, Nancy, were participants in this study. Neither of them had previously been involved in a fight. Five of the male participants were watching the fight.

Alice and Abbey describe the incidences that led up to the fight.

The girl's name was Gail, right, and she was like a friend of Tara's, my best friend, and she had called Tara names and she had called me names, and Jody, and a bunch of other girls, right? And she said that she was going to sleep with some guys in grade 10, right? And these people that were friends with them didn't like it so they thought they'd take it into their hands and like beat her up because she shouldn't say that about, like, people, right? (Alice)

She was saying things about my best friend. She was calling her names and saying that she was a slut and everything. And then I got mad and my best friend got mad and she started spreading rumors about everyone else. And everyone was getting mad. And I used to be close friends with her and so did all the other people and then she - she

promised us things and never did it. And turned around and broke her promise. And everyone got mad. And then we told her we didn't like it. Like we told her to her face and all that. And then she said she was going to quit it. And like, still a week later she was still doing it. And it still got us mad.
(Abbey)

Alice and Abbey then described how the fight got started even though their intent was to "talk things out".

She said that I'll talk to you guys, right? Then people that she talked about, we went out there - about 7 or 8 girls - and she wanted to talk. Then Tara told her to say sorry, right? And she said, "No. I'm not saying sorry." And then Tara slapped her in the face. Then she kept punching her, like ten times in the face. And Gail was just standing there covering her head. She wouldn't fight back. Cause she knew that Tara would beat her up bad. 'Cause Tara's tough. Then everyone walking by yelled, "Fight. Fight!" And a whole pile of people just came running over. Then people that didn't even know her were hitting her, just to like, get a punch in somewhere.

Then this grade 9 girl, Nancy, just went up and kicked her in the face and - sounded like Gail kind of had a broken nose, right? It was like 'crack' right? I was like 'oohh', right? Gail was just kinda bending over, kinda covering her face and Nancy kicked her right in the nose. Apparently she had heard that Gail had said this stuff about the grade tens and these grade tens are like her really good friends. And she got really mad cause it was her best friend's boyfriend that she had said it about. So she just started, like, kicking her and telling her that she shouldn't do that. I was just standing there. I wasn't really in it until it got near the end of it. (Alice)

Nancy describes her involvement with the fight:

Well, first, no, actually I didn't even know there was a fight going on. Me and my friends were just going to walk over to 7-11 to get some food, and on our way we saw, um, at least five, five girls, um, surrounding this one girl yelling at her pushing

her around and stuff. We looked over and go, "Oh yeah! There's a fight!" So then I guess the word got around and all the grade nines came from their hangouts, I guess you could say. And we heard that some of the reasons that they were yelling at her and stuff was personal reasons but also we heard that she was talking about some of the guys that, um, I hang out with and stuff, right? And they heard it and they got real mad. And she, um, talked about my best friend's boyfriend, right, real badly. And I got involved I guess.

And the guys I was with, um, Mike Foster, kinda was like telling me, um - I was telling him what she said and he got real mad and he said - he just told me to go ahead and just give it to her and stuff. And then Vic told me to, and so I was kinda thrown in there, because I remember I wanted to get good sight on what was going on and see - try to get front row seats I guess you can say. And then, well, I really got good seats! (laugh) So then I started punching her and stuff and she didn't do anything because she knew if she did something, then people might jump on her and stuff, right? So I think she was smart in ways. And she got really beat up bad 'cause there was like seven of us against her. I heard she had a broken nose, a couple of bruises and scratches but she - the funny thing is that she never cried so it showed that she was tough. We all respected her for that. (Nancy)

Abbey and Alice describe how the crowd of spectators tried to influence them to begin fighting.

A whole bunch of people started crowding around and pushed us into her. No, actually they pushed her into us and that's another thing that started it. Cause they wanted to see a fight and we thought that she was pushing us. And they were trying to bug me into hitting her. They were like, "Hit her, hit her, hit her!" and all that sort of stuff. They were trying to bribe me into hitting her. Like, "I'll give you this if you hit her." Like their knife, pocket knife type thing - not to use it, just to have it.... I said no. (Abbey)

Somebody pushed her into me, right? I was talking to Sarah and I had my back turned to the fight, right, because Tara was

hitting her and she came flying over to me, right, and I turned around and I said, "What do you think you're doing?" and she goes, "I didn't do it." And I go, "Sure you didn't" and I hit her and we got into a fight. I kinda threw some punches wherever I could get a shot in and she kinda pulled my hair. I mostly got her in the face. She was pretty bruised by then. Like her face was starting to really swell. Everyone was yelling and screaming, "Fight, fight, fight!" I couldn't really hear what else they were saying. And if there's a whole bunch of people standing there and they're telling you to fight, and if you don't want to, they're going to call you a wimp, right? (Alice)

Then I punched her - but I didn't do it where I knew I could damage her or anything. Then there was people coming out and telling us to leave and stuff. So we all went up to Pizza 1-2-3 and then that's where she fought Alice and that's when Alice had her bleeding tongue. Like it was almost bit right off cause she bit it when she was fighting her. And everybody's like, "Are you OK? Are you OK?" And we just kinda ran over to the clinic and they said there's nothing they could do about it....That kinda ended the fight. (Abbey)

A noon hour fight at the 7-11

OK. This fight started because my little sister went over to her girlfriends. This guy was going to beat her up that's older than her. So I never even liked the guy in the first place. 'Cause I've hated him for so long. He's like, real high on himself. He thinks he's like a harsh tough guy. He mouths people off all the time and stuff. And I finally got a good enough reason to hate him even more. So I just saw him one day, at lunch, at the 7-11 and decided to beat him up. A bunch of friends ran up 'cause they knew I wanted to beat him up. They said that he was over there. So we just started talking at first. "Why'd you do that?" and stuff, trying to like work myself up to it. Then just started punching him and stuff. And he was like trying to get away but I had all these friends in front of him. Cause he was all by himself and I had about, the whole school on my side, like, about 100 - 200 students were watching.

And they were, like, cheering, saying stuff like, "Kick his ass," and stuff like that. "Beat him up." So I started to punch him,

wherever I could throw a punch - in the face, chest, gut. I don't know how many times- more than 10 cause it lasted for about 20 minutes. And he didn't fight back cause he didn't have any friends there. 'Cause he probably thought a bunch of people would jump in on him. He was like saying, "Why are you doing this? Stop," and stuff like that. But I didn't really care because my tread mill was going and I was just pissed off at him. And everyone was cheering and stuff. And it started at 7-11 and ended up across the street from Honey and Milk, cause he kept trying to run away. So it lasted about two blocks. Everyone ran after him and stuff. And there was a whole bunch of pedestrians watching and saying. "Leave him alone" and stuff. Like, honking their horns and stuff. Like yelling at me. But they just stayed in their cars cause there's a bunch of students around. Then he just ran off crying.... And then the school bell rang so that kind of ended it. (laugh) (Alex)

A backyard fight

OK. The fight with Nicole started - she was saying a lot of stuff about this guy that she shouldn't have said, like she was fooling around with him and stuff and she wasn't. And she tried breaking him up with his girlfriend that he had been going out with for a long time, right. And so he (Donald) came to me and my friend, this girl, and he goes, well, "Can you do me a favour?" And we're like. "What?" right. And he's like, "Can you beat up Nicole Sykes?" right. And at first we're like, "Why?" right. Just for no reason. "No way," right, and he's like - then he told us what she did. He was like, "Please. Can't you?" We just go, "OK," cause we didn't think it was right what she did, right. Cause he can't go up to her and hit her, right. The guy would kill her if he hit her. He's like, harsh big, you know. So then, we like, took her one lunch hour and we go, "Come with us," and she was like - she knew what was going to happen and stuff. She didn't run away or anything. And then we took her to Lisa's house and we sat her down and explained what we were going to do. She's like "Please don't" or whatever and then we took her into the backyard. And there were about 15 - 20 people waiting back there and stuff. And Donald was sitting on top of the fence, to get a good view, I guess. And then Lisa started beating on her a bit, like she punched her a few times -

in the stomach once and about twice in the face. And then she stopped and stuff and started talking to her more. And then Donald goes, " Elaine - go in there and punch her," and stuff, right, and I go, " No way. It's Lisa's fight, man, " and he's like, "She's not doing anything." I look at Lisa and she's like, "Yeah, right." And so I go, " OK" and, um, then, so I did. So I punched her in the head a few times - about five times - and I punched her in the stomach about twice and kicked her, but you know, just like normal fighting. I was like, "Come on, fight!" I was kicking her leg. "Come on. Fight back." Cause like, the girl wouldn't fight back, so like, if she did fight back she would've been hurt a lot worse, right. But she's lucky that she didn't cause then we felt really sorry for her. And we're yelling at her and stuff, like, "Why did you do this? Why did you lie?" and stuff. "Why did you say all this?" She was like, "I didn't say it." I was like, "Yeah you did." But we felt really sorry for her. And she dropped her barrette and I picked it up and I go, like, "Here." I gave it to her. She's like, "Thank-you." Started shaking. Took it. It was so funny. And like, there were about four or five girls hitting her but like, there was never two of us on her. It's like, we never started double - teaming her, ever. I don't believe in that cause that's mean. Cause if two people came up to me and started beating on me at the same time, I'd be pretty mad. But, like, if she had said, "Yes. I said it and I'm sorry," or whatever, I would have just hit her once and let her go, right. But I was like, really mad at her, harsh raging, cause she was like, harsh lying to us. Then, I was like, my adrenaline was harsh upwards. I was harsh hyper. My adrenaline was up so high I was like "aaaahh....I need to...." I was like, to jump around or something, get unhyper. I just want to fight when my adrenaline's up. I want to jump around and fight. It's wierd. Then, I don't remember why we stopped. I think she was getting upset and she looked pretty bruised and stuff, so we just let her go and went back inside. And I remember I asked her if she was going to rat on us and she said no. And, well, she did, and so I got suspended. (Elaine)

A fight at the school dance

Me and a friend, Jim were waiting outside of the dance. And we asked somebody - well, somebody asked us if he could buy a smoke off us, you know, for fifty cents. "OK, fine for a

buck." He goes, "Fuck off, man." Then, "OK. Fine. If you don't want to buy it then get the hell out of here." Then we go, "Suck my dick" when he was walking away and he goes, "No. You suck mine." So I was going to do it at the dance, cause he said it to my friend, Jim. Like he's (Jim) bigger than me and he could've taken him but I just felt like fighting. So then we're waiting through all the dance thinking if we should do it then. We're having sort of a good time and stuff so then we waited till afterwards. And then we went after him in the school parking lot after the dance.

So then I go, "So why did you tell us to suck your dick?" Cause like, we just, we're saying that to start a fight even though we said it first. Cause I didn't like the guy really. He was like, pretty scared, I guess. Cause like, well, cause he's been beaten up a few times lately. So then he was like, "OK." I go, "OK, I'll just punch you once then and it'll all be over." And he goes, "OK, fine. Just don't punch me in the nose, " cause he didn't care cause he was like so scared. He just didn't want to get punched. So I punched him once and he was like falling down, then I kicked him in the gut or the head or something like that. I had my big work boots on too. Not steel toe though - still, hard tipped. And then me and Jim both started kicking him in the gut and stuff and he was like huddled up in a ball and stuff. Then we let him up and punched him again. Then Jim punches him. Like he comes around, jumps around, punches him in the face and he falls down. Then we just started kicking him again. And we were kinda swearing at him and stuff too. And then Dave Stratton comes up. And he's a strong guy. And he just rips both of us back and said, "Well two on one, like that's not fair. Just one on one." Then, like, he wouldn't have cared if it was one-on-one but two on one - he thinks that's unfair. And I didn't want to like get into a fight with him, cause, he's kinda like a friend. I was just - right when that happened the adrenaline rush just stopped. (Alex)

By understanding how participants talk about fighting and how they perceive fights get started, the reader may better contextualize some of the more isolated pieces of data that are included in the next chapter, and identify emergent themes and categories.

This chapter discussed the rationale for conducting qualitative research, using an inductive exploratory approach, and also some of the limitations of this particular approach. It discussed the role of the researcher, ethics and confidentiality, the process of identification and selection of participants, background information of participants and the method of data collection. Data was collected by way of an unstructured interview format and was analyzed according to emergent themes and related categories. The central themes that emerged were "image" and "self-esteem" as well as "peer pressure", "boredom", "anger", "media" and "drugs and alcohol." The next chapter discusses the results.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter examines the participants' perceptions of the nature of, and factors contributing to school violence. Beginning with the students' own words, it addresses the question, How do students conceptualize violence? Participants explain how fights get started, where they occur, how many students are involved in the fight, how many are watching, how they fight, things they say when fighting and how the fights stop. The second part of this chapter discusses some factors contributing to school violence. Themes and categories that pertain to these factors, as outlined in chapter three, are primarily related to the central theme "self-image" and "self-esteem."

IMAGE AND SELF-IMAGE

Many of the categories identified in this study with respect to school violence centre around two themes - image and self-image. Self-image refers to how participants view themselves while image refers to how they perceive their peers view them. I will call the latter peer image. Self-image and peer image are strongly interrelated because participants develop their self-image partially in reaction to how their peers treat them. The process of developing a strong self-image is a dimension of the search for personal identity. Because such identity formation is partially dependent on peer relations, participants may feel vulnerable and very susceptible to

peer pressure. Participants with many friends are pressured to behave in ways to maintain their peer image because friendship groups are constantly changing. Participants with poor peer relations, few friends and a poor self-image, often attempt to change their peer image by changing their appearance or behavior. Such attempts to satisfy peers and improve self-image often conflict with personal values and needs, compounding the process of identity formation. Ultimately, participants are seeking to increase their self-esteem, which is a sense of "feeling good" about themselves, of accepting and liking oneself. By developing a stronger self-image, higher self-esteem and greater autonomy they will be better equipped to resist peer pressure.

Participants often use labels to describe themselves and their friends and peers. A label is defined as a single word that narrowly defines a person. Participants use the labels "tough" and "cool" to define themselves and other students who fight. Fighting is considered a "cool" activity, and therefore participants are motivated to fight in order to re-inforce their "cool" image. Participants describe "cool" people as popular, with "lots of friends, money, clothes." Their friends act as "back-up" during a fight which means they protect and defend the participant if he or she should lose the fight. The unpopular students are assigned a variety of labels, such as "geeks," "nerds," "skids" and "scrubs." They have few friends and therefore minimal back-up in a fight. Jim and Alice describe the characteristics of geeks and nerds.

People that don't really have any friends... hang out by themselves....or they could just look like a nerd, like pull their

pants up real high or wear tape on their glasses...they're like small and skinny. (Alice)

It's the way they dress, the way they act, some of the things they say...it's the way they think and the way they act - they act immature. (Jim)

Lisa describes the characteristics of skids and scrubs.

Skids means scrubs. They lose their temper so easy like for everything. They're just gross looking. They have like long greasy hair, tight tight jeans that are always dirty, and scrubby looking shirts and stuff and jean jackets. And they smell. And like they always like fight among with each other.

Students who belong to the "cool" group identify with the group's image. One's self-image therefore becomes intertwined with the image of the group. The "cool" group could be composed of a circle of friends or of all the students in the school who are not considered geeks. Regardless of the size of the group, belonging and acceptance is crucial for maintaining a "cool" person image. Jim states, "The cool people, they're all together. They're like one big happy family. One big gang kind of.....some of them (geeks) don't like each other but we're not like that. " The distinction between cool people and geeks is further defined with respect to territory. Cool people have the freedom to hang out wherever they chose on school premises while geeks hang out in specific areas of the school. The Pit, a designated smoking area behind the school is considered a place where cool people hang out. Carla says :

to be not called a geek you have to be kind of buddy,buddy like with people in the Pit. You either have to hang out there or you don't hang out there. If you hang there you're OK.

Some cool people fear being perceived as geeks and behave in ways to prove or maintain their cool person image. Nancy states, "No one wants to be a nerd. You can read that in any magazine. I know teens go through this big, big stress thinking about, "Oh God, am I a nerd?" and all that. The strongest definition of a cool person, it seems, is to simply "not be a geek". Some participants secretly fear being labelled a geek by their peer group, which forces them to behave according to "cool" standards. Jim explains the importance of not backing out from a fight for this very reason. "It would make you look like an idiot. Kind of like a geek." Carla says, "And we just fought thinking, yeah, we're going to be cool," you know. "Like, after we fought, me and Tracy talked and we both thought we were going to be cool that we fought."

The participants associate many negative characteristics and images with those students that are labelled geeks. It then becomes standard practice to dislike or hate geeks based on the images their label conjures up. These preconceived notions prevent a student's individual traits from being recognized and understood. Consequently, there is a tremendous discrepancy between a "geek's" self-image and his or her peer image, and less tolerance and empathy is expressed by participants towards students who are assigned such labels. This lack of empathy or the inability to feel a victim's suffering seems to be a major component in fighting and will be discussed later in the analysis. Jim explains, " Geeks are the ones that get threatened. Most of the popular people don't get

threatened....so then the cool people go over to the geeks and start beating them up. "

Alex further describes the characteristics of a geek:

And he was like a harsh, wanna-be gangster. He had like the pager and stuff and he was wearing a soother. And just like, harsh geek. So then, one of them, it was like they were drunk and they just wanted to pick a fight with him cause he was like this harsh geek.

If a cool person begins to associate with a geek there is often a loss of status for the cool person's entire group. Some fights begin as a measure to restore a group's status and image. Carla explains one situation:

Michelle was going out with Mark Smith and all her friends Eric and Andrew Baker and all those guys kind of got mad because you know, Michele's going, like from being popular to like, a little lower popular, kind of thing, so they decided to beat Mark up because Mark was a geek, you know. They just kind of yelled, "Hey, get out of here, you geek. " And that was kind of an interesting one. Everyone got into a ring and when Eric was finished with Mark, Andrew would start on him. And finally Mark gave up and just ran home. He just got so mad that he said "forget this" and he just went home.

Participants who fight to maintain their "cool and "tough" image are often influenced by the images portrayed in the media. Nancy states, "It's all the violence and stuff on T.V. that makes kids want to fight ...just to, like, be cool - like them." Advertisements, for example, show "cool" men and women smoking and drinking. Television shows and movies portray "cool" people, usually males, fighting. These "cool" people are often portrayed in ways similiar to how the

participants describe themselves - physically attractive, rich, popular, stylish clothes. The relationship between media and violence will be explored in more depth later in the analysis.

The relationship between image and social status is very pronounced. Participants are assigned "higher status" from their peers when they are recognized as "cool" and "tough." The need for respect, power and control is fulfilled when participants attain "high status." These categories will be explored in more detail with respect to the theme of "image." The first category in this theme, however, is "peer pressure." It explores the need to comply with peers in order to maintain or acquire a "cool" "tough" image. When participants fail to comply, they are often labelled, "wimps" and "chickens" and may lose social status.

PEER PRESSURE

I had no reason to fight her.

I was just kind of thrown in there. (Nancy)

Peer pressure refers to those pressures coming from one or more students that are directed toward one or more students in their age group, also known as a peer group. Students who exert such pressure seek conformity to their own values and code of behavior. Within the peer group is a subgroup, known by participants as friends. Friendship circles provide a stronger degree of peer pressure than that expressed by one's overall peer group, mainly because one's self-image and degree of self-worth is often measured

according to the degree of acceptance experienced in one's friendship group.

Peer groups and friendship circles pressure students to fight in different ways, both before a fight gets started and during the fight. They also share many similarities. Before a fight, peers may start rumors as a means to set participants up for fighting. Many participants state that students believe such rumors are based on truth and refrain from checking them out with the original source. Abbey explains how her second fight got started:

That's mostly what happened with my second fight because people were saying stuff and people told her stuff saying that I said it. And people told me stuff saying that she said it. And we both believed it at first. We both thought it was true so we both got mad at each other. They were saying that to get us to, to see another fight. And then someone said something about, "Yeah. Go up to 7-11. There's a fight at 3 o'clock." They said that to me and told me it was between me and her and like - there's me and Helen, OK? And then she'd go and tell Helen, "Oh yeah, you know there's a fight here at 3 o'clock." Then she'd come and tell me, "Helen wants to fight you at 3 o'clock," right. So then I went and talked to her and then she said, "Fine. I'll fight you," and all that. After that we found out that everything that was said was not true.

Friends often encourage and coax the participants to fight in response to such rumors. A student may unwillingly participate in a fight to please his or her friends who are are coaxing and encouraging him or her to fight. Abbey recalls how her peers pressured her. One peer said, "You don't have to be scared. If you have to fight her just fight her and try your best."

As a fight begins, a crowd of students, composed of both peers and friends often encircle the participants. The majority of these

students are spectators or "fight watchers". They pressure the participants to fight by crowding, pushing and cheering. Pushing is often done in a very covert manner and does not usually imply direct involvement in the fight itself. Consequently, it is categorized here with other spectating behaviors. Some of the fight watchers are prepared to "jump in" and assist the participants if they begin losing the fight. When such fight watchers become participants they are considered "back-up." Back-up usually refers to one's friendship circle who "stick up" for the participant out of loyalty but it may also involve one's peer group who are seeking an opportunity or an excuse to fight, and therefore "defend" their participant of choice. Back-up also refers to a group of friends who participate in a group assault on another student.

Fight watchers

Participants enjoy watching fights as a form of entertainment. When bored, they may resort to "creating" a fight in order to satisfy their urge to spectate. Carla explains:

Anybody can be a fight watcher. I mean they can be anything. You want to see a fight, you want to see some action in a boring school, or you know, that's just what a fight watcher is, they just want to see something fun happen in the school. Other than the announcements, the dances and crap like that. When I hear, "Fight!" I go running cause I want to see who is fighting.

Fight watchers encourage fighting by crowding, pushing and cheering. They often encircle the participants creating a very tight circle. This ensures that participants have very limited space to move

away from one another, experience a sense of being crowded and therefore a greater chance of physical contact. Abbey recalls, "There were like 50 people there. Just crowding around us. We had this little space. (measures hands about 2 feet apart.) Just this little circle for the two of us to fit in. Like, not much. "

Fight watchers may push a participant as a way to instigate the fight. Participants who are pushed by fight watchers may mistakenly believe their opponent has instigated the fight. The proximity of the crowds often contributes to such confusion. This situation, as described by Alice and Abbey in, 'A fight with an ex-friend', often triggers the fight to get started. Alice says, " Somebody pushed her into me, right.....and I hit her and we got into a fight. " Abbey, Carla and Nancy also comment :

A whole bunch of people started crowding around and pushed us into her. No, they pushed her into us and that's another thing that started it. Cause they wanted to see a fight and we thought that she was pushing us. (Abbey)

We stopped (fighting) for a minute, right, and then everyone pushed us back into each other. And then she said, "I want to stop," right. And I wanted to too, but they still pushed us into each other. (Abbey - in fight #2)

Every single time that I fight, somebody always gets pushed into it.....it's somebody else that pushes the person that I'm fighting against into the fight.....And so then she got pushed into me and I turned around and then she hit me and I hit her and, you know, the fight went on, kind of thing..... (Carla)

And I was waiting for her to do the first punch because if I ever get suspended I could blame it on her. (laugh) But then someone, um, pushed her into me - I think it was Sam Tate - and I thought she, um, went ahead and pushed me so I just grabbed her because she turned around. I guess she

turned around to see who pushed her, right. I just grabbed her and punched her in the face and then we were fighting.
(Nancy)

The third way fight watchers pressure participants to fight is by yelling and cheering. They hope to arouse the fighters, to stir animosity between them and to be entertained by their "performance", without suffering any repercussions. When sensing an outbreak of a fight they may begin yelling, "Fight! Fight" as a signal for others at a distance to move into the fighting arena. Within minutes, a crowd of 10 - 50 fight watchers may encircle the potential fighters. Once encircling the participants, such words may be repeated in hope of enticing the potential fighters into physical combat. Further prompts such as, "Hit her," "Kick his ass," "Beat him up," "Smash him against your knee," "Put his head on the ground," and "Stomp it," are uttered to encourage the participants to keep the action going. Steve says, " Oh they're cheering you know. "Fucking kick his ass," you know. "Put his head on the ground, stomp it," you know. Just, it's just for them more or less. They just want to see a scrap."

Peer pressure becomes stronger when there is an increase in the number of fight watchers. This is largely due to the increase in noise levels created by the shouting and cheering which creates confusion and disorientation. Alice explains, " I just didn't realize at the time what was really going on....Everybody was just yelling and screaming, "Fight, fight, fight." Nancy concurs. "A whole bunch of people were yelling at me and stuff. Yelling, yeah, go do this. Do that.

There was so many people around us, right, and it was like pretty loud." On another occasion Nancy states:

When it comes to peer pressure, it's not just one or two people. It's when there's like, twenty or thirty people peer pressuring you. That's when it gets - I think that's when it gets fights started. Because I know if it was just Sam or Vic or somebody peer pressuring me, I'd just tell them to F off or whatever. Just to get lost.

Some fight watchers, in persuading participants to fight, offer bribes to encourage participation. Abbey explains:

And they were trying to bug me into hitting her. They were like, "Hit her, hit her, hit her!" and all that sort of stuff. They were trying to bribe me into hitting her. Like, "I'll give you this if you hit her." Like their knife, pocket knife type thing - not to use it, just to have it. I said no.

The cheering from fight watchers directly influences an "adrenaline rush" to occur. One student states, "All the cheering gets your adrenaline pumped up. " This experience is associated with increased energy, euphoria and impulsiveness. Jim states, "Everyone gathers around. Someone scraps cause everyone's like, "Duke him out! Duke him out." All the cheering gets your adrenaline pumped up."

Friends exert greater peer pressure on participants than do other peers. The association between adrenaline rush and friends is much stronger than that between other peers. One participant states, "If it's your own friends it kind of gets the adrenaline going but then when it's the other guy's friends you don't even think about it." When friends are yelling and cheering, participants tend to listen and

internalize their comments, and "get pumped up even more." Lisa says, "And I had all my friends around me yelling and stuff. And I just harshly beat her face in." On another occasion she states, "their friends always psyche them up to fight. They think, yeah man, yeah man, like fight, fight. Like even if the other two parties don't want to fight but their friends really psyche them up to do it."

Nancy also stresses how friends apply greater peer pressure than other peers:

It all depends because if a person you don't know is fighting, the whole group doesn't know, just two people you have no idea of, they'll just say, "Fight her. Fight her," right. And so you don't got specific names, right. But when you're friends with these people, there's a lot more pressure on you.

Carla explains:

I was trying to think, and trying to listen to my friends, or listen to what her friends were saying and she wasn't doing anything on what her friends were telling her to do, right. I thought that was kind of stupid.

Participants may become targets for ridicule and victimization from their peers if they back down from a fight. They may lose respect, experience a loss of power and control and a weakened self-image. Peer pressure, therefore, has a significant impact on these crucial adolescent needs. Jason states, "You can't just walk away from it or everyone will know that you're chicken.....you'll just get picked on for the rest of your life." Nancy agrees:

You're known as a wimp if you say "no" to peer pressure. You lose respect, I think. Well, it never really happened to me but that's what I would think. That's why I wouldn't stop....It shows you can stick up for yourself. You're not chickening out.

Alice and Abbey recall:

Well, if there's a whole bunch of people standing there and they're telling you to fight and if you don't want to they're gonna call you a wimp, right. 'Cause they're like, "Come on you guys. Fight. What are you guys, wimps?" (Alice)

I didn't want to fight anymore but I couldn't exactly say that cause if you back out of a fight, the next day you'll be like, everybody'll come up to you, like you're such a wimp and all that, you're a chicken and all that. And it would be going on for like a couple of weeks. Someone'll walk past you, "Wimp." And we'd get a reputation like that. (Abbey)

Resisting peer pressure from friends poses even greater risks with respect to a participant's self-image. Belonging to a group, particularly one with "high status" increases popularity and acceptance and enhances one's self-image and self-worth. Participants who chose not to fight risk losing their "position" in the group or may ultimately be abandoned by the group. When a group has a reputation for fighting, a newcomer to the group may feel compelled to fight to be "initiated" and accepted by the group.

And then I come to Carter High and I have certain people that I hang out with, such as Carla Peters, Lisa Henry and Rhonda Silicas. I guess, um, you can say, that, they're really, you know, big and tough, right? And, um, I know like no one will mess with them, right, and then when I got into my first fight I felt like I was a part of them. (Nancy)

Female participants seem more responsive to male peer pressure than to female peer pressure. They perceive that males have more power, control and back-up than female participants.

Male participants are, therefore, more capable of influencing them to fight. Nancy explains:

I always felt that guys are more in control. I'm just the old fashioned type. I always felt the guys were always in control. And so, I don't know. When it comes to girls I know I could handle them myself. If I don't want to fight, I'll just tell them that. But when it came to guys, I just keep my mouth shut. Guys tend to have more back-up. Um, they're, I guess stronger and more in control.

Male participants claim to enjoy watching female fights because "they're more interesting" and " they're kind of funny, cause girls mostly cat fight, like with their nails and their hands."

Consequently, the majority of fight watchers are male. Abbey states, "The guys are the ones that are always wanting to see the fights....that's one thing they always try to do..is get fights started. "

Female participants seem more responsive to male peer pressure because a greater number of males seem to be present at fights and there is more opportunity to be influenced by them. Abbey comments on the fight she participated in.

There was lots of guys there...Most of them was guys. The guys at this school influence anybody..Like if they see anybody that's fighting then they'll influence one of them. Like they'll say,"Hit him, hit him" or "hit her, hit her," you know. Well, there's girls doing that too but it's mostly guys.

Nancy began as a fight watcher at Abbey's fight but ended up a participant due to male peer pressure. She states:

At first I was like saying, "Kick her ass" and stuff, but it never went through my mind that I would actually be thrown in there until Mike and Vic did come. He just told me to go ahead and give it to her and stuff. And then Vic told me to and so I was kinda thrown in there, because I remember I wanted to get good sight on what was going on and see.

Although some female participants have initiated fights with males, it is considered socially unacceptable for males to fight with females. Consequently, males may convince their female friends to fight on their behalf. Elaine states, "I did it because he's like a friend of mine. He needed a favor 'cause he can't go up to her and hit her. The guy would kill her if he hit her."

Elaine and Lisa participated in this group assault on a girl who had "spread rumors" about their male friend. Earlier in the thesis this fight is described more fully by participants in "A backyard fight at lunch hour." During the fight, especially when the participants hesitated to continue hitting the victim, he yelled orders such as, "Go in there and punch her," to which they responded, "OK" and then continued to punch her.

While many male and female friends pressure participants to fight, they also serve as a support network or back - up system during a fight. A participant's decision to fight is often related to the degree of back-up he or she is capable of bringing along to the fight. A participant's level of back-up directly impacts his or her peer image. Participants with lots of back-up are considered "cool" while those who lack back-up are considered "geeks."

Back-up

"Like you come with your own group of friends and he comes with his own group of friends and like, we have circles, so everyone forms a circle and then the two people go in the circle and scrap it out.....Like you know if it's your own friends cheering 'cause like, you'll be the first one in the circle. (Steve)

Back-up refers to a participant's circle of friends who will "stick up" for and defend the participant during a one-on-one fight. They may stick up for the participant as a fight watcher by yelling words of encouragement or advice. Once participants begin losing a fight, their back-up will protect and defend them by either breaking up the fight or by "jumping in," and physically defending them from their opponents. At this point, they stop being fight watchers and become active participants in the fight. Nancy says:

And my friend, Bev, right, she didn't exactly jump in. She just grabbed Helen's hair from the side and punched her in the face and so then I caught my balance up and I fought her again, right.If let's say, I'm on the ground, and Helen's got me on the ground, I know that Marnie would have jumped in. And I guess some of Helen's friends would have jumped in too. That's why you have your back-up, so just in case you're on the ground, they'll jump in.

Steve agrees:

'Cause if you know your friends and everybody are behind you then you'll be doing all right. And then you know they won't let it get out of hand. Let's say if you lose or whatever, then it won't get out of hand. They'll just break it up and then you just go on.

Fighting often provides the opportunity to "test" friendships by seeking re-inforcement of those qualities that originally sealed the friendship and by allowing the participants to discover "who their friends really are." Showing loyalty is perhaps the most important criteria for binding friendships, and friends who back others up during a fight prove their loyalty and friendship. Nancy explains:

I think at fights you realize when it comes to people you're fighting against who's actually your friends and who's not; because when I fought, um, Gail - well no one was really friends with her so I guess that didn't really count but I was surprised at all the back up I had, right. Like all, I had big back-up and that made me, you know, more confident knowing that I had all these people backing me up.

All our friends will back me up, they won't - they'll keep a tight word on it. They won't say a thing. [to administrators] And so she had to pick me out in the hallway when I was walking by.....but the thing is, like, you cover your friends' back and they'll cover yours type thing. You know? I guess you could say what comes around goes around, right? And, um, that's how we take care of things. I mean, because I did certain things for them, they back me up by not saying anything. They backed me up many times when I went out with them. Like when we go out partying.(Laugh) And um, I know that if I ever needed something, they'll be there and they'll stick up for me.

Nancy's back-up clearly provided her with the confidence to participate in her first fight. When pressured to fight a second time, Nancy was reluctant, but eventually she participated because of her discovery of even more back-up.

'cause then I backed out cause I didn't want to fight her, you know. I kinda backed out on that, right. But then Jill told - by the time Jill told everyone. You know. It was too late to back out because, um, some grade 10's were there - my grade 10

friends, my grade nine friends, all - everyone was there. They were all with me. Um, we were just - they were just telling me, "Oh well, good luck. Beat her up real badly," and telling me who hates her, and at that point I realized who was all backing me up on this because I was kinda a little bit afraid because Helen (her opponent) is friends with Rosie and she's friends with the people I'm friends with, right, and I was afraid maybe they'd back her up instead, right. But I realized that everyone who backed me up at Gail's fight would still back me up at Helen's fight. Plus more." (Nancy)

People's back-up constantly changes as their friends change so it's important to keep informed about people's back-up or "you could get into trouble." When an opponent's back-up is greater than that of the participants, the participant may refrain from fighting.

Nancy states:

If Angela and I ever got into a big quarrel or whatever, I know I'd never fight her cause I know her back-up is big. She's got like Steve Allen. No way I'm going to touch her! .And if she chose to fight me I'd just back off. I'll be a punching bag if I have to.when it comes to violence and back-up and stuff it's like being a politician. (laugh) a big campaign - you want the campaign to go nice, for people to vote for you type thing. It's all politics.

The decision whether to fight or not is directly related to a participant's level of back-up and the level of back-up their opponent has. When two participants share the same back-up, they begin competing for friends and risk losing them. On another occasion Nancy chose not to fight for this very reason.

If I did fight her I'd really see who are my friends and who aren't because we're both popular and we're both friends with the same people, right. That's one thing I won't fight her for because I'm afraid I might lose some of my friends. Like I

know her boyfriend, Ricky Matheson and I are good friends but, like, if I get into a fight with her, I'll lose his friendship. I know that for a fact.

Back-up may also encourage the continuation and escalation of fights such that other students, on opposing sides of the back-up, begin their own fights later on, in response to the events that unfolded during the first fight. In extreme cases, the two opposing sides may start a "rumble", a fight where one group fights the other group. While most participants deliberately avoid fighting students with a lot of back-up, others sometimes seek out such students because of the excitement and challenge it provides. Alex explains:

Or I'd pick fights with people that do have lots of back-up just for the hell of it. Cause then they'd bring their friends and I'd bring my friends and then there'd be a big fight again.... a rumble sort of thing.

Back-up generally refers to a group of friends who spectate a "one-on-one" fight, participating only if necessary to defend the participant, usually a friend. However, back-up also refers to a group of friends who actively partake in a group assault on one other person. The size of this group could range from two to seven assailants. Participants in group attacks usually take turns attacking their victim as opposed to "double-teaming" which is considered unfair.

Elaine states:

there was never two of us on her. It's like, okay, I'd be there and then, and then, um, my friend was there and then that girl. Like we never started double-teaming her, ever. I don't believe

in that cause that's mean. Cause if two people came up to me and stuff and started beating on me at the same time I would be pretty mad.

Participants who partake in group assaults gain a sense of power, safety and back-up from their fellow assailants. This element is lacking in one-on-one fights for some participants and consequently they avoid such encounters. Alex says:

I could probably take him on my own but it's easier when you're with friends cause you can back each other up and stuff and it's more fun cause the guy 's like, so scared and stuff... You have more power, more control over winning I guess. Cause when he's by himself he acts so tough so we just want to take him down.

The victims of these assaults, without exception, did not willingly participate in these fights. In all of these group situations, each participant would take turns assaulting their "victim" and the victim did not fight back. Both victim and victimizer(s) seemed to understand the "rules" of fighting - "if you fight back, you will get beaten up even more." This rule also applies to one-on-one fights where one participant lacks back-up. The fight watchers, although not participating in the fight, may "jump in" and back-up the perpetrator if the opponent fights back. Alex says, "Like one time he did fight back, then we beat him harder." Alice states, "Gail wouldn't hit back 'cause she knew that Tara would beat her up bad," and Elaine says, "Like if she did fight back she would have been hurt a lot worse. I was like, "Come on. Fight." I was kicking her leg. "Come on. Fight back." Allen explains a similar situation:

And he was like trying to get away but I had all these friends in front of him. Cause he was all by himself and I had about, the whole school on my side, like about 100-200 students were watching.....And he didn't fight back cause he didn't have any friends there. 'Cause he probably thought a bunch of people would jump in on him.

Most of the victims described by participants are loners who are unable to defend themselves during a fight and lack the back-up to retaliate at a later time. This often makes them an ideal target for victimization. In "A backyard fight" the victim was new to the school, having been in attendance for approximately one month. In "A fight with an ex-friend," Abbey describes Gail as unpopular. "She wasn't very well liked at this school. Like people thought that she was a slut. That's what they thought of her."

When participants resist peer pressure they risk losing recognition from their peer group and acceptance from friends. By responding cooperatively to peer pressure participants have the opportunity to gain power, respect, and control, increased self-confidence and self-esteem. To fulfill these needs participants must acquire social status.

Social status

Social status refers to the participants' "position" in relation to peers and friends and the amount of prestige assigned based on their position. Participants with a "cool" or "tough" image are assigned "high status" while "geeks" are assigned "low status." Participants with "high status" are often considered "leaders." They are "better

than" and "higher than" their peers. This implies a position of authority and superiority with respect to their peers. Participants may attain status within their friendship circle or amongst larger peer groups such as "all of the grade nines" or "even the whole school." Belonging to a friendship circle with high status ensures that a participant's individual status will be maintained. The group's image becomes a reflection of the participants' self-image and the participants' self-image is a reflection of the group's image.

Maintaining a position in such a group is therefore crucial for a participant's sense of self-worth. Participants who fail to gain sufficient status through their circle of friends, often resort to fighting as a means to gain higher status. One of the participants discovered, after participating in many fights, that she gained more status by changing her circle of friends than she did by fighting.

Carla explains:

Yeah, we're going to be cool." But it didn't make us any higher...higher standings. Like people will look up at you instead of you looking up at everybody else. Everybody's looking up at you. You know, like "what should I wear tomorrow," kind of thing, "ppffsh, I don't care." Like people ask me, kind of thing and I'm like, "I don't care what you wear tomorrow, I really don't care." Especially grade nine I wanted more status. But I couldn't get any more status. It didn't work. No matter what I did, how many times I fought, it didn't work.....and this year's status just kind of came as, "Oh, I'll be friends with this person, this person, this person and this person." And then I just - instant high status. And I'm like, "whoa! Instant high status. I like this!" They just kind of said, "We'll be friends with her." they became friends with me and I just kind of got my status higher and higher and higher. But, I mean, I'm not afraid to walk anywhere around the school.....Having better friends, you know, being able to walk wherever you want in the school.

Participants state the importance of fighting someone in the same grade in order to gain status. Fighting someone in a lower grade is not considered to be "cool." Carla continues:

Me and Tina used to be really good friends and just because she wanted to be higher with all her friends, she had to go and beat me up, just so that she could look like she's tough and whatever, so she could also get higher in position with her friends but it didn't get her any higher than she was, cause her friends thought, "Ppff, well, that's a grade nine and you're a grade ten," you know, "Grow up. If you're going to fight anybody, fight a grade eleven, or fight another grade ten, "kind of thing. I mean, I would have let her win if I knew that before hand.

Ultimately, when participants have high status in their friendship circle, they gain recognition and respect from both their friends and peers and satisfy their need for power and control.

Respect

Because people made fun of me. They didn't treat me with respect. And now all the people do, right? I feel better about that. (Nancy)

Many of the participants refer to respect and power as meaning the same thing. It would therefore seem logical to integrate these categories in order to reflect the participants' inclusive comments. However, I have chosen to separate these categories with the hope of conceptualizing their individual and combined meanings in greater depth. In doing so, the similarities and differences

between them may seem clearer. For many participants, gaining respect usually results in gaining power but gaining power is not always dependent on gaining respect. Participants associate control with both respect and power. Consequently, it will be discussed in both categories. The difference between respect and control is best described by Nancy in the following quote:

I think they're the same thing. Um, well, no. Okay. When you get respect from people, they treat you better. But when you're in control, if someone doesn't treat you right, you know that you've got the, um - you've got the power to be able to, you know, tell them off or whatever. Power feels good.

Respect depends on recognition from friends and peers and being treated in a way that acknowledges social status and develops self-image and self-esteem. While power also satisfies these needs, it is not dependent on recognition alone.

Participants receive recognition from their peers and friends after they participate in a fight. Such recognition improves their social status by strengthening their "tough," "cool" person image. Consequently they are treated with more respect. Jim says, "Fighting makes them feel tough and stuff. It gets them respect I guess." And Carla reports, "It felt like I was getting noticed, but in other ways I felt like, I'm fighting, like I'm cool, kind of thing, right?" Nancy talks about her "stardom" after fighting:

I found grade eights coming up to me and saying, "right on," all this and I didn't even know them right. (laugh) And telling me that I did a good job and I'm like looking at them like, "Who are you?" type thing and so it was like being stardom for a day.

Alice comments on the respect she earned:

'Cause when I'm upstairs in the halls now with all the grade eights - like all the girls, even the ones that are bigger than me, they all like step aside and let me through. It's like they respect me now.

Many participants victimize other students because they themselves have been victimized by their peers on previous occasions. Such experiences left them with feelings of low self-esteem and a lack of control over their lives. Fighting helps the participants gain control over their lives by discouraging other students from "messing" with them. Lisa states, "And like if you get into one fight, any real fight, people don't mess with you again at all." Alex agrees, "It makes you feel good, like you can take care of yourself if you ever need to....then you know how to fight so you don't get beat up." The "tough" image that participants acquire from fighting not only demands respect, but it is worn like armor, protecting them from further victimization and providing them with a degree of control over their lives. Acquiring control means "sticking up" for oneself by fighting. Otherwise the opponent may victimize the participants, stripping them of their image and their self-worth. Having control strengthens the participants' self-image and boosts self-confidence and self-esteem. Jim states, "You have to show the person who's boss. You have to show them that or you'll get picked on for the rest of your life." Nancy explains how fighting increased her self-confidence:

I felt in control. Um, I had more self confidence at that point cause before I didn't have that much self-confidence and now

that, um, that I did this, I feel like I do - type thing - that I can have control. And you know, no one can mess with me type thing.(laugh) I think that's how, like - I know fighting they say is not good and stuff but, I don't know, it brought up my self confidence cause I would never have thought I could do that, but now that I know that I can do it I know that I'm not going to put up with anyone else's. Cause I remember people treating me very bad. I mean I don't tell much people this but they treated me like really bad. They'd make fun of me and stuff and I'd just sit there and let them because I didn't want to cause any trouble. But now since I got into this first fight, I can know that... and people know that they can't call me names and stuff now. I know I can stick up for myself.

Helen was making fun of me , like, how I was before when I didn't have much self-confidence at Carter High. She was making fun of me like them, right. And talking behind my back and laughing....and then Cameron is like, "Woah!" because it was the first time they actually heard me tell someone off, right - that bad - I don't usually do this in front of people. And, um, and Cameron is like, "Yeah!" and all this stuff. And Kevin is like, "Woah, Nancy can stick up for herself!" and at that time I guess they knew they can respect me now, right - knowing that I can stick up for myself and I'm not going to put up with anyone's stuff.

Alice recalls:

If I hadn't gotten in a fight they'd just be pushing me around. After I got into the fight - it was pretty early in the year - I guess in February, and right after I got into the fight, no one really bugged me. Like, they kinda bugged me sometimes, like because I was so much smaller than most of them. They just kinda pushed me out of the way if they wanted to get through. Now the grade eights don't do that anymore, they always get out of my way now. .They're like twice the size of me and they just kinda step out of the way.

The participants claim that respect is earned by various degrees depending on the situation. For example, participants gain

some respect for fighting even if they lose the fight. It proves they can "stand up" to somebody and "stick up" for themselves. Although they don't gain the same status as they would if they won the fight, they are not at risk of losing status and being labelled a "wimp" or "chicken." Sometimes the participants become friends after a fight because of the respect that develops as a result of the fighting "relationship." Lisa says, "That's the only reason why I do respect her I guess you could say. Cause like she was able to stick up for herself." Steve agrees, "If somebody's going to stand up to me I've got respect for them. Same goes for if I stand up to somebody, or whatever else, they respect me. " Lisa continues:

Or sometimes if you can like fight even if you know you're going to lose. Cause a girl like totally bigger than me, I still fought her. You get a lot of respect cause you can take your beats, they say.

Participants receive even more respect if they lose a fight without showing any pain. This helps to maintain the "tough" image. Nancy says, "the funny thing is that she never cried so it showed that she was tough. We all respected her for that."

Fighting properly

The most effective way to gain respect during a fight is to "fight properly, "or be "a good fighter." Nancy states, "even if you're the biggest geek in the whole world, you'll still get respect if you fight properly." Participants who fight properly and win the fight will earn the greatest amount of respect possible. If they lose a fight

while fighting properly, they will still earn a great amount of respect and maintain a "tough" image, thus discouraging other students from "messing" with them on future occasions. This is especially true if the opponent is bigger than the participant.

"Fighting properly" requires the participant to seriously hurt his or her opponent such that some visible "damage" to his or her body is evident. It also involves hitting the opponent in "proper" spots such as the face or stomach - spots where the opponent will experience the greatest amount of pain and where other students will notice the "damage." Lisa explains:

'Cause some people, they can fight and fight until their face turns blue and they'll never get the respect that other people have cause they can't fight. Like for someone to gain respect for his fighting you have to know how to fight. You can't just say, " Oh a slap here, yes, I've got my respect now" right. It has to be like, you've got to do damage to the person's face. Like they have to see like bruises, like a bleeding nose or something. Like some form, deep formation in the face. Not like a good slap and that's it, right.

Nancy agrees:

And also with more respect - it's the way you fight too. Um, if you fight properly you get more respect. If you just start - cause I know Helen -she didn't fight very well because I guess it was her first real fight, right? Um, because um - she grabbed - my hair was in a ponytail, in a bun and everything and she grabbed my hair and started swinging me around. That's how I lost my balance right. And when you start swinging a person around, it's like what are you doing? You're not fighting. You're just pushing them around. And I know I was punching at her and stuff and she seemed so tall to me. I had to like jump up to get to her face or something. Because when you start swinging at a person, pulling their hair and slapping them, it's like, "What are you doing? You're not fighting."

Punching, um, certain spots...Face, stomach - proper spots - spots that are easier to break, bruise or whatever. You can't like punch in the shoulder or whatever, cause it doesn't really do anything. You've got to, like hurt the person. I know it's a real demented thing but it's true. And, you know, you get extreme respect for curbing someone if they're on the ground and you start kicking them in the face and stuff....Cause they know that you're tough now. You got the person on the ground. I haven't got that far yet but(Nancy)

The concern over fighting properly to earn respect seems to be more of an issue for the female participants than to the male participants. In fact, only the female participants refer to this term. The male participants refer to being a "good fighter." Such differences may be attributed to the notion that females are concerned with imitating male fighting behavior to gain more respect and power. In doing so they are bridging the gap between male and female fighting styles. Nancy states, "I guess we fight like guys do - boxing - I don't know. " The stereotype for female fighting, largely upheld by males, suggests that females fight by slapping with an open hand, pulling hair, scratching and biting. Female participants perceive that they fight like the guys do, by punching and kicking in the face and stomach. Nancy explains, "It's a stereotype - guys always expect girls just to cat fight and pull hair and scratch and whatever, right. But not anymore. Girls punch in the head just like the guys."

Abbey agrees:

everyone likes to see girls fight though after school. Like that's why all the crowd was there. They like to see girl fights.

....especially guys cause they say it's more interesting. Actually it's not more interesting, they just like seeing it cause they think girls mostly cat fight, like with their nails and their hands and like open hand. That's what guys think. They think cat fighting is for girls and fist fighting is for guys. But that's not true. That's not how girls fight. Girls fight just like the guys.

Alex disagrees:

I think it's funny to watch like, girls beating up each other, like scratching, clawing each other and stuff. Pulling each other's hair. Cause like they've never been in that many fights and stuff. So like they don't really know how to punch and stuff..unless they've been in lots of them.

Carla claims that some girls fight like girls while others fight like guys:

Girls, they grab hair, they use their nails. Guys they just punch. And then there's the girls that fight like the guys, who grab the hair and smash them against their knee, kind of thing. And then they drop them and curb stomp them which means you put their open mouth on the curb and just stomp on them. ...And like, blood everywhere. They call them butches cause they fight like guys.

Male participants recognize that some females are "butch" and fight "like guys." However, both the male and female participants believe that males fight more violently than females. They punch and kick harder, resort to carrying or using weapons, such as knives or bats more often, and continue their fights longer after the opponent is on the ground. Abbey explains:

Girls fight just like guys. The difference between them though is that guys are more violent. Girls aren't as violent as them. They use their fists and all but they're not as violent. Guys like

using bats and everything with each other. And girls just like, use their hands. They won't pick up a rock or a bat or anything. And they won't like leave them lying on the ground or anything. Cause I hear of guys doing that.

Alex agrees:

with the guys it's a lot different. Cause it's more brutal I guess...a lot more blood. Guys they just hit harder and they know where to go for like weak points and stuff...groin, the neck, the face and stuff like that. (Alex)

"Fighting properly" seems to be equated with "fighting like guys."

Female participants perceive that males have more control and power and to get some of that power and control, they need to be like them.

Girls fight a lot now. Girls and guys are not a big difference anymore. We like wear guys clothes, we act like guys, we talk like guys, we fight like guys. I think we're becoming male and that's not what we're supposed to be doing. It's weird. But we talk about guys being chauvinistic and stuff and how we don't want to be like them. But it just seems like more and more everyday we're becoming like guys. 'Cause like girls never used to like fight. Not like the way we fight like now. It used to be a slap here, slap back, a little hair pulling. Now people don't pull hair no more, they just like pick up a rock, smash her face, you know. Harshly, fight dirty. (Lisa)

Lisa's comment with respect to male chauvinism suggests a perceived power imbalance between the sexes. Ironically, it seems that "butch" females are reacting to male oppression by imitating the very behaviors that they condemn. Trying to "outdo" male violence while adhering to male role models may prevent females from gaining freedom from male oppression. In fact, female participants who adopt male tactics often become further enslaved and exploited.

Lisa states:

Girls use a lot of the male, like the guy tactics. Some girls fight just so the guys can like them and respect them and think they're tough and they want to hang out with them more....Like either you would beat people up really bad or you like harshly like let them use you and stuff. Or he acts like he sincerely likes you. And so far I've been like lucky like where I didn't have to get any of that. Like they honestly like me for me. Like some of my other friends who think they like them, they just want to use them and stuff.

It seems that many female participants fight in order to gain the same "tough" image that males seek. They perceive that this image is crucial for gaining respect from males, sharing equal power and escaping male oppression. However, in trying to impress males with their "toughness" they are often sexually exploited, behaving in ways that are contradictory to their values and needs. Unfortunately, it seems that males have little respect for those females they are capable of exploiting.

Nancy describes how one reason for participating in a fight was to impress a male that she hoped would become her boyfriend. She states, "I guess he probably treats me with more respect now." Her "boyfriend," Alex, responded by saying, "The fights I've seen Nancy in, she just throws her arms. She doesn't really take aim and stuff. She just throws her arms forward. The girls that we like, they don't really fight at all. They're just kind of hanging out with us. Like they're nice and stuff. They don't get into fights." Abbey, who was also participating in the fight comments on Nancy's motives for

fighting. "She just felt like doing it because her boyfriend was there and she wanted to show off." Participants earn recognition and respect for fighting properly. They also gain power.

Power

Power is described in terms of what it gives the participants - control, self -confidence and freedom. Participants often describe power in relation to fear. When peers respond to victimization in a fearful manner, participants experience a greater sense of power and control, which motivates them to instill even greater fear. This fear response from other students re-inforces the participants' powerful position. Consequently, a participant with a lot of power and high status is much more feared by his or her peers than a participant with less power and less status. Participants instill fear in a variety of ways. Its strongest presence is expressed during assaults where opponents are being attacked against their will and they fear for their personal safety and sometimes, for their lives. Fear is expressed by desperate pleas, cries for help, pained facial expressions and tears, running away, and huddling into a ball. Fear often expresses pain.

Lisa states:

Some people do it because they like to see people in pain. There's certain people like that, like they like to see that they can make someone squirm and like yell and beg for them to stop beating them up. And they like keep beating and boot stomping them until they're like right content and like until they're happy. Like even if they're not mad.

Making someone squirm in fear and pain ultimately allows the participants to feel in control because they are directly causing this response to occur. When participants perceive they have control over their peers, they feel powerful. Elaine states:

Some of my friends go out picking fights cause like, they want to go out on the harsh power-trip, or whatever. Like, they want to feel like they have control over someone or something. Like it's up to them on whether the person's hurt or not.

The participants claim that their peers often express fear in anticipation of being "beat up." Such fear is carried through hallways at school, into classrooms, while walking to and from school and is often expressed in subtle ways. For example, peers will avoid walking or "hanging out" in certain areas of the school where they may be confronted and threatened by the participants. They may change their route home, try to change classes, request to leave school early, or ensure they travel in groups. They may behave cooperatively when the participants make requests, such as leaving a particular hangout area, giving out cigarettes, food or money. Such fear immobilizes and disempowers students because they no longer have the power to make personal choices. Participants react to this increase in fear and powerlessness by exerting more power and instilling more fear. Lisa claims, "If you walk downtown with them, they're like harsh like scared of you and stuff...everyone like seems to respect me. Everyone at Carleton high is like scared of me." She continues at a later time to say "People fight so like other people can respect them and they can gain power and like harsh become the leaders and stuff...because everyone else is scared of them." Jim agrees,

"teenagers today they like threatening people so they figure that they're in charge; and that's to scare them." Elaine states:

Some people fight to feel in control and they want the word to get around - my friend used to fight a lot and she's considered the toughest girl in the school, right. And I guess I know a lot of people who tried to get that name or whatever . And they'd fight anyone so that people know them to fight a lot.

Lisa says:

'Cause when you do beat someone up, everyone's like, "Oh my God, she's so tough, she's so this. And everyone feels like you're better than them and stuff. And they're like harsh afraid of you. But you're always like, "Do you think you can take so and so? Do you think I can take so and so?" And that's how everything like works out.

Participants often mask their own fear behind their "tough" exteriors. They fear being victimized, being ridiculed and laughed at. They fear being rejected by friends, peers, teachers and family. They are very vulnerable and scared and often carry a great deal of pain. Instead of expressing their pain, they protect themselves by acquiring toughness to prevent their "secret" from being discovered. Toughness also helps them to forget the pain. Participants sometimes talk about their own pain by referring to the pain of other people. Jim states, "I just like bugging people and usually when I bug people like that - when I really start to hurt their feelings like, they're crying their eyes out down inside but you don't notice it. " By instilling fear in other students, participants temporarily gain power and control - and temporarily forget their feelings of powerlessness and the lack of control they have over their lives.

The relationship between fear and power results in emotional and physical freedom for the participants. Emotionally, participants can express their individuality without fear of ridicule. They can resist peer pressure without fear of losing status, power or respect, or being abandoned by their circle of friends. Lisa explains:

that's why she like respects me now. Cause like I could've listened to all of them and go like, people were like, " DJ quick stomp her, man" And like I couldn't do it. I was like, "No man" and so I went and just left her there.

Physically, participants can walk or hangout in any part of the school or community they chose, without feeling their safety is threatened. Ultimately this freedom and power provides them with feelings of being in control. Lisa states, "It's just kind of like what you want to do, when you want to do it, and how you want to do it.

Carla concurs:

Being able to walk wherever you want in the school. This year I can walk wherever I want. I can go out to the pit. Last year I couldn't without being bugged. I can smoke whatever brand of smokes. I don't have to smoke what brand people in the pit smoke. So I smoke my brand.

Lisa says:

So whenever they see me in the halls they like, harsh cross over and stuff. I just laugh. Cause if someone told me that I wouldn't do it. I mean like, I'll walk on what side I want to walk on, right. Like all of them are harshly scared of me. Like, Allison Simms, she's like terrified of me.

When the participants are treated as "better than" their peers, they begin to feel better than their peers. Their self-image then strengthens and their status improves. This position of leadership and authority demands recognition and respect and exerts power. When participants believe their power is threatened by peers with equal power, they may resort to fighting to maintain their "better than thou" status, restoring their position in the hierarchy of power. Lisa explains, "Some people just don't click at all. Like some people just don't get along and then they think like for them to be better than that person they'd have to be able to beat them up. " Some participants believe they have the right and freedom to physically harm their peers for "good reasons" without fearing any consequences such as reprisal or condemnation. Lisa states:

But you can't let them push you around. It's like you have to be out there to take them down like. If you want to beat someone up, you should be able to go out, punch them in the face and they can't do anything about it. Cause you're the one with the power I guess you could say....it's like totally a power trip.

In fact, their somewhat superior attitude permits them to police others and "create" their own judicial system. Jim explains:

Fighting is good and bad.....sometimes it should set an example for somebody. Show them not to do it again. It's kind of like going to jail for a crime but you don't want to go through the courts and stuff so you just beat them up.

Female participants often associate with male groups as a way to gain more status, respect and power. Males in some groups "require" females to "have status" before joining their group.

Associating with males with similar status, allows them the opportunity to gain more power and control. It seems that a female's need for power is sometimes stronger than the need for a satisfying relationship. Lisa says:

And they think, cause like, these guys, I guess they don't hang around with girls who don't have power either. It's like you have to have some like social status kind of thing. Cause like when you're with them it's kind of like, "Oh my God it's so and so. " And like you can't really talk, they're not the type of guys that you'd want to go out to talk to. Cause they're like totally crazy.

She continues by saying:

And I didn't realize how many people knew me, it was like so many people knew me. It was like, I was at New West Station and I met Bob and stuff. And then like there's one guy, like, he goes, "Are you Lisa? " He goes, "Oh my God. I'm so happy to meet you. I've never met you before" this and that right. " Cause I've heard so many good things about you" and he goes, "Richard told me you're not the type of girl people will mess with," this and that, "Cause you're going out with Steve. "Cause like everyone's afraid of my boyfriend. They're afraid like cause he's crazy. I swear, he's like so strange. He scares me sometimes. He has like these total temper changes. Like one minute he'll be totally sweet and then he'll like harsh change on you.

While Lisa enjoys the respect and power she receives from her association with Steve and his male friends, it also seems that she is afraid of him, and therefore, rendered powerless due to her dependent position.

When participants fulfill their need for respect, power and control, they develop a stronger self-image in relation to their peer image and ultimately increase their self-esteem. The need to "feel

good" about themselves seems to be at the root of their fighting behavior. Lisa states:

when I fight with someone and I win I feel harsh good about myself. Yeah, it's like an ego boost I guess you could say. And I think a lot of teens like, fight and they argue and stuff to boost up their egos, cause they have no self-esteem.

Media

Participants often emulate "cool" and "tough" characters from movies and television. These characters, usually male, are often represented with stereotypic masculinity- physically strong, rugged good looks, independent and indifferent, void of emotional expression, and often oppressive towards females. Arnold Schwarzenager movies come quickly to mind as examples where such male stereotypes are portrayed. They often use excessive violence as a means to solve problems, rarely suffering any consequences for their wrongdoings. The viewers are seldom exposed to the sufferings of the victims of violence, nor of the family members that suffer the loss of a loved one. This glorification and romanticization of violence in the media encourages participants to view violence as "cool." They adopt violent characters as role models, to the point of imitating their behaviors and dialogue. They may reenact violent scenes with peers, by making verbal threats towards their victims or by physically assaulting them. Lisa explains:

I saw this one guy right, he was like mad at his friend and he just stabbed him in the arm. And he goes, "I told you never to yell at me, don't ever raise your voice at me. I am so and so. I am Ali. When Ali talks you listen. " And this guys like, "I'm

sorry man, I'm sorry." And he goes, "No you're not." And like stabbed him. And the thing is like you watch like so many gangster movies. Like too many of them. And they harsh get like everything from that. It's like, "oh I never liked your face anyways. " That's right from New Jack City. It's like the guy's like a total like, reject so you stab him and go, " I never liked your face, your pretty face anyways."

Some movies appeal to the participants' need for respect, power and control by teaching them how violence will help them satisfy such needs. The movie titled "Juice" refers to ways of gaining respect through violence. In fact, "juice" is a slang term meaning respect. Lisa continues:

That's another thing why violence has occurred, like for respect. It's like oh, like, there's this juice thing. Juice means respect down on the streets and stuff. Cause I'm always watching Juice, right, and everybody, like there's so many ways to fight for juice (respect). And that's where everybody gets that line from - that movie. ... It's like to get - to earn your respect you have to - I don't know. It's weird. There's like a way I can explain this but I don't know if I can say it. I usually have to throw down, stand up and die for stuff like that.... I guess you've got to earn it. It's just like, you've got to let - this is how they think of it. You've got to let people know that you're out to get them down whenever you feel like it. It's like, if you want your respect, you've got to be able to tell people that. I don't know. It's kind of like, you see, it's like you've got to get the wind behind your back and go out and fight the blaze if you have to.

Lisa's reference to such lines as having "the wind behind your back" and "fighting the blaze if you have to," and having to "throw down, stand up and die for stuff," is a reference to specific movie dialogue that has been internalized by her friendship circle. Such lines reflect movie-like drama, heroism, and romanticism. Sometimes

they conflict with a participant's "true" feelings and beliefs. While participants want to be treated with respect, they seem to be pressured by these messages to obtain respect by resorting to violence. This dramatization of violence, may serve to provide a sense of purpose and "meaning" to the participants' lives. Defending friends and "dying for a cause" suggests a need to act like a martyr with respect to violence.

like my friend, Darren, right, like he got stabbed down on Robson. And everyone thinks it was wrong that he died cause he's too young to die. Cause he was like only 21, right. But no way. Everybody thinks that he died for a reason. I just don't understand what the reason is yet....cause he was a gangbanger,right, and he knew that. And he knew he'd die someday. (Lisa)

Violent movies also teach the participants how to fight more effectively. Lisa says:

Boys in the Hood, Juice, Color, and that. Total gang bang movies. And then they like teach kids like, well, one thing is how to like shoot up and like how to like shoot someone, how to stab someone properly and stuff...Like not directly but if you like watch it. ... And then they like teach you ways to run away from the cops and stuff and hop fences. So the cops can't catch you. Like you get harshly excited and stuff.

Participants express an appreciation of fighting technique while watching violent movies and television. Such techniques "have to be perfect" because they are "performed" for an audience.

cause like you get to see how they fight and there's lots more, lots of good fighting in movies and stuff cause it has to be

perfect. And I don't know, it just looks neat how like this movie, *Menace to Society*, this guy punches the guy twice in the head cause he had slept with his cousin. And got her pregnant and he didn't care. And so he came to his part of, like his town and stuff for his house, punched the guy, goes to pick a fight, punches him in the head twice and kicked him fourteen times in the head in like a second it seemed like. And I don't know, I just thought that was neat cause he liked kicked the shit out of him pretty good. (Alex)

Participants are exposed to a continual stream of violence in the media - including world news. Constant depiction of war and violence throughout the world eventually desensitizes participants to violence, leaving them with feelings of hopelessness and despair, and lack of control over their environment. Participants may begin to seek greater doses of violence as they become increasingly desensitized to its effects. While many participants partake in violent acts, they are also concerned that violence is out of control, and many of them feel scared. They want "the violence to stop" but feel powerless to change a subculture that thrives on such violence.

I think they have to stop like provoking fighting on TV and stuff. Like I like Swartzenager movies and everything but like on the news and stuff all they show is war and violence. And these movies like, "New Jack City" and stuff. I mean, I love them and everything but that's what's getting you to want to be just like them. It's like, it's going to your brain or whatever, right. They're not brainwashing you but they're putting in your brain, "Oh that's rad" right. "Oh yeah! Look at them. They're cool" right.....But people are scared and stuff, right. They shoot someone on TV and then, "Oh. I want a gun," right. You know it's all just like that.Like all people talk about lately is violence. "Oh yeah. I fought this person. I fought that person." They have to stop. Especially they have to stop the wars and stuff. And like you see little kids playing with toy guns in the backyard. Kids should be playing with dolls, not guns. (Elaine)

Some participants refer to video games and rap music as contributing factors to school violence. Many participants spend lunch hours and after school time playing video games or listening to rap music. Jim states, " Rap music is the worst. It's all about beating up people, pornography, drugs, crack houses, and pregnant thirteen year olds. "

The majority of the stories reported by the local news are stories of violence, especially youth related. Consequently, participants do not perceive violent behavior as deviant - it has become the norm, the expected way of behaving. Lisa sums it up by saying, " If everyone else is doing it, I may as well too, right."

As participants become increasingly desensitized to violence, movies need to become increasingly more violent in order to "excite" them. Participants are constantly seeking external stimulation to satisfy their need for fun and entertainment, rather than relying on their imaginations to create entertainment. Consequently, many participants complain of being bored by everyday events. While media may be a contributing factor to boredom, other factors also play a role.

Boredom

the rest of the fights - about 50% are just from being bored. I've seen a couple of people out front there and they were just because they were bored. (Jim)

The participants claim they often seek out "geeks" to "beat up" because they are easy to beat up. Jim states, "the cool people pick on them because they're bored. They have nobody else to bully around and stuff. Let's go beat up a couple of geeks or something." The need to bully "geeks" around as a way to handle boredom, suggests the need for "something to do," the need for involvement in activities that are fun and entertaining. The participants describe fighting as an activity that is both fun and entertaining. In fact, they equate fighting to being like a "sport" similar to a boxing match. Nancy describes her urge to watch a fight as trying "to get front row seats" and getting "good seats." She continues this analogy when describing her participation in a fight.

it was kind of funny at the time cause it was like a boxing match - "Here comes Mr. Stratton "- ding, ding, ding, ding.(Laugh) Then all of a sudden I go off to my corner and they hand me over a cigarette and just shove it in my mouth - give me water or whatever. It was kind of funny.

Alex describes how "fighting sports" are fun to watch and participate in.

I like fighting. It's fun. Like I used to be in Tai Kwon Do cause I like the fighting. (laugh) But then I dropped out of that. Now I want to join another fighting sport. I always liked watching boxing and stuff like that. I don't know. It's just neat watching fights and being in them. If it's a guy that you don't like or something like that, then you get to beat him up and he doesn't say anything anymore...I just think it's kind of fun.

Elaine describes fighting as being a sport similar to basketball or any other sport.

I think it's fun. It's like an activity. It's like a sport. Playing basketball's fun, right. So fighting's a different way sort of. Like if you enjoy basketball, it's a game. Like getting the ball through the hoop, you know. It's the same but in the head. ..Like boxing's a sport. Karate's a sport. It's the same thing except you're not doing "Ahchee" You can chose another sport like football, basketball,soccer. I play them after school and stuff with people but fighting is another one you don't do as often. It's just like you fight 5 times in a year or something. It's not that much.

Fighting is fun in the same way that other sports are described as being fun. They provide a good work out, a challenge and the opportunity to win. The workout involves an increase in adrenaline which provides more energy, increased self-confidence and feelings of being in control. Some participants equate the feeling of adrenaline "rush" with a drug-like euphoria. "It's like a high that you can't buy....you actually have to do it." Another student concurs. "It just hits you, kind of like a drug." She describes her fight as "a good rush." Other participants equate their " good rush" with a "self-confidence high. It just hits you, you know, your self confidence. You're in control, type thing." Adrenaline also provides a sudden burst of energy such that "you're harsh hyper. You just want to jump around and fight.....to get unhyper." Cheering from fight watchers also "gets the adrenaline going" and adds a dimension of excitement. Participants consider fighting to be more fun than other sports because the "adrenaline rush" is stronger. This is true, however, only if the opponents fight back. Elaine states:

When you play basketball, your adrenaline doesn't get up as high. When you're fighting you're just like,"AHHHHH." It's fun

cause you get harsh hyper. It's like a good workout or something. It just is. But if they don't fight back it's boring.When I fought Nicole, I was harsh hyper but it was like a basketball type of adrenaline. It wasn't the same as when somebody fights back.

Like other sports, fighting provides the opportunity to challenge an opponent and win. Winning a fight increases the participants' self-esteem because they feel good about their accomplishment and receive more recognition and respect from their peers. Jim says, "It's kind of like a sport. It's like a game between us. It's like winning the Grey Cup. It feels great cause you know you can beat someone at something." Elaine agrees, "After a fight, it feels good, like you've won - like you've won a basketball game. ..You feel victorious."

When the opponent fights back and provides a challenging fight for the participant, the "adrenaline rush" is stronger and winning feels better, then if the opponent doesn't fight back. However, sometimes participants seek "easy" students to "beat up" to ensure they are guaranteed a win. Group-on-one fights, and fights against "geeks," who lack back-up, are considered "sure wins." Alex states, "I just wanted to beat him up just for fun...just for the hell of it cause I knew he'd be easy."

Winning a fight is not always restricted to just the outcome of the fight. Winning is a process that sometimes begins with the participant and the opponent bugging each other. Participants describe this early stage of fighting like a game where the opponent and participant take turns verbally challenging one another, trying to outdo one another. This sport-like competition seems to be a fight for

control and power. Winning is then crucial for obtaining such control.

Jim explains:

It's kind of like a sport. It's a game - just to show you have control, you have to make a comeback. Kids call it burning the other person. Like, say they say something - I don't know an example, right off hand, um.. but say they say something to you - you have to come back and switch it around and make it backfire on them. Um, and if you can do that for as long as the other person can bug you, then you've got it made. You've got control.

Challenging authority figures, such as school administrators and police officers after a fight is fun for some participants. Alex describes the excitement of being chased by the police after assaulting someone. He enjoyed trying not to "get caught" or to "get into trouble."

It's kind of fun too though, cause you get chased from the cops after you let them go. I like getting chased by the cops cause they barely ever catch you. I don't have one charge against me and I've been in about thirty fights.

Participants describe fighting as fun because they're "good at it" and it makes them "feel good." Participants earn recognition and respect by fighting and winning, and fulfill their need for power and control. They take pride in their fighting skills and the feeling of accomplishment such skills provide. One participant states, "we're proud of what we have here, for muscle and back-up and stuff. " Taking pride in such skills and accomplishments ultimately improves self-confidence and self-esteem. Fighting is one sport where all of the

participants can make the team, enjoy the spotlight, and play the game according to their own rules.

Participation in fun activities, such as fighting, is one way of reacting to boredom. Many participants comment that there's nothing to do and nowhere to go which seems to imply their need for participation in enjoyable activities. However, boredom seems to be a symptom of some underlying, unmet needs. Jim says, "A lot of teens go looking for other teens on the street and stuff cause there's nothing else to do." Alex states, "And if you see a fight, why not go in it? Something to do." Alice agrees by saying, "There are gangs out there that will go beat up somebody for fun. Something to do. They're bored."

It seems that many participants feel alienated from their school, from their homes and from the community. In short, they feel unwanted and that they do not belong. They are often required to leave the school by a specific time. Some parents are not available for them at home after school, and community members often accuse them of loitering around their shops and malls. Jim describes one such experience when he was picked up by police for loitering.

It bugs me how people complain about teens hanging around their stores and stuff but there isn't anywhere else to go. I was arrested for loitering in front of 7-11 once. The police told me to go to Stanton [recreation centre] and they dropped me off around 8:30 and it was closed. 8:30 on a Saturday night. It's a joke, man. They don't even know what's going on.

Although participants are questioning reasons for their boredom, perhaps the underlying issue pertains to the need to belong and be loved. While participation in school and community

activities may "keep kids off the streets" or "out of trouble" it is important for such activities to be meaningful to the participants such that they feel involved and part of the fabric of the school and community. Meaningful involvement that also encourages participants to take responsibility may help them gain power and control and ultimately improve self-esteem.

Many participants state their reason for fighting is because they "just feel like fighting." This desire to fight is sometimes triggered by aspects of their opponent they do not like, such as those aspects attributed to "geeks" - the way they dress, the way they act, the way they look at the participant, or the way they "mouth off." It seems that many of these "reasons" are really excuses for the participant to behave in the way he or she wants to behave. The underlying reasons for such behavior may relate to boredom or it may relate to feelings of anger. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the root causes such as the example Alex describes. "Like we'd start a fight with him. If we wanted a smoke, and he wouldn't give it to us, we'd just beat him up and stuff. Just cause we felt like fighting." It seems that participants "feel good" when they "get rid of frustration and anger." In this regard boredom and anger are interrelated.

Anger

Participants refer to anger as something inside them that has to be "gotten rid of" by "throwing a few punches or beating someone

up." It is a "loose energy" that participants must "get out of their system." They "burn off" anger and "let out" anger to feel more "clear headed." Lisa states, "it harshly clears your mind up and you feel so much better just to pound someone's face in."

Participants describe anger as if it were a foreign entity, an undesirable visitor that has to be forced out the door in order for harmony to be restored. Once anger is "let out," it is gone, and not likely to return. Fighting is considered an effective way for "getting anger out of the system" and restoring peace of mind. Alex states "it's better just to get the thing out, like by fighting, cause most times it doesn't come back." He describes fighting as a good way to express anger. When anger "builds up," participants are more likely to commit more serious acts of violence. Alex says, "You get to take your anger out and stuff, you know, so it doesn't like, build up. Or you could do something worse. Like stab somebody or shoot somebody or kill somebody. " Steve agrees, "After it's over then it's fine. After you fight actually, then we become friends at the end if he wants to. Cause it's over. After you get it out it's over."

Participants describe their angry feelings in a variety of ways. They may be "totally pissed off, harsh raging, really, really mad, or ticked off." They "get so uptight" and "go wild" or act "short tempered." However anger is described or expressed, participants seem to be carrying a lot of it around, and are trying desperately to "get rid of it. " Some participants try to get rid of it by walking away from the situation and hitting lockers or doors instead of people. Some participants may turn their anger inward and behave in a self-destructive manner. Jim describes one such situation.

I have to let out my anger and if I don't let out my anger, I'll take it out on myself, like I used to burn myself with my lighter and stuff....I had scars and stuff. You know those things called happy faces? You heat up the end of the lighter and you put it on your skin and it makes a little happy face. I used to burn the bottom of my hand....just hold my hand there and take the pain. That was the only way I could get rid of my anger.

This self-destructive behavior seems to reflect self-loathing which can trigger suicidal thoughts. Jim had contemplated suicide at one point, in conjunction with being high on acid. "I was sitting at home and everybody was in bed and I was watching some movies and all of a sudden I just thought of committing suicide.....that was the last time I ever did it because I thought I was going to kill myself." Participants describe a number of situations that trigger angry feelings and the desire to fight. Most frequently, these situations involve their peers spreading rumors, telling lies and being "mouthy" towards the participants, especially about the participants' family. Less frequently, they involve jealousy between boyfriend and girlfriend, and peers giving participants dirty looks.

A rumor is a story or comment of uncertain truthfulness that is shared by the participants' peer group, about the participants or about the participants' friends. The content of such stories or comments are often demeaning to the participants or their friends and consequently they become angry and want to fight. When participants hear about such rumors from their peers, they rarely check them out with the alleged source. Instead they become angry and begin "badmouthing" those students who are supposedly

responsible for creating and spreading such rumors. This indirect approach encourages the escalation of the conflict, increasing the level of tension and anger between the participants and those responsible for "badmouthing" them or their friends. Sometimes rumors are deliberately fabricated to start fights, while other times they are the result of miscommunication and misunderstandings between participants and their friends and peers.

Alice explains:

she had heard that Gail had said this stuff about the grade tens and these grade tens are like her really good friends. And she got really mad cause it was her best friend's boyfriend that she had said it about. And she got really mad and just started like, kicking her and telling her that she shouldn't do that.

Elaine continues:

I heard that she was saying alot of stuff about this guy that she shouldn't have said like she was fooling around with him and stuff and she wasn't. And she tried breaking him up with his girlfriend that he had been going out with for a long time. So he got mad, and then I got mad, so I guess I beat her up.

One of the most devastating comments for female participants is to be called a slut, or for a friend to be called a slut. Carla says, "But she didn't like me....she wanted to fight me because I was friends with Jan and they didn't like Jan because they thought Jan was a lousy little slut, right. "

Abbey says:

She was saying things about my best friend. She was calling her names and saying that she was a slut and everything. And then I got mad and my best friend got mad and everyone - and she started spreading rumors about everyone else. And everyone believed it at first.

Nancy explains:

I was so pissed off - when it comes to certain small things, we tell people off and when it comes to big things we go ahead and fight them, cause, they call my friends sluts and you know, that's a harsh word. And if someone's going to call us that and mean it, then sorry.

If a participant decides to check out a rumor with "the original source" but discovers that the student denies having spread such a rumor, he or she often accuses the student of lying.

I got really mad at her cause she was lying to us. Cause if she had said, "Yes, I said it and I'm sorry", I would have just hit her once and let her go. But she started lying to us and I was like, really mad at her. She was harsh lying to us. I was like, "Why did you say all this? Why did you lie? She was like, "I didn't say it." I was like, "Yeah, you did." (Elaine)

Participants become angry when their peers "bug" them and are "mouthy" towards them. Unlike rumors, bugging and "mouthing off" means that one or more students are making derogatory comments directly to the participant. Comments made about a participant's family trigger the greatest amount of anger in participants. Steve says, "I got a short temper so it just ticks me off when people bug my family and whatever else."

Alex states:

And he said something like "fuck your grandma." That really pissed him off and his mom was home and she had to hold him back. And he went to punch him again and he punched his fist through the wall cause he really loved his grandma and stuff.

Lisa says:

cause she was saying something about the girl's mom and stuff. I'm like, I know I don't like people saying stuff about my mom so I understood what the girl was talking about. So it was like, "OK, we'll take her right. "

Sometimes a participant and a "geek" will "mouth off" one another until the participant becomes so angry that he or she decides to beat the geek up. Usually the participant initiates the bugging, hoping the geek will respond.

I go, "You're a geek. You shop at Value Village," or something like that. " Then he goes, " You kneel for your dad." Then that would really get me mad and so the fight starts. (Jim)

The participants occasionally direct their anger towards someone other than the person who caused them to feel angry. Usually participants are aware of such displaced anger. Steve explains, "Just the mood. Like if your parents are bugging you or girlfriend or just in general everything is not going right that day and then you get angry. "

Or just if they want to get into a fight, like they get into a fight with their mom, like a verbal fight, and they're mad and they wanna go look for a fight to burn off all their anger. (Alice)

I was mad on Saturday and I started punching one of my ex-boyfriends - I'm like, "Okay" CRACK. I mean, the guy is big. He can take it, right. I just said, "I'm mad. I'm going to hit you." "OK." CRACK. ... Like say if their girlfriend broke up with them

or something like that, they need something to hit and they won't hit any of their friends. (Carla,)

Some participants "just feel like fighting" and look for opportunities and excuses to fight. These participants may be unaware of angry feelings that are seeking an outlet. Finding "reasons" to fight helps them "let out" their anger. Lisa explains:

if you look at her funny she'll fight you. If you touch her by accident she'll fight you. If she just doesn't like your face she'll fight you. If you're talking to a guy she likes she'll fight you.....If you look at a guy that she is going out with, her like cousins or one of her friends, you go" oh my God that guy's cute." She'll fight you. She fights for stupid reasons, like seriously.

Bob stepped on his new clicks, like his shoes right. Well he freaked man, right. And he just like, "come on. Let's take it outside right now." So they go out and they duke it out. For what? Cause he stepped on his new shoes. People are like always fighting for some stupid reason.

Participants who express angry feelings by fighting, are sometimes expressing frustration over school work, homelife, or relationships. Frustration is expressed as anger when participants are unable to understand or resolve the source of their frustrations. Nancy says, "fighting is just a whole thing when frustrations build up, right. It builds up on weekends. It builds up when you're at home."

At the end of the year though, last year at Carleton High, everyone was like building up frustrations and stuff. About passing or failing or whatever. And they called us like the worst Grade 8's they've ever seen. Because like every day there'd be a fight. And then like someone'd get busted like every single day right. (Lisa)

You should do what you want to do at school so you don't get frustrated and you don't end up beating someone up. ...I get mad for all sorts of reasons, like not just people but my schoolwork.... I think I'm failing this year. (Elaine)

Angry feelings also serve to mask a participant's pain.

Participants may express anger towards friends, peers and family members who have emotionally hurt them. They may also direct their anger towards those who have not hurt them, as a "safe" way to get back at those who have.

Maybe they were hurt in their childhood or something. Cause a lot of people are just psycho. I think people who do that stuff, are like people who have been hurt before. Like tremendously hurt. Like they had to like take their anger out on everybody else. (Lisa)

When a participant hurts another person's feelings, the other person may respond by hurting the participant's feelings. When the participant's feelings are hurt, he or she becomes angry and therefore has a "reason" to fight.

I just like bugging people and usually when I bug people like that, when I really start to hurt their feelings, they come back and hurt my feelings. Then I know I've got it made because that's what I want them to do, is have them come back and hurt my feelings and that gives me reason to fight. (Jim)

Anger and pain often originates in families, where participants compete with siblings or step - parents for their parent's affection. When participants perceive that parental affection is not equally distributed, they may feel rejected, hurt, and angry.

And my parents took the knife from me cause they know when I get really mad and stuff that I'd either stab my brother or sister cause I've tried it before....last year I had lots of anger, 'cause I'm always getting pissed off. That's when me and my brother were doing a lot of our fighting. I just wanted to beat him up so bad. (Alex)

'Beause I'm the youngest and I don't get as much as my sister does. She's got more clothes than I do. She has 12 pairs of shoes. I've only got one. She's got 4 jackets. I only got 1. She's always ahead of me....I don't like her...we usually just fight. (Jim)

Some participants learn to behave violently by imitating their parent's behavior. Participants who are disciplined in a violent manner by their parents, may retaliate by seeking out a "safer" victim to fight.

Most of my anger comes from my relatives....alot of my family has a temper. Once my dad got mad - something my mum said. He leaned over, picked up the oak coffee table and threw it across the room and took a chip out of a desk and knocked over a planter.... My sister is the only one that has gotten hit. She called my dad an asshole and started throwing stuff at him and I had walked in the door after coming home from a party and I was drunk and my dad was slapping her on the butt and stuff. I had to grab him and I had to throw him down on the floor to calm him down. (Jim)

When participants lack control over their home environment, and feel disrespected or unloved by their parents, they may seek opportunities to express their pain and anger by fighting peers. At the same time, they may try to acquire the respect, power and control that is lacking in their home environment. Participants may

victimize their peers to acquire a "tough" image, but behind their "tough" image they hide tremendous vulnerability, fear and pain.

Family violence may escalate due to the abuse of drugs and alcohol in participants' families. When family members are under the influence of alcohol or drugs they may behave in ways that are contradictory to their personalities when sober. Jim states that "a lot" of his family "has a temper." He also indicates a history of drug and alcohol abuse.

I've come home a few times really drunk and she's caught me stoned a whole bunch of times but I guess I do that cause of the environment I was brought up in. Most of my aunts and all of my uncles, all they do is drugs, drink, and smoke dope. (Jim)

Drugs and Alcohol

maybe 15% of the fights are related to drugs and I'd say another 35% are related to two drunk people or two stoned people. This year people fight more over drugs. (Jim)

Many of the drug or alcohol related incidences of violence occur outside of school time, often on Friday and Saturday nights. The participants claim that LSD, more commonly referred to as acid, is the drug of choice for most students while at school. Participants claim that LSD is easier to conceal than other drugs such as marijuana or alcohol. It doesn't require the paraphernalia that marijuana requires nor does it affect one's breath such as alcohol. It is also less expensive than some other drugs and its effects are felt more quickly and powerfully. Participants claim that "there's a lot of students coming to school stoned. Acid is everywhere around the

school but most teachers don't realize it. " School is an ideal centre for selling drugs due to daily contacts with large groups of students. Many fights occur as the result of drug transactions. For example, a student may claim the drug "didn't work" that it was "a rip off" while another student will claim "he didn't pay." Such claims often provide excuses to fight. The availability of drugs in conjunction with peer pressure can trigger impulsive drug use while at school. Chronic drug use outside of school can affect one's temperament and attitude while attending school.

Or some people are just like permafried for life. They just have no brain cells left and then they like, fight for everything. They're like really, really short-tempered. Cause when you do a lot of acid and dope and stuff you become like really, really, short tempered. Like everything gets you mad.Like people who fight at Carleton high are like people who really don't care. Like seriously, they're so permafried that nothing makes sense to them. (Lisa)

Many participants claim that acid and alcohol desensitizes them from pain. They are able to fight more aggressively because they are unconcerned about their opponent's ability to hurt them.

Like half the time you're all drunk or whatever...You can't feel it or if you're on drugs or whatever you know, whatever else. you don't feel the pain. Especially on alcohol you don't feel pain cause you're body's normally all numb anyways when you're tanked. (Steve)

They say, you know, acid, right. Since you're on acid you don't feel anything right, like if someone slaps you or punches you, you don't feel a thing, right? Which is true because I've been on it. (Nancy)

we'd do acid cause acid like sort of gives you a high with strength. So like, and when you're on acid you don't feel pain at all really. So we just go downtown and pick fights with like people. (Alex)

When participants are high on drugs or alcohol, they often feel more confident and powerful. They seem less fearful of the consequences of their behavior. Alex explains, "Like if you're drunk and stuff. You're with a bunch of friends so you think you've got a lot of power and stuff. So you just feel like fighting."

Although participants may be more susceptible to fighting when high on drugs or alcohol, their peers and friends often encourage them to take the drugs. Peers may also encourage the participants to fight once they are experiencing the effects of the drug, knowing that they are less likely to resist peer pressure.

it's not the drug that made me want to get into fights, it was my friends. They would kind of trick me into it, you know. Say things and pressure me to fight and I would go ahead and do it. It's not - I don't know. I know people say it's the drugs and stuff but I don't think so....Cause when you're on drugs you don't want to get into fights. It's not the reason why you do them. It's just to have fun. (Nancy)

Some participants take drugs to "escape" their feelings of anxiety, frustration, pain and boredom. Perhaps by addressing these underlying issues, participants would reduce their drug intake and be less likely to participate in fights. Drug usage, however, often seems a quicker and easier solution for participants. Participants may increase their frequency of drug use to gain greater control over their lives. Paradoxically, it seems that participants feel less in

control when the drug "has worn off. " They may then increase frequency of drug usage as a means to regain control. This cycle may eventually create a drug dependency. Participants claim that chronic drug users "just don't care anymore." When they stop caring about themselves, they seem incapable of caring about anyone else. One participant states, " you can't feel the pain after awhile yourself so you can't see their pain...so then it's easy to just beat them up." This inability to empathize, to understand or feel another person's suffering or pain seems to be a crucial component in fighting.

EMPATHY

I like to fight but I don't. 'Cause I do care
if I hurt people and stuff. (Alex)

Empathy is a word that I constructed based on many of the participants' comments concerning their levels of "caring" and "not caring" for peers they "like" and "dislike". It is defined as the ability to identify with, experience and respond emotionally to the feelings or thoughts of another person. Assuming the perspective or point of view of another person means understanding their individual experiences, feelings, values, needs and motivations. Nancy states, " I felt bad for fighting her 'cause I know if I was her I'd hate to be in that position. " Empathic behavior is expressed with understanding of the individual in a non-violent manner.

Participants' level of empathy is related to the degree they like or dislike their opponent. For example, Jim distinguishes between people he hates, dislikes and doesn't mind. His varying degrees of

"caring" are related to such likes and dislikes and are reflected in his fighting behavior. He will fight someone he hates without any feelings of empathy, but will feel some empathy if he fights someone he dislikes. He usually reserves his bullying behavior for someone he "doesn't really mind."

"If I really don't like the person then I don't care. Who cares? The guy's crying. Big deal. But if it's a person I don't hate...I feel bad inside. ...I kind of feel like crap. Like a real jerk kind of. I feel like a jerk every time I do it, especially to a person that I don't really mind... When it's a person I kind of like, and I hurt their feelings, usually I don't fight them... Why bother beat up a nice guy? (Jim)

When a participant's perceptions of another student are based on negative images they can produce "blind spots," an inability to recognize or accept other perspectives, thus discouraging empathic responses. Labelling, a way of narrowly defining or describing someone with one word, and stereotyping, the formulation of preconceived or fixed images of a group of people, encourage these negative perceptions and blind spots to prevail by encouraging prejudice and intolerance between groups of people. They diminish one's ability to treat people as individuals and form positive opinions of others. Participants provided many strong examples of labelling with respect to "geeks" and "cool" people. They dislike geeks based on the negative images they assign to them, such as "the way they dress and the way they think." Their unwillingness to consider a "geek's" individual traits increases their intolerance levels and provides justification for beating them up. Another strong example of labelling and stereotyping relates to racism. Participants describe

situations where their peers are victimized because of their racial origins. Lisa states, " like black people will say like, we don't like a flip - Filipino person, and they like harsh start a fight about it. Or like, white people don't like chinks - I mean Chinese people, or Native Indians and they'll harsh start a fight. It's totally like, cause of racial."

Another reason that participants dislike their peers is because they are "mouthy." When a student "mouths off" it means they are spreading rumors or lies, or "badmouthing" participants directly. Such students "think they're tough" and therefore "deserve to be beat up." Nancy states, "nowadays you can't go around saying certain things about people without expecting something to happen....most likely physical harm." Alex explains one such fight.

So I never even liked the guy in the first place. So I just saw him one day and decided to beat him up....cause I hated him for so long. I finally got a good enough reason to hate him even more, and I saw him, so....I just didn't like his attitude and stuff. He's like real high on himself. He thinks he's like a harsh tough guy. He mouths people off all the time and stuff.....and if it's a guy that you don't like or something like that then you get to beat him up and he doesn't say anything anymore."
(Alex)

As described earlier, participants become angry when their peers spread rumors and lies. When participants are angry their feelings seem to intensify. Consequently, it seems that participants want to fight those students they hate or strongly dislike, and often those feelings are triggered by anger.

Many of the participants experience empathic feelings for their opponents. Such feelings of empathy seem most likely to occur

before or after a fight, not during the fight when their "adrenaline is going." Steve explains, "You kind of feel bad after cause if you hurt them, but at the time you don't really think about it." Alex concurs:

I like to fight but I don't. Cause I do care if I hurt people and stuff.....When I'm in it I don't care. I could care less. Then I just fight them cause you've got your adrenaline going and it's like, I just feel like fighting. But like before it starts and after and stuff I do...

During a fight some participants seem to have little control over their fighting behavior. Their "adrenaline rush" seems to serve as a driving force which overpowers any feelings of empathy they may have for their opponents. This adrenaline rush is often fueled by anger which intensifies feelings of hate toward the opponent. Yet, many participants know when to stop a fight, when "enough is enough," even during the heat of battle. This suggests that certain indicators during a fight may trigger an empathic response in the participant. One such indicator rests with the victims of a group-on-one fight. When they refuse to fight back the participants may feel empathic.

But she's lucky that she didn't [fight back] 'cause then we felt really sorry for her...and she dropped her barrette and I picked it up, and I go "here." She looked so scared so I just sort of gave her a break. (Elaine)

Another indicator relates to the degree of visible "damage" inflicted on the victim. A bleeding nose, bruised or swollen face, black eyes, a pained expression on the victims may trigger an empathic response. Elaine recalls, " I don't remember why we

stopped. I think she was getting upset and she looked pretty bruised and stuff." Jim describes a fight where prolonged eye contact with the victim may have triggered an empathic reaction.

When he was on the ground, he was kind of just laying there, sitting there on his butt and he looked up at me and I looked up at him and I swung my foot and I missed...Right then and there I looked at him and I said, "Woah," this is enough. I'd already given him a black eye and a bleeding nose and stuff.....I just know where to draw the line, just how hurt the person was like. I just know. That's enough. He got what he got and that's it." (Jim)

A one-on-one fight, such as Jim describes above, may provide more opportunity for the participants to feel personally responsible for the pain inflicted on one another. A group assault, however, may discourage each individual participant from taking ownership for the pain inflicted on the victim and therefore be less likely to feel empathy for him or her. Abbey states, " you never really knew who bruised her, or hurt her cause everyone had a turn taking swings at her and stuff."

Some participants felt empathy for their victims at a point when their fellow assailants forced the victim to beg for forgiveness or kiss their feet. Nancy states, "We were pretty rough on her too. I mean, I guess I was nothing compared to how they were. They made her kiss their feet, say sorry. I thought that was kinda bad." Despite the extreme physical brutality inflicted on the victim, as Alex describes in a fight which occurred outside of school time, it seems to be the victim's feelings of humiliation that triggers an empathic response in some perpetrators.

He was like crawling on the ground, begging for like, " help, help" and stuff too. He had blood gushing from his nose and mouth and stuff. He had cuts all over cause he kept on running away and falling down and we just kept punching him in the face and kicking in the face and mouth and stuff. Then at the end and stuff we - I didn't do this. I thought this was kind of cruel though. One of my friends though, he goes, "Kneel and beg for forgiveness." And he's like, "No, cause if I kneel you're going to kick me in the face." He was like, " No I'm not." So then he goes to kneel, and kicks him in the face. (laugh) Then he goes, " Kneel, beg for forgiveness. " And so he knelt. He goes, "Please don't beat me up anymore. " He had blood all over and stuff. I don't know. I was kind of feeling sorry for him by then cause I knew the guy and so then after he begged for forgiveness we let him go.....I'd never do that to a guy, make him beg for forgiveness. That's a bit too cruel. (Alex)

Feelings of remorse and empathy for the victim most often occur a day or two after the fight. Empathic feelings are stronger for those opponents who chose not to fight back. Elaine describes the mixture of feelings she experienced after being part of a group assault on a student who didn't fight back. Her initial feelings of remorse, guilt and empathy were replaced with feelings of hatred and anger. Such feelings emerged as a consequence of the victim "ratting" and Elaine being suspended from school.

When the fight was over and stuff, a few days after I felt bad for doing it....after my adrenaline came down...just cause she didn't fight back and she looked so scared. I felt guilty cause she's a new girl and stuff and I'm beating her up already. I go, "Oh, why did I do that? That was so mean. She looks so sad. She looks so scared." You know. Like their face really sticks in my mind if they don't fight back. Like, there's like, harsh little puppy dog eyes. It's like, "Oh God."..... Now I want to do it again. I hate her. I'm going to kill her. (Elaine)

When participants hate their peers, they claim to lack empathy for them. Hatred towards others, however, often seems to be an expression of their own self-hatred. Rather than direct it towards themselves, however, some participants direct it towards their peers. This lack of self-caring and the subsequent lack of caring for others, allows some participants to endure victimization while victimizing their peers. For example, one participant states, " I'm not afraid to take a guy who's bigger than me...cause I don't care if I get beat up." Another participant says, "the only thing that matters to teens is sex, drugs and violence....and money and clothes. People don't matter, it's like no one matters but themselves.....and sometimes they don't even care about themselves." A third participant states, "teens are doing all the violence and like we just don't care no more." When participants "just don't care no more" they are unconcerned about the consequences for their behavior. In fact, disciplinary tactics such as suspension often help to intensify the participants' feelings of hatred towards the victim, and provides them with an excuse to retaliate. Similarly, the threat of imprisonment is not a deterrent for many participants. Alex states, "I have lots of friends who don't care if they kill... they don't care if they go to jail."

Participants who "don't care" seem to lack meaning and purpose in their lives. Feelings of meaninglessness are expressed as boredom and lack of involvement in meaningful activities or groups. Participants who "don't care" about themselves have a low self-image and self-esteem, and seek respect, power and control as a way of increasing their self-esteem. Participants who like and respect

themselves seem to have the best chance of caring for and respecting their peers.

This chapter discussed how participants attach meaning to their fights. One of the main reasons participants fight is in response to peer pressure. They fear being labelled "geeks" "wimps" or "chicken" and often fight to maintain a "cool" image. The majority of fights involve fight watchers who cheer, crowd and push the participants, and exert further peer pressure. Participants also fight to gain status, respect, power and control, often in response to feelings of powerlessness, and low self-esteem. Participants fight when they feel angry and frustrated. Such feelings often originate in families and may accompany feelings of emotional pain. Participants also fight because they are bored, need some excitement, and are searching for meaningful involvement. Finally, participants fight due to media influences and drug and alcohol abuse.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The words of "the kids who fight" demonstrate that school violence is a complex problem that must be addressed from a multi-dimensional perspective, by implementing a variety of strategies and approaches, and involving school personnel, parents, and community agencies. Prior to conducting this research, I believed that school counsellors were the best candidates in schools for helping to reduce student violence. We have direct contact with students who are victimized by other students, and have the necessary training to help students with interpersonal disputes. Upon completing this research, however, I developed contrary views, for a few reasons. First of all, regardless of how effectively school counselors teach skills to victims and victimizers of violence, many acts of violence occur for reasons unrelated to skill deficiencies. While conflict resolution training may effectively help some students behave less violently, it should not be considered a sole solution for all acts of school violence.

Secondly, counsellors cannot have a long-term impact on student behavior while working in isolation with students. They need to collaborate with other school personnel in creating a school climate that attempts to counteract some of the factors contributing to school violence. When a variety of strategies are jointly implemented by school personnel, the need for one-on-one counseling would be reduced. The counsellor's role would become more collaborative, and less specialized, for example, in teaching conflict resolution skills.

Implications for school practice

The notion that participants turn to violence for a variety of reasons has many implications for school practice. As Berkowitz (1993) points out, there are different forms of aggression. He focuses on emotional aggression and instrumental aggression, each of which have different goals. While conflict resolution skills may be helpful for some participants who react emotionally to situations, they are irrelevant to those participants who behave aggressively in order to attain a particular goal such as power, control, status, or respect. For example, Abbey and Alice, were described as "good" students who participated in few fights. During their fight, as described in "A fight with an ex-friend" they reacted emotionally to a situation involving an ex-friend whom they perceived had spread rumors about them. Both girls felt remorseful after the fight and Abbey apologized to the girl she assaulted. Both girls believed that fighting was not the best way to solve problems, but in this particular situation they reacted impulsively. Both Abbey and Alice are likely to benefit from learning conflict resolution skills, especially anger management, to help them handle interpersonal problems and misunderstandings.

Many school based violence prevention programs teach anger management skills by incorporating the principles from cognitive-behavioral psychology. However, many programs fail to address some of the underlying feelings of frustrations and sadness that may have triggered the angry feelings. Anger management skills may be useful for those participants who generally exercise self-control with respect to their aggressive inclinations, but may be ineffective for

those participants who are unaware of the underlying feelings that fuel their ongoing anger. Therefore, it is important for them to have an opportunity to talk about the source of their frustrations and other unpleasant feelings. Their frustration is often related to thwarted goals such as academic failure, while emotional pain, such as hurt feelings, loneliness, sadness, rejection and disappointment, often originate with family and peer relationships.

The participants' perceptions of anger and frustration support the literature. Berkowitz suggested that the stronger the feelings of displeasure, the stronger will be the resulting instigation to aggression. Neufeld claims frustration occurs when one is incapable of "moving from mad to sad." In other words, when participants are able to recognize and express the frustration and hurt feelings that lie underneath their angry feelings, they are less likely to behave aggressively towards others and more likely to exercise self-control. School counsellors may be effective in leading small groups with participants that provide them with an opportunity to discuss some of their underlying feelings. However, some participants may require intensive therapy before they can understand the source of their frustration. Social factors pertaining to poverty, poor parenting or physical abuse, for example, may continually fuel anger and frustration and further suppress unpleasant feelings.

Some students, such as Alex and Jim, may fight for reasons unrelated to lack of anger management skills or feelings pertaining to anger. Although they may also feel angry at times, they also fight because it is fun, because they are bored, because they feel in control and powerful when they win. Likewise, Nancy fights to gain

"stardom"; Lisa fights to gain "juice"; they seek recognition and respect. Learning skills will not likely convince them to control their aggressive inclinations. Other violence prevention strategies would need to be implemented if they are to change their behavior.

Recognizing and understanding the motivating factors that trigger aggressive behavior is not as simplistic or straightforward as these examples suggest. As the participants indicate, there is often a combination of factors that operate simultaneously to trigger violent behavior; participants are not necessarily able to articulate these factors. However, by recognizing that participants behave violently for a variety of reasons, educators designing violence prevention programs should collectively seek a variety of solutions in response to such complexities, and not restrict violence prevention programs to skill acquisition.

Some participants claim that fighting is fun; it is a sport that provides an "adrenaline rush" and relieves them of boredom. Like other sports, such as boxing and basketball, they claim that fighting provides a good workout, the opportunity to win, experience a sense of accomplishment, to feel in control and to gain self-confidence. If the participants had the opportunity to satisfy these needs through sports, they may be less likely to participate in fights. For example, schools might provide participants with the opportunity to learn fighting techniques in a disciplined manner such as through Boxing and Wrestling Clubs, Tai Kwon Do, Karate or self-defense courses, and encourage both males and females to participate. Team sports such as volleyball, basketball, football and soccer often discourage interested students from participating because students must "try

out," often competing against the best athletes for a position on the team. Developing intramural programs that emphasize participation as opposed to skill level may encourage interested students to participate in a fun work-out in a non-competitive atmosphere. Schools could also change their philosophy, as some schools have done, to abandon try outs and include all interested students onto school teams, perhaps offering two skill levels, such as an "A" and "B" team.

Frankl (1962) contends that boredom is a symptom of meaninglessness and that loss of spirituality and sense of commitment to things or people one values, contributes to feelings of meaninglessness. The participants talk about their feelings of "not caring anymore," not caring for themselves or for others around them. Such indifference, expressed as boredom, seems to be associated with feelings of alienation. It seems that the participants are trying to make sense of their lives and must somehow integrate societal values with their own values; yet often these two sets of values clash. Ashford, (1994, p. 8) says that "cultural values based on consumerism, competition, and power, conflict with values based on finding meaning in relationships, compassion, sharing, commitment to work, and spirituality."

When the participants claim there is nowhere to go and nothing to do they seem to be seeking more than just involvement. They need to feel their involvement is purposeful, that they are part of the fabric of the school and the community. Surveying participants is one way to discover which activities and sports are meaningful to them; surveying parents and teachers may help in finding club sponsors for

these identified activities. Schools could also encourage risk taking activities similar to Outward Bound Programs such as rock climbing and mountaineering. Such activities may encourage participants to become aware of their potential, to accept challenges and, in doing so, build self-esteem.

Participating in community projects and humanitarian causes may also encourage participants to feel a sense of commitment and purpose. Schools could, for example, sponsor activities such as a volunteer fair which would allow participants to get information on volunteer organizations. Volunteering for humane agencies such as the S.P.C.A. or supporting global issues, such as through the Environmental Youth Alliance, for example, may give participants a sense of self-worth as they make a contribution and commitment to their community. In addition, they would receive some work experience which not only helps them become aware of their personal interests, values and abilities, but may also contribute towards feelings of hopefulness with respect to future job outlook.

While schools can play a role in discussing and promoting participants' personal values and their relationship to societal values, society must also respond to the profound inequities that it promotes and continues to support. Gaines (1991) quotes Raoul Veneigem, "Anyone who has felt the drive to self-destruction welling up inside him knows with what weary negligence he might one day happen to kill the organizers of his boredom."

The participants claim they fight to gain power, respect and to be in control. Having control allows them to feel in charge; they are the leaders, and their peers will not mess with them. They tend to

have a low internal locus of control, often blaming external factors, such as teachers, parents, and peers for their problems. Teachers who grade them unfairly, peers who look at them the wrong way or spread rumors, are reasons for them to feel that they are victims of their circumstances and must respond with aggression in order to restore their sense of control. This struggle for control and power seems to be linked to the need for independence and autonomy, which in many respects, is a developmental process that all adolescents struggle with. Many of the participants, however, seem to have difficulty separating themselves from the situations in which they find themselves, and therefore behave impulsively.

There are many ways that schools could be re-organized and re-structured to foster independence and a higher internal locus of control. One way, for example, is to increase levels of participant responsibility by providing opportunities for student governance. Participants who have the opportunity to collaboratively make decisions with teachers and administrators regarding school policy may identify with the school and feel a sense of belonging. Even participants who are not directly involved in the collaborative decision-making process may feel a greater sense of belonging as their ideas are represented by fellow students and not solely by school personnel.

Another way for participants to identify with their school and feel a sense of belonging is by attending smaller schools. The research suggests that smaller schools tend to have less violence. While building new schools is hardly likely, schools could create a "school within a school" structure, such that students in one

particular grade, for example, are stationed in one part of the school, and taught by one particular group of teachers. Smaller schools also provide students with more opportunity to be recognized by peers and teachers, and to develop meaningful relationships.

A Coquitlam school recently implemented a grade 8 P.O.D. Program (Providing Opportunity for Developing Success) to address a variety of issues pertaining to at risk students. School size, student governance, and student-teacher relationships were a few of the factors considered in the development of this program. Ten classes, or pods, of grade 8 students were assigned to classrooms in one hallway of the school. Ten teachers, one counsellor and one administrator were assigned to the program and met on a weekly basis to discuss student issues. In a school of 900 students, these 300 grade 8 students functioned within their own "small school." They had a morning break at a different time from the grade 9 and 10 students and began lunch hour 15 minutes earlier. The students in each pod stayed together throughout the morning where they were taught by just two teachers - one teacher for Humanities and one teacher for Sciematics, (Science & Math). These teachers switched pods halfway through the morning. This organizational structure seemed to enhance teacher- student relationships, as communication channels were strengthened and teachers had a chance to get to know their students beyond the scope of the curriculum.

A P.O.D. Advisory Council was also formed to provide an opportunity for student governance. The council consisted of ten students, one elected representative from each pod, two teachers and one administrator. The council collaboratively made decisions on

issues pertaining to student and teacher concerns. One example pertained to hallway noise at their break and tardiness in returning from the break. The student advisory spoke with all of the grade 8 classes, listened to their concerns, then decided on a two week trial period, during which time they also purchased a clock for the hallway. Hallway noise and tardiness was reduced and was not a significant problem for the remaining school year.

Many of the participants talk about their frustrations building up particularly with respect to academic failure. Lisa said, "Everyone was like building up frustrations and stuff...about passing or failing or whatever." The value placed on academic achievement in public schools, and the use of letter grades as a means to represent such achievement, encourages competition between peers, setting many participants up for failure at a very early age. As the literature suggests, competition often triggers aggressive behavior, and achieving something less than the desired goal, such as a low grade, can trigger frustration. In addition, the teacher centered method of evaluation may serve to empower teachers but disempower students. Perhaps participants would feel some power if they shared the responsibility of reporting. West Walley Junior Secondary School in Surrey initiated such a project where students kept portfolios of their work. These portfolios had three sections; one for teacher reporting, one for the student's work, and one for a student self-evaluation and parental response. According to Brown, (1991) this method of reporting seemed to increase student involvement in their work; it provided students with a sense of pride and accomplishment and improved communication with teachers and parents. Self-

evaluation allows students to measure their own progress, take responsibility for their learning, and have some control over their academic lives. Many of the participants in this study achieved low grades. While the relationship between poor academic performance and fighting behavior cannot be generalized to other students, poor grades may be one risk factor worthy of further investigation.

The participants talk about peer pressure as a major reason for fighting. The majority of their fights involve fight watchers who cheer, crowd, and push the participants into the fighting circle. One participant claimed that fight watchers enjoy watching fights to relieve their boredom. While it is important to design strategies and programs to help participants behave less violently, it also seems important to include such programs for the fight watchers who pressure their peers to fight. Future research might explore the perceptions of the fight watchers; this may help educators understand peer pressure in more depth. For example, are peers pressured to cheer, crowd and push? Will they be labeled "geeks" if they try to break up a fight? Why do some fight watchers become participants, and some not? Nancy described how she began as a fight watcher, then was "thrown in." Would it be effective for schools to discipline fight watchers as they do participants? Whether students fight or not, it seems that many students consider fighting a "cool" activity that provides them with entertainment and alleviates their boredom.

Participants fight to be cool in front of their friends and peers, but more importantly, they fight to ensure they are not labelled "geeks" "chickens" or "wimps." Peer approval and acceptance is

crucial for the participants' self-image and self-esteem. The literature suggests that children who do not form significant attachments with parents and other significant adults, often seek attachments to peers. When participants attach more meaning to their peer groups than to adult relationships, they are much more susceptible to peer pressure. Many of the participants may be incapable of forming attachments to their parents; one or more of their parents may be abusive, rejecting or separated from the family. While only a few of the participants discussed their home lives, many of them indicated that they are "hardly ever home." A few of the male participants were pressured by their fathers to fight. In fact, one father was a fight watcher at his son's pre-organized fight that occurred after school.

It seems crucial for schools to develop strategies and mentoring programs that help at risk students build relationships with adults or with adult-orientated students. Peer counseling, peer tutoring, and peer mediation are examples of such programs. Some schools are setting up mentoring programs in the same format as "Big Brothers" and "Big Sisters." In one Coquitlam high school grade twelve students became mentors for grade 8-10 students at a nearby junior high school. They met with them both during school time and outside of school. Smaller schools and classes with fewer teachers, provides the opportunity to develop stronger teacher-student relationships.

The participants describe how their fights are structured, where they occur, the rules of fighting, and how they get started. The majority of the fights occurred during lunch hour or after school away from school premises but during school time. They usually

involved a group of students fighting one other student and a group of students watching. Such information is helpful for educators designing strategies for violence prevention. First of all, if the majority of fights occur away from school premises, increased supervision in hallways or installation of security systems are not going to have any affect on student behavior.

Secondly, understanding the anatomy of the participants' fights is helpful in designing violence prevention curricula. Descriptions of the participants' fights and the rules they abide by, could be incorporated into classroom situations through role play and discussion. Students are more likely to participate in a program and take it seriously if it reflects issues and situations that are real for them. Discussion on issues pertaining to boredom, group attacks, peer pressure, status, image, and power may be enlightening for many of the participants. They may be more likely to listen to the views of their peers than to adults. For example, many students who do not fight may not think fighting is cool. Their views may influence the participants who previously believed all their peers respected them for fighting.

The issue of gender with respect to school violence has many implications for school practice and for future research. This research suggests that females and males fight for many of the same reasons - for power, control, respect and status. They are frustrated, bored, need to be accepted by peers and seek a cool and tough image. Female participants perceive that males have more power and control; in seeking equity of power they "act like guys" and "fight like

guys," and subscribe to "fighting properly" which seems to mean fighting "like guys."

Given that the majority of violence is male based, educators need to design violence prevention programs that address the socialization aspect of masculinity, its historical association with a tough image, and attempt to de-masculinize then restructure this image through education and self-concept building. On the other hand, statistics indicate that female participation in violent acts is increasing. If so, what socializing agents are contributing to this increase? This research suggests that female participants have adopted the tough image that traditionally represented masculinity, partly to share equal power with males, and partly due to changes in the media's representation of females, as depicted in such movies as "Thelma and Louise." Therefore, males and females may equally benefit from violence prevention programs that address both the socialization process of masculinity and that of femininity, with consideration for role similarities and differences.

Informing the literature

There is a scarcity of research that explores student perceptions of school violence. Campbell's study concerning the perceptions of 251 schoolgirls showed both similarities and differences to the perceptions of the participants in this study. Whereas Campbell's girls reacted aggressively when called names such as "slag" "whore" and "tart", the participants in this study reacted violently toward the assailants who called them "sluts." Both

groups tended to react to gossip rather than check out the alleged insults with the original source, and both groups expressed loyalty to friends by "sticking up" for them. While both groups fought by kicking and punching, they differed according to how they labeled "scratching, slapping and biting" behaviors. Campbell's girls considered such actions as "dirty fighting" while participants in this study categorize such tactics as "female" fighting, which earns little respect from peers. Both groups established "rules" to fighting but unlike Campbell's girls who supported the "one-on-one" rule, the participants in this study believed it was acceptable for their peers to assist in the assault providing they were not "double teaming." In both groups, social rules operated to exclude access to adults or other authority figures.

Given that so little research has been conducted on student perceptions of school violence, it seems that further exploration through qualitative analysis is important for a more in-depth understanding of student views. To understand these issues, it is crucial for researchers to allow participants to express their views without imposing the adult labels and understandings of concepts which are often implicit in questionnaires and self-reporting methods.

While some student perceptions of school violence in this study are related to the literature, others are not. The literature that refers to topics shared by the participants, such as anger and frustration, empathy and labeling, media, drugs and alcohol, and some aspects of peer relations, usually does not include student perspectives. Therefore, further research in these areas from a student perspective

may enrich the current literature. This research has contributed to the literature regarding issues pertaining to student perceptions on boredom, gender differences, the need for power, respect, and control and ways that students conceptualize fighting.

Despite some controversy with respect to media influences, participants in this study perceive that exposure to violent scenes in the media contributes to violent behavior among youths in a variety of ways. First of all, participants internalize scripts from movies which they re-enact in real life settings. For example, Lisa describes how a male friend stabs another male while using the line, "I never liked your pretty face anyways," a direct quote, she claims, from the movie, *New Jack City*. Some words from film dialogue become part of the participant's everyday vocabulary, as in the movie "*Juice*." Lisa explains, "juice" means respect, and "that's where everybody gets that line from - that movie." The internalization of words are supported in the literature by Huesmann's script-theory. He suggests that youngsters who are frequently exposed to media violence internalize aggressive scripts and use these scripts as a way to handle interpersonal problems.

Violent role models in the media contribute towards violence by teaching specific strategies and techniques to youths, and imposing values, which may become internalized and associated with the real world. Lisa claims that movies such as *Boys in the Hood*, *Juice*, and *Colour* "teach kids how to shoot someone, how to stab someone properly....to run away from the cops and hop fences." Elaine states, "They shoot someone on TV and then, "Oh, I want a gun." Liebert and Sprafkin (1988) found that such youths who do not

distance themselves psychologically from the screen, may have difficulty separating reality from fantasy, especially those who lack positive adult role models in the home. The participants also describe how frequent exposure to media eventually desensitizes them, as Lisa says, "If everyone else is doing it, I may as well too, right?" Thomas and Drabman (1977) found that people who watch the greatest amount of violent television, may begin to view violence as an everyday occurrence and believe it to be socially acceptable behavior. Finally, the participants claim that violent role models in the media are portrayed as "cool" and "getting you to want to be just like them." Berkowitz (1993) suggests that lack of consequences for violent behavior in the media encourages the participants to perceive that such characters are romantic and "cool." Future research may explore the relationship between gender differences and the media as a socializing agent with respect to sex-roles.

Although the literature indicates that exposure to media violence may contribute to violent behavior, there are few media literacy courses in schools. In fact, the structure and effects of the mass media are relatively absent from educational policies and guidelines. Although much money is spent on producing educational television, Canadian educators and policy-makers have generally overlooked the need to develop media literacy. Implementing curricula in the classroom that teach students to be critical viewers of televised violence is crucial when designing violence prevention programs.

Many participants claim they behave aggressively due to feelings of anger which mask underlying frustration or emotional

pain. The participants claim their peers influence them to behave violently. Belonging to a peer group often fulfills the need for power, control, status and respect and re-inforces their cool image. When participants behave violently they are often rewarded with peer approval; such approval re-inforces their aggressive behavior and the cycle continues. These views support the literature, in particular, social learning theory and various sub-culture theories.

Implications for future research

Given the scarcity of research on school violence, I attempted to explore this topic by acknowledging all of the issues presented by the participants as a way to open the door for further study. Future research needs to focus on specific aspects of school violence, exploring specific themes and their relationships in more depth. For example, the participants state that feelings of boredom and the need for excitement often motivate them to seek provocation. Is boredom a symptom of meaninglessness as Frankl (1962) contends? If so, how can the participants find meaning in their lives? And how is the search for meaning related to self-esteem? Or is boredom related to a lack of imaginative play or a lack of mental stimulation? Could constant exposure to video games and action movies instill feelings of apathy toward the real world? Is boredom a sign of indifference, an inability to express feelings and to form relationships? Many students complain of boredom in school settings; some may drop out of school; some get into fights; others use alcohol and drugs. Future

research that explores the relationship between these factors may be useful for school settings.

Participants also claim they fight to gain power and control. While this study attempts to conceptualize the participants' views on power and control, further research is needed to understand it in more depth. For example, how is power and control related? What is the relationship between power and powerlessness, between control and lack of control? What are some examples of situations where students feel in control, out of control, powerful and powerless? How do schools represent control and power? By understanding these adolescent needs more fully, we are in a better position to help them achieve these missing elements in their lives in a non-violent manner.

Another area to address for future research concerns the perceived increases in violent youth crime. If violent youth crime is increasing, the question then arises, what predisposing factors are contributing towards an increase in violent youth crime? Is the level of poverty and unemployment increasing? Have the number of fragmented families increased? Is there a greater level of transience, a loss of one's sense of neighborhood and community? Is media portraying more violence? Such questions may encourage educators and researchers to investigate their social and cultural milieus to further their understandings of this complex social problem.

Another important area to explore for future research is the relationship between fighting and those factors specific to a school setting such as curriculum, teacher-student relationships, grading systems and evaluation procedures, school organization, structure

and size, disciplinary tactics, extra-curricular activities, and support services, to name a few. All of these factors may contribute to school climate and have an impact on student behavior. For example, the participants claim they fight to gain power and control. What factors specific to schools contribute to the participants' feelings of powerlessness? What factors would help to fulfill their need for power in a non-violent manner? Similarly, how do schools contribute towards the participants' feelings of boredom and frustration?

Given that violent behavior is triggered by a multitude of factors, and that schools are complex systems, it appears too simplistic to suggest that any one factor specific to schools directly causes a student to behave violently. While I suggest that student participation in team sports may relieve boredom, that self-evaluation may satisfy a participant's need for power, that smaller schools may provide a sense of belonging and recognition, I am not suggesting that any or all of these factors will necessarily prevent the participants from expressing aggressive behavior at school. However, a combination of risk factors such as low grades, lack of involvement in school activities, and poor student-teacher relations may, in conjunction with other societal risk factors, trigger aggressive behavior.

While schools are certainly not responsible for all of the social and psychological problems that students bring into their doors, they are probably the last social structure remaining outside of the family. Therefore, schools can have a significant impact on student values, attitudes and behavior. Future research on student violence as it pertains to school settings, especially of a qualitative nature, would

help educators better understand the nature and risk factors that contribute to school violence. Such research should be a collaborative effort between social scientists and educators. Otherwise research from social sciences will continue to be irrelevant to school settings and educators will continue to provide anecdotal accounts that are unsupported by research. Understanding student perceptions of school violence will help educators and social agencies collaboratively design and implement programs that students will participate in willingly, to help make safer schools.

APPENDICES

Interview guide

1. How would you define school / youth violence?
2. What are some examples of violent activities or situations that you have heard about, seen or been a part of while at school?
3. Where have these situations occurred? What time of day?
4. How did they get started? How did they end?
5. What made you decide to fight or not fight?
6. How many fights have you been involved in this year/ throughout your life/ at school/ at home/ in the community ?
7. What are the differences/ similarities between male and female fights?
8. How do you feel after a fight is over?
9. Is fighting a good/bad way to solve problems?
10. Under what circumstances is it good/bad?
11. How do your parents and siblings solve their problems?
12. How could teachers/counsellors/administrators help to reduce or prevent school violence?

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

May 26, 1994

To _____

I am currently doing research on the topic of school violence through the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. I am interested in investigating your perceptions regarding the causes of youth violence and your ideas on possible solutions to violence.

I would like to conduct a 45-60 minute interview with you to assist in gathering information on this topic. The interview will be audio taped, then transcribed and interpreted for research purposes. The interview will take place in the privacy of an office at _____ School.

To maintain your anonymity all names on transcribed documents will be substituted for fictional names. All information shared during the interview will be confidential with the exception of any disclosures indicating proposed illegal activity or where one's safety may be jeopardized.

You may withdraw participation at any time during the course of research without explanation for doing so. You may register any complaint regarding the research process with Ms. Ann Berglund at _____ School or with Dr. Robin Barrow, Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University at 291-3148.

You may request a copy of the completed study by contacting me at _____ School or the Graduate Studies Office at SFU.

By signing the form below, you are agreeing to participate in this project as described above.

NAME (Please print) _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Once signed, a copy of this form will be provided to you. Please contact Ms. Ann Berglund at _____ School if you have any further questions.

Note: The university and the researcher subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. Your signature on this form signifies that you have full understanding of the procedures involved, that you have received adequate opportunity to read the document described above and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this project.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR MINORS BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

May 27, 1994

To

I am currently doing research on the topic of school violence through the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. I am interested in investigating students' perceptions regarding the causes of youth violence.

I would like to conduct a 45-60 minute interview with your son/daughter to assist in gathering information on this topic. The interview will be audio taped, then transcribed and interpreted for research purposes.

To maintain the anonymity of your son/daughter, all names on transcribed documents will be substituted for fictional names. All information shared during the interview will be confidential with the exception of any disclosures indicating proposed illegal activity or where one's safety may be jeopardized.

Your son/daughter understands the procedures involved in taking part and that he/she may withdraw his/her participation at any time during the course of research. You may register any complaint regarding the research process with Ms. Ann Berglund or with Dr. Robin Barrow, the Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University at 291-3148.

You may request a copy of the completed study by contacting me at _____ School or the Graduate Studies Office at SFU.

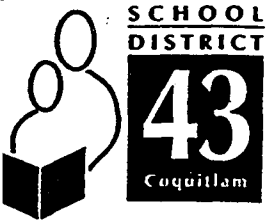
To provide consent for to be interviewed, please sign this form and return it to Ms. Berglund. Once signed, a copy of this form will be provided to you. Please contact Ms. Ann Berglund at _____ if you have any further questions.

NAME (Please print) _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Note: The university and the researcher subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. Your signature on this form signifies that you have full understanding of the procedures involved, that you have received adequate opportunity to read the document described above and that you voluntarily agree to allow the subject for whom you are responsible to participate in this project.



550 Poirier Street, Coquitlam, British Columbia, V3J 6A7 • Phone (604) 939-9201 • Fax (604) 939-7828

May 13, 1994

Ms. Ann Berglund
4567 McKee Street
Burnaby, B.C.
V3J 2S9

Dear Ms. Berglund:

I am writing in response to your application to undertake a research project in School District No. 43 (Coquitlam). I understand that your project involves interviewing students on their perceptions of the nature and causes of School Violence. Further, I understand that the study is in partial fulfillment of your Masters of Education Degree at Simon Fraser University.

I have reviewed the content and design of your study and am prepared to grant District permission for you to proceed. As you are likely aware, this approval is subject to the voluntary participation of students and permission from their parent/guardian and the school principal. In addition, results are to be kept confidential and used for the sole purpose of your thesis.

The nature of your topic is timely and results should prove to be of interest and value to the District and to schools in planning to address this problem.

I would appreciate a copy of your findings once the study is completed.

Good luck with your project!

Yours truly,

Alan Taylor, Ed.D.
Director of Instruction

AT:cw

cc: R. Watson
N. Fernandes

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