

Youthspeak: Using a Data-Driven Approach to Explore Secondary School Students' Perspectives on School Violence in Trinidad and Tobago

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

I confirm that this thesis, including the footnotes and appendices but excluding the references, does not exceed the permitted maximum of 45,000 words plus a 10 percent over-length.



Signature

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Abstract

School violence challenges the ideal of school as a safe space for educating young persons (Bucher and Manning, 2005). In Trinidad and Tobago, significant media coverage and public outcry about increasing school violence led to its prioritisation for national-level intervention. Yet, students' voices have been underrepresented in prevention efforts, in like manner to global trends (Brown and Winterton, 2010; Sundaram, 2016). This study has, therefore, explored students' views about the causes and consequences of school violence in Trinidad and Tobago, and their recommendations for its reduction and prevention.

To engage the students' perspectives, my research was informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and employed inclusive participatory methods (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Nind, 2014). Using purposive sampling, I engaged 39 students (28 girls; 11 boys) from six secondary schools that were most at-risk for violence (JSC-SSPA, 2016). I conducted focus groups with three to five students in each school, and individual interviews with 25 students from across the research sample.

For the students, school violence refers to physical and non-physical altercations that are primarily student-initiated, with differences in the manifestations of violence by gender groups. The students are equally concerned about structural violence, but classify its manifestations as

inappropriate behaviours and not as violence. They also understand that school violence is caused by contextual factors at the school and wider societal levels. The students further recommend a collaborative approach to preventative interventions, with student-involvement.

This study has contributed to knowledge by elucidating contextual school violence from young persons' perspectives, and the effects of intersectional factors on emergent school violence. It has, thereby, highlighted causal factors and enabling conditions that have been overlooked within the school violence discourse. Further, it has provided practical tools for school-level application, to inform effective interventions based on a collaborative/whole-school approach (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007).

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List of abbreviations

CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
FASS	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
JSC	Joint Select Committee
LUMS	Lancaster University Management School
REC	Research Ethics Committee
SS	Secondary School
SSPA	Social Services and Public Administration
STU	Student
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

‘Young people who become involved in violence are vulnerable, have limited opportunities for gaining status in more pro-social ways, and do not see education as a route to self-advancement’

(McAra and McVie, 2016, p.76).

1.1 Personal reflections at inception

As a secondary school student in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, circa 1980s through early 1990s, from my perspective life was good. I was attending a school that was informally labelled as ‘prestigious’ by the general public and I was being afforded the opportunity to pursue general and advanced proficiency studies in a single institution.¹ Moreover, school violence involving physical altercations among students was a misnomer. Scuffles between students at my school were rare and, as such, were dismissed as part of the growing pains of adolescence. When these instances of ‘violence’ occurred they were usually short-lived, as minor disruptions to the existing student camaraderie and were between no more than two students at a time. The perpetrators were mainly boys, girls who described themselves as being

¹ General proficiency secondary studies are provided over five years of compulsory education for students up to the age of 16, leading to terminal examinations at the secondary school level. This level of education corresponds with the General Certificate of Secondary Education in the United Kingdom. Advanced level secondary studies are provided over an additional two years, as pre-university entrance education, and are not compulsory.

tomboys, or girls who were rivals for the affection of an identifiable boy. In retrospect, although student disagreements could arise at any designated moment, to my teenaged mind school violence did not exist at my school and it was hardly reported at the national level.

Almost two decades later and a continent away, I found myself somewhat bewildered by the public outcry against school violence in the twin-island nation. Mass media reporting, signified by traditional print and televised sources of information, and new media, in the form of the internet, including its social media platforms, had painted a desolate picture of the school setting. School violence was being portrayed as a commonplace feature of the education experience that appeared almost unexplainable and insurmountable. Against this backdrop, in 2016 the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament commissioned a national inquiry into the situation of school violence, to address the increasing public awareness of violence among students (Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration, 2016). To support this directive, four public hearings were held with key actors in the school violence debate, including principals and student representatives from a sample of schools that had accepted an invitation to participate. Notably, the inquiry identified a consistent increase in violence among students attending government-managed secondary schools, and specifically, more reports of violence among boys, as opposed to girls.

In my efforts to understand the changing dynamics that were being reported in student relations, I reflected on my personal experience at secondary school to determine whether the setting had been as idyllic as I had imagined. While

acknowledging the myriad factors that can, conceivably, influence interpersonal exchanges, I searched for early evidence of contention and discontent among the student body in my own school, as a starting point for exploring the pervasive reports of school violence. My reflective journey produced more questions than answers, such as: *Does school violence occur among students only? Is school violence limited to physical interaction? Do schoolgirls only fight over boys? How do students define school violence?* This line of mental enquiry took me back to the classroom and also evoked recollections of a school environment steeped in the enforcement of rules to ensure student discipline and establish the authority of teachers. Arguably, the workings of the institutionalised school setting are legitimate, insofar as they are used to control a diverse school population. Yet, within the context of institutionalised education, it remains equally contestable whether extremities of behaviours can emerge.

My reference to extreme behaviours is not confined to recollections of student disregard for school rules, but includes approaches to classroom management and teaching practice. To illustrate, I vividly recall instances of student belittling, insults about personal appearance, favouritism and the misuse of student contact time; actions that were all initiated by teachers. What is more, this behaviour was rarely challenged by students based on our deference to the authority of teachers. In the analytical genre of Freire (2010, pp.72-73), as the 'necessary opposite' of students in the school setting, teachers were seen to be all-knowing, with the professional authority to enforce personal choice, including discipline. Students, in contrast, were required to comply, in meek

manner. Would I have labelled the behaviour of teachers as violent or socially unjust, from my vantage point as a secondary school student? It is unlikely. For some students, however, the elation of their secondary school placement was gradually challenged by a school environment that advocated a banking approach to education (Freire, 2010), with its emphasis on obedience and regurgitated instruction. I know now that what was missing during my school years was the perceivable link between the school environment, denoted by educational instruction and institutional regulations, and life outside the school walls. Surely, the school experience was supposed to do more than just equip students with an academic certificate for use in job-hunting. I argue, here, that the students received inadequate guidance for developing the critical thinking skills that support informed decision-making and personal growth. Relatedly, therefore, McAra and McVie (2016, p.76) intimate that some students find it difficult to associate classroom instruction, and the overall school experience, with social advancement. When students opt to rebel against the system that seemingly confines them, school violence can emerge as a possible manifestation of their frustrations.

So, further to my personal recollections, what are my thoughts now on the current reports of secondary school violence? Indeed, I experienced the sensitivities around the school violence issue first-hand, during my efforts to gain field entry permissions at the Ministry of Education and school levels, and acquire data on school violence from the ministry. Notwithstanding the ministry's investment in preventative efforts, school violence continues to affect the relational ecology (Brown, 2018) of several schools, with implications for

the morale and performance of students and teachers, in particular, although not exclusively. On the one hand, therefore, my research interest in school violence has been informed by the reported upsurge in occurrence in this country. On the other hand, I hold the perception that students are being underutilised in the search for a solution. I also note that while media coverage of school violence and the results of the 2016 national enquiry have concentrated on student-initiated violence, they have ignored the hidden forms of violence that have been legitimated by the school system. In response to my own lack of awareness of hidden school violence during my secondary school days, therefore, I have used my research to engage the perspectives of students to further explore the school violence thematic. As key actors in the school violence debate, I argue that the students are critical partners in the search for an effective solution, as I explain in the next section.

1.2 Why students' perspectives?

School violence has been increasingly recognised as an emergent challenge 'in virtually all nation-states' (Akiba et al, 2002), signifying its global prevalence and, arguably, its independence from levels of country development. It is at variance, however, with the ideal of the institutionalised school setting, which presents as a safe space for educating young persons (Bucher and Manning, 2005), to encourage their social and intellectual growth. As a result, school violence is often prioritised for national-level intervention in the countries where it occurs. From a policy perspective, this level of responsiveness has the potential to stem emergent violence, as it will, by implication, inform schools' anti-violence programming. Interestingly though, while there has been

significant media coverage of violence among students, including within Trinidad and Tobago, students are generally underrepresented in school violence prevention efforts globally (Brown and Winterton, 2010; Sundaram, 2016). This is not to deny the contributions of some students to pre-policy and/or pre-intervention consultations, but yet, several issues remain noticeable.

First, by attributing school violence to student-perpetrators, efforts at intervention are likely to be unidimensional. On the one hand, there is a risk that acts of violence that are not student-initiated would not be considered during violence prevention efforts. Notably, a preoccupation with student-initiated violence can lead to interventions that equate school violence with behavioural deviance that arises from the students' psychosocial needs and/or personal challenges that are out of the purview of their schools (e.g. in relation to domestic situations). On the other hand, it is possible that the anti-violence interventions would not be informed by the students' understanding of violence, especially within the context of their own schools. Yet, a contextual understanding of school violence is critical for effective policies and follow-up interventions (Sundaram, 2014). In essence, the likely results from both scenarios would be preventative work that is not informed by other pertinent factors within the school environment that implicate emergent school violence.

Second, anti-violence interventions that lack the contextual input of schools, including their students, can create challenges for results sustainability, in terms of suitability and effectiveness. What is more, interventions that are developed through a top-down approach, by decision-makers who are external to and unfamiliar with the contextual school setting, are rarely effective and

sustainable (Brown, 2018). Like school discipline, school violence prevention is a transactional process (Osher et al, 2010; Brown, 2018). Consequently, its effectiveness and sustainability are informed by collective action from entire school communities based on a whole-school approach (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007), with required support (and permissions) provided for school-level implementation and management (Cremin and Bevington, 2017).

I have chosen, therefore, to engage the perspectives of students as an underrepresented but critical group of key actors in the school violence debate in Trinidad and Tobago. My rationale is strongly supported at the ministry level, based on a perception that the 'students must be given voice and opportunities to lead ...and must accept their responsibility in creating the desired school culture' (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.4). Similar to McAra and McVie (2016), however, I question whether students from vulnerable backgrounds feel empowered to become pro-social changemakers within their schools and the wider society. To support the 'transforming [of] the social arrangements that silence or misrepresent marginalised students' (Keddie, 2012, p.266), therefore, I have used my research to create an opportunity for all students within the research schools to share their views. In effect, by engaging the students' perspectives, I have sought to facilitate adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007), as I discuss next.

1.3 Methodology and methods

1.3.1 Research purpose and rationale

The purpose of my research has been to explore the views of secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago about the causes and consequences of school violence and engage them in developing effective preventative approaches. Although school violence implicates multiple actors at the school level, I used my research to engage students only, to address the underrepresentation of their voices in prevention efforts in this country. Further, given the higher incidence of secondary school violence in Trinidad and Tobago, as opposed to violence at the primary school level (JSC-SSPA, 2016), I have focused on the views of secondary school students.

In line with the observation that ‘the voices ...of young people have been muted within the traditional paradigm of conventional research’ (O’Brien and Moules, 2007, p.387), the rationale for my research has been the need to address the underrepresentation of the students’ voices in the school violence debate in the Trinidad and Tobago context. Moreover, in order to support adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007) at the school level, I sought to engage students of different abilities, including students who face multiple forms of marginalisation and are thereby multiply-marginalised (Ferree, 2010). Indeed, the principles of adequate social justice advocate the need for determining who is entitled to social justice; what they are entitled to receive; and how their access to required resources and services can be effectively facilitated, as captured by the main research questions below.

1.3.2 Main research questions and methods

My research has been guided by three main questions:

- i. What are the causes of school-based violence from students' perspectives?
- ii. What do students believe are the consequences of their/fellow students' violent behaviours?
- iii. How do students think school violence can be effectively reduced and prevented?

I note, here, that there is limited empirical research on school violence in Trinidad and Tobago. To address this gap, along with the dearth of information on young people's understanding of violence (Sundaram, 2016), I developed research questions that would facilitate an exploratory study based on an inclusive participatory approach (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Nind, 2014), to engage the students in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. In formulating the research questions, I was also driven by an interest in the students' potential to contribute towards the co-development of preventative efforts. Consequently, I used the main research questions to empower the students at the investigative stage of the study, as a precursor to future studies. I further used this process to develop the conceptual research framework (see sub-Section 1.3.3).

Although I did not engage the students during the research design and writing-up phases, I incorporated them into the study 'as rights-holders ...[who] are... able [and] ...entitled ...to express their views and influence their own lives'

(Lundy and McEvoy, 2011, pp.129-130). In line with an inclusive, participatory, student-centred approach, therefore, I used purposive sampling to select 39 student discussants (28 girls and 11 boys) from six schools across five educational districts. Each school was identified by the Ministry of Education as being most at-risk for violence (JSC-SSPA, 2016). By facilitating focus group discussions within the safe spaces that I created in each school, I encouraged the students to reflect critically on the situation of violence in their respective school settings. I engaged three to five students per focus group, in a maximum of two focus groups in each school, followed by individual in-depth interviews with a sample of two to seven students from each focus group. Further to engaging all 39 students in focus group discussions, therefore, I engaged 25 students (16 girls and 9 boys) using in-depth interviews.

1.3.3 Conceptual framework

This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, which supports the extraction of subjective meaning from the lived experiences of social actors, on the premise that human actions are socially constructed (Brewer, 2003; Flick et al, 2004; Bryman, 2012). To support an inclusive and participatory approach to student-engagement, my research methodology was informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I used this approach to facilitate an iterative process of systematic data generation, triangulation and analysis, to allow for the development of data-driven theory. The conceptual research framework emerged as a direct result of this process and has been further informed by the discourse on school violence and my contextual research insights (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3). It establishes the combined perspectives of the students as the

focus of analysis, and aligns with the key themes of the main research questions, namely, the causes and consequences of school violence and recommendations for violence reduction and prevention. The conceptual framework further includes two emergent themes from my discussions with the students, gender-based-violence and social justice. To facilitate the exploration of these themes and some of the deeper issues that influence school violence, the framework also incorporates the concepts of multiply-marginalisations (Ferree, 2010); structural violence (Galtung, 1969); and adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007). I have further incorporated a revised version of the Salmi (2000) framework to support a data-driven process.

The establishment of a data-driven conceptual framework has minimised the effects of researcher bias, and has increased the potential for credible results for policy uptake. I present my perceptions of the significance of my research in the next section, therefore, relative to the contribution to existing knowledge.

1.4 Research significance and contribution to knowledge

As I structured my research around the students' perceptions, this study holds significance for further research on school violence. By engaging the views of the students, I have given voice to a critical category of key actors who are affected by school violence, but remain underrepresented in violence prevention efforts. As advocated by the new sociology of childhood (Prout and James, 2003; Morrow, 2008), therefore, the results of my research are useful for highlighting the students' potential to function as active agents and knowing subjects (Barker and Weller, 2003; Grover, 2004; Balen et al, 2006; Powell and

Smith, 2009; Mason and Hood, 2011; Jacquez et al, 2012) in the school violence debate.

Undeniably, there are several empirical studies on school violence that reflect the views of students (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira and Vinokur, 2002; Wilson-Simmons et al, 2006; Phillips, 2010; Williams, 2012; Cobbett and Warrington, 2013; Sundaram, 2014; Younger and Cobbett, 2014; Rawlings, 2019). Further, two of these studies were conducted in Trinidad and Tobago (Phillips, 2010; Williams, 2012). Through its exclusive focus on the students' perceptions and its exploration of hidden structural violence (Galtung 1969; 1981; 1990) within schools, however, my research differs from and builds on what has been done before. Moreover, by exploring the gender thematic, including the contribution of intersectional factors to violence at the school level, I have added a new facet to the school violence debate in this country. Indeed, based on their global study of school violence, Akiba et al (2002, p.830) have observed that 'most research on violence ...[has] traditionally focused on individual-level variables and psycho-social modes of causation'.

Significantly, my research has contributed to practice and academic knowledge. First, this study has demonstrated how a data-driven approach can be used to account for contextual school violence and support the design and implementation of effective anti-violence programming to yield sustainable results. It has advanced the need for student-centred data generation based on an inclusive participatory approach (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Nind, 2014). The intention is to fill the gap in understanding on young persons' perspectives on school violence, which is critical for implementing effective policies and

preventative initiatives (Sundaram, 2014). To support this process, my research has provided practical tools for the analysis of contextual school violence by individual schools, namely, the iPLACE framework for school violence reduction and prevention, and a revised version of the Salmi (2000) typology of different categories and forms of violence. iPLACE draws on the iPEACE model of positive peace (Cremin and Bevington, 2017), and has been designed to guide schools towards the systematisation of their anti-violence efforts. The revised Salmi (2000) framework complements iPLACE as a simplified data generation tool, the purpose of which is to assist schools to better understand contextual violence in their institutional settings.

Second, my research has contributed to the re-theorising of school violence by addressing the dearth of information on young people's understanding of violence (Sundaram, 2016). The results of the study have shown that although the students' define school violence in terms of its overt manifestations, notably direct physical violence and verbal altercations, they are concerned about hidden structural violence within the school setting (Galtung, 1969; 1981; 1990). As structural violence is not easily recognised within institutions, since it integrates into normative practices, the students classify related incidents as unbecoming actions rather than as forms of violence. They maintain, however, that manifestations of structural violence do contribute towards a negative educational experience, as they detract from the establishment of a conducive context (Kelly, 2016) for learning and development at the school level.

Further, as the institutionalised school environment reproduces the social and cultural mores of the wider society (Jackson and Sundaram, 2020), it generates

complex inequalities that contribute towards the multiply-marginalisation of students (McCall, 2005; Choo and Ferree, 2010; Ferree, 2010; Few-Demo, 2014). In essence, these inequalities have manifested as multiple forms of subordination within the school setting, and have been particularly visible at the intersections of gender; race; and social class. Moreover, their effects have been supported by authoritarian and punitive school environments, as well as a banking approach to education. As gender is relational and performative (Butler, 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), it combines with other social identifiers/intersectional factors to generate person-specific responses to social expectations. Notably, therefore, the contextual interplay of intersectional factors has strongly influenced the students' responsiveness to their lived realities within the school setting. Based on the complex inequalities and, in effect, the multiple forms of marginalisation that are reproduced within the school setting, the response of the students includes engaging in violence.

Consequently, I have used the results of my research to advocate the need for the institutionalisation of social justice at the school level, notably, by applying the principles of adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007). As adequate social justice supports collaborative efforts through parity of participation, relatedly, preventative interventions at the school level will be based on a whole-school approach that engages the efforts of entire school communities (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007). To account for the effects of the interplay of gender and other social identifiers on emergent school violence, this study further endorses the application of a gendered and intersectional lens to the analysis of contextual

violence within individual schools, followed by the design and implementation of preventative interventions.

Indeed, the knowledge that has been generated by this study is relevant for the school violence debate in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as at the global level. As schools generally have limited specialist resources for the contextual analysis of violence and the development of anti-violence programming, they require simplified tools and guidelines that facilitate easy incorporation into existing school management frameworks. It is within this context that I have sought to elucidate my research in the section that follows.

1.5 Overview of chapters

Further to the introductory chapter, this thesis comprises eight distinct, but interrelated chapters.

I have used Chapter 2 to review the existing discourse on school violence, including the influence of the media on public perceptions; school violence as a typology of violence; and evidence of social injustice in school violence. In examining the arguments that identify school violence as a typology of violence, I have specifically reviewed the concepts of youth, institutionalised and gender-based violence, and the perceived effects of a poverty complex on emergent violence. I have further explored the social justice theme in alignment with the notion of multiply-marginalised young persons and the intersectionalities of gender, race and class, and the documented underrepresentation of students' voices in the school violence debate.

In Chapter 3, I build a case for the use of data-driven research, relative to an assessment of the analytical categorisations of the Salmi (2000) typology/framework. I further use this chapter to refine the framework for practical application to the current study, as well as future research.

In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed overview of the research methodology. I further outline and describe the methods that I used during data generation and analysis, and follow-up results interpretation and synthesis.

As the first of three analytical chapters, in Chapter 5 I examine and elevate the aggregated perceptions of the students on school violence, with particular emphasis on research questions #1 and #2, the causes and consequences of school violence from the students' perspectives. I commence the discussion by reviewing the students' contextual understanding of school violence, for use in developing a working definition of the term to guide subsequent analysis.

In Chapter 6, I conduct an in-depth analysis of gender manifestations in school violence, as an emergent issue from data generation. My analysis intertwines with an exploration of the effects of multiply-marginalisations and intersectional identities on gendered performances within schools in relation to school violence.

In Chapter 7, my focus is on research question #3, the students' views on violence reduction and prevention. I stop short of providing **the** solution to school violence, given that there are multiple contexts in which school violence occurs and, therefore, no one solution to this issue. Consequently, I outline a practical approach to guide preventative efforts within schools.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I present the research conclusions, which articulate clear responses to the main research questions. I also identify the research limitations and outline possible considerations for future research. Importantly, I have further used the concluding chapter to reiterate the significance of my research, including its contribution to knowledge. I close the chapter with my concluding reflections.

Chapter 2: From media images to in-school realities: Grounding the discourse on school-based violence

2.1 Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to examine the existing discourse on school violence from the conceptual and empirical literature across disciplines, to prelude my own exploration of this thematic. Indeed, the literature on school violence is as vast as it is diverse, and identifies a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that is of grave concern at the global, national and institutional levels (Adams, 2000; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Salmi, 2000; Staples, 2000; Alda, 2007; Benbenishty and Astor, 2008; Sundaram, 2013; Cremin and Guilherme, 2014; Grant, 2017; Rawlings, 2019). From the 1980s to the present day, the global research community has acknowledged the increasing frequency of school-based violence (Toby, 1982; Staples, 2000; Smith, 2004; UNDP, 2012; Le Mat, 2016), such that '[r]esearch into violence in schools has been growing steadily at an international level' (Cremin and Guilherme, 2015, p.1123). There has been a similar recognition that no country or community is immune to school violence, as it occurs across communities in both industrialised and developing nations (Ohasko, 1997; Akiba, LeTendre, Baker and Goesling, 2002; Herd-Rapp, 2003). This observation contrasts sharply with research conclusions from the 1970s, within the context of an American metropolitan city, which maintained that violence was 'rare in school' (Wayson, 1985, p.127) and was 'primarily confined to the junior high schools ...in the economically poorer sections of the city' Brodbelt (1978, p.383).

Significantly, current research on school violence has revealed changing perspectives on its dimensions, including the extent of occurrence. Moreover, social research on school violence has coincided with growing concerns among policymakers; politicians; activists and the general public, about the increasing involvement of young persons of school-age in acts of violence (Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Yogan, 2000; Stewart and Robles-Piña, 2008; House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, 2016; Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration, 2016; Sundaram, 2016; 2014; 2013). Conceivably, this interest draws on firsthand observations of school violence, and secondary media reports on the intensity of individual acts, which suggest that a viable solution remains elusive. More importantly, increasing school violence has contradicted the general perception that schools provide an institutionalised safe space for student development (Toby, 1982; Noguera, 1995; Salmi, 2000; Killingbeck, 2001; Watts and Erevelles, 2004; Bucher and Manning, 2005; Thompson, 2009; Grant, 2017).

Undeniably, school violence disrupts 'the educational mission of the school' (Bucher and Manning, 2005, p.60). There are questions, however, about its inherent characteristics, especially whether it is only initiated by students or includes institutionalised school practices that reflect student victimisation by school personnel (Hyman and Perone, 1998). Of necessity, therefore, research on school violence should be informed by a conceptual definition of the term, to clarify the defining characteristics of the research subject and facilitate targeted enquiry for appropriate policy and programming responses. This approach creates scope for the alignment of school violence interventions with

country-level development goals and global agreements for sustainable development. In the sections that follow, therefore, I explore the conceptual understanding of school violence for application to the Trinidad and Tobago context. I examine, in particular, the influence of the media on the public's perception of school violence (Section 2.2); school violence as a multi-faceted typology of violence (Section 2.3); and school violence as a form of social injustice (Section 2.4).

2.2 Media influence on public perception of school violence

At the global level, the definition of school violence has been challenged by extensive, though not exclusive, mass media reporting on physical interpersonal violence among students (Burns and Crawford, 1999; Killingbeck, 2001; Kupchik and Bracy, 2009; Shapiro, 2018). The mass media, here, refers to print, broadcast and digitalised media, the latter of which includes publicly accessible social media platforms, in particular, YouTube; Facebook; Instagram and WhatsApp. Given the popularity of social media networking among adolescents (Patton et al, 2014), secondary school students also frequently use social media to circulate informal video recordings of physical violence among their peers (Benbenishty and Astor, 2008; Sumiala and Tikka, 2011).

In line with social constructionist thought, which maintains that social meaning is continuously created during social interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1991), the mass media has been a vehicle for disseminating 'powerful messages about violence and behaviours in school' (Shaughnessy, 2012, pp.87-88). I

argue, therefore, that as 'people use information received from the media to construct a view of the world' (Herda-Rapp, 2003, p.547), school violence has become increasingly synonymous with physical student-initiated violence, as a result of the images of school violence that are conveyed through the media. These images have further contributed to public concern about school safety and the capacity of schools to facilitate 'opportunities for learning' (Shaughnessy, 2012, pp.88).

Conceivably, each media report on school violence instigates a linear process entailing sensationalisation to 'pique the public's interest' (Burns and Crawford, 1999, p.160); fear generation (Killingbeck, 2001; Herda-Rapp, 2003; Kupchik and Bracy, 2009); and moral panic (Cohen, 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Burns and Crawford, 1999). At the extreme end of this spectrum, moral panic is created when an emergent social issue threatens social infrastructure and elicits rapid and significant public concern, including intervention by key decision-makers (Cohen, 1972; Killingbeck, 2001). Nevertheless, while the public's reaction to physical altercations among students is understandable, their conceptualisation of school violence remains debatable. Notably, based on empirical research conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, Williams (2016a, p.143) suggests that school violence is a social problem that 'has been blighted by media sensationalism and restrictive conceptualisations'.

Indeed, physical violence among students has distorted public expectations about the school environment, such that mass media reporting has been

skewed towards student-initiated physical altercations² (Staples, 2000; Seepersad, 2016). While it is debatable whether discernable agendas underscore the reports of different news producers, media reports have generally highlighted two emergent forms of school violence, as offshoots of physical violence involving students. First, there has been increasing coverage of physical attacks by some students against teachers. By extension, the media has reported on the reluctance of teachers in the affected schools to resume classroom duties because of personal safety fears. Second, there have been reports of physical altercations between adults and students outside the school compound, where the adults are the parents of student-victims of peer-initiated violence. As these media reports have caused national concern, they led to a high-level response by the government in 2016, in the form of a parliamentary enquiry on school violence and efforts at governmental intervention (Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2017). Inasmuch as school violence persists to the present day, however, an enquiry into its core characteristics and manifestations within the school setting, the locus of its emergence, is critical for effective intervention. I address this issue further in the next section.

² Examples of mass media reports are included in the References.

2.3 School violence as a multi-faceted typology of violence

Based on the recognition that violence is ‘a leading worldwide public health problem’ (World Health Assembly, 1996, p.1), the first World Report on Violence and Health outlines three categories of violence: i) self-directed; ii) collective; and iii) inter-personal violence, the latter of which includes ‘violence in institutional settings such as schools’ (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2002, p.6). WHO further defines violence as ‘[t]he intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation’ (WHO, 2002, p.4). In exploring the school violence thematic, therefore, Harber (2004, p.44) observes that the reference to power within the WHO definition ‘expands the conventional understanding of violence to include those acts that result from a power relationship ...and... serves to include neglect or acts of omission’.

Notwithstanding Harber’s logic, I argue that the reference to ‘physical force and power’ within the WHO (2002) definition is ambiguous. It is unclear whether the terms force and power are synonyms for physical strength, or whether power refers to the abuse of authority. Indeed, Galtung (1981, p.83) advises that the term violence needs to be clearly conceptualised and supported by ‘some meaningful dimension’, to allow its sub-categorisations (including school violence) to be easily defined. Consequently, he argues that ‘no typology of violence exists yet’ (Galtung, 1981 p.83). Moreover, as ‘the dividing lines between the different types of violence are not always so clear’ (WHO, 2002,

p.7), no two researchers have ever used the same working definition of violence (Galtung, 1981).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the social research literature outlines myriad conceptualisations of school violence (Adams, 2000; Thompkins, 2000; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2004; Flores, 2005; Barrett, Lynch and Stretesky, 2016), which appear at times to be examples of ‘acts of violence’. In Figure 2.1, I present an aggregation of thematic descriptors for school violence that emerged from my review of the literature. The emergent themes denote physical and psychological manifestations of violence at the school level (e.g. rape and bullying, respectively) by students and adults alike. These themes further imply that while school violence largely manifests as interpersonal exchanges (both in-person and online), it can also be embedded within the institutionalised school system.

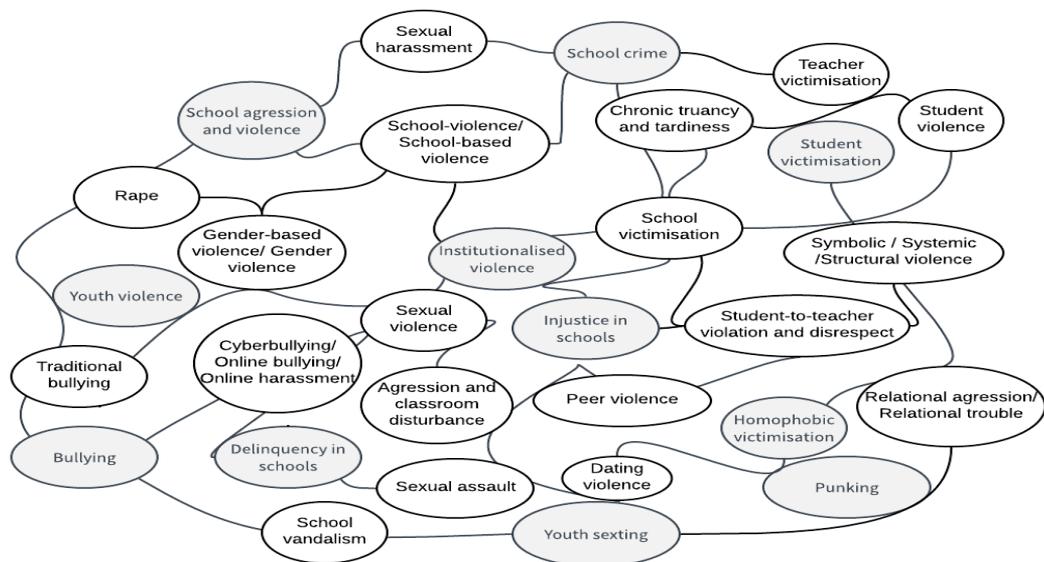


Figure 2.1 Thematic overview of school-based violence

As the distinction between definition and act of violence remains unclear, school violence presents as a multi-faceted construct that emerges from the interplay of diverse social factors, such as gender; race; social class; and institutional culture (Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Henry, 2000; Smith, 2004; Bucher and Manning, 2005; Flores, 2005; Shapiro, 2018). While this interplay of social factors is largely associated with the relational ecology of the school setting, namely the interpersonal relations within school populations (Brown, 2018), they are influenced as much by school-place context, as by factors from the wider society, including individual households (Henry, 2000). Consequently, the meaning of 'school violence' continues to evolve and, thereby, lacks a clear and universal definition (Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Cremin, 2003; Smith, 2004; Flores, 2005). To illustrate, while Elliott, Hamburg and Williams (1998, pp.13-14) maintain that '[v]erbal and psychological abuse are not included in our definition of [school] violence', bullying, entailing repetitive physical, verbal and/or psychological onslaughts, is recognised as one of the most pervasive forms of school violence (Olweus, 1997; Elinoff, Chafouleas and Sassu, 2004; Olweus, 2002). In essence, not only are there 'different types of school violence' (Thompkins, 2000, p.56), but the term is given to multiple definitions based on the contexts in which the violence occurs (Smith, 2004).

On the one hand, I question the universal applicability of a singular definition of school violence, and particularly, its restriction to student-initiated physical violence, as promulgated by media reporting (see Section 2.2). In effect, the cloistering of school violence under an 'umbrella term' can lead to interventions that are based on a 'one-size- fits-all approach' which does not consider the

effects of context on emergent violence. Yet, on the other hand, I argue that it is defeatist to conceive of school violence as ‘a spectrum of crimes’ (Miller and Kraus, 2008, p.15) at the school level (e.g. physical fight; school property vandalism; bullying; etc.), given the need for, and the importance of, contextual interventions that are informed by systematised approaches.

Of significance, Henry (2000, p.19) recommends ‘a more inclusive, integrated definition of school violence’ that takes stock of ‘its broader dimensions’. Conceivably, this approach to conceptualisation increases the prospects for empirical work on the possible linkages between school violence and contextual factors at the school and wider societal levels (Baker, 1998; Laub and Lauristen, 1998; Astor and Meyer, 2001; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005; Ozer, 2006; Benbenishty and Astor, 2008; Fuchs, 2008; Phillips, 2010). Moreover, it creates scope for re-visiting the general tendency to ascribe school violence to individual-specific juvenile crime/behavioural deviance (Akiba et al, 2002; Lawrence, 2007). In delving further into the notion of a school violence typology, therefore, I use the sub-sections that follow to examine the concepts of youth violence (2.3.1); institutionalised violence (2.3.2); gender-based violence (2.3.3); and the poverty complex (2.3.4) in the context of the formal school environment. Of necessity, in discussing these conceptual considerations I draw on the extant theoretical discourse and empirical studies that underpin the school violence debate.

2.3.1 Youth violence vs school violence

The need for clarity in conceptualising school violence emerges as an important take-away from the discussion above (Section 2.3), to elucidate the focal research issue and identify the priority areas for exploration and intervention. As this approach requires constant reflection and conceptual thinking at the level of the researcher (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), it serves to minimise researcher bias by grounding the research trajectory in emergent data from the existing discourse on school violence.

I question, therefore, the equating of school violence with juvenile delinquency/youth violence in the wider society, particularly within the social psychology literature. Although school violence includes manifestations of youth violence, and has been considered as a form of youth violence (Connell, 2013), at issue is the likelihood for research that equates both genres of violence to focus on student-initiated incidents (Stevick and Levison, 2003). In essence, the intertwining of school and youth violence creates a risk for research conclusions that attribute acts of violence to students' behavioural deviance, at the expense of considering other drivers of violence within schools and wider societal influences (Henry, 2000; Akiba et al 2002; Lawrence 2007).

Notably, the term school violence evolved from research on juvenile delinquency, which was conducted within the controlled school environment on the basis that: i) school is a nexus for young persons; and ii) violence would be 'the most extreme manifestation' of juvenile delinquency in this setting (Stevick and Levison, 2003, p.325). Definitions of school violence that centre on juvenile

delinquency have been criticised, however, for being narrow, as they do not account for the complexity of the thematic (Noguera, 1995; Baker, 1998; Henry 2000; Cremin, 2003; Smith, 2004; Barrett, Lynch and Stretesky, 2016; Cremin and Guilherme, 2016; Williams, 2016a). Moreover, they are often skewed towards one manifestation of violence, namely, physical student-initiated violence.

Indeed, based on an empirical inquiry on school violence at a secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago, Williams (2013; 2016a) avers that a preoccupation with the generalised category of youth has implications for follow-up interventions. Specifically, school violence interventions will be 'correspondingly narrow and ...fail to reveal ...structural violence' (Williams, 2016a, p.141). Importantly, structural violence: i) is built into the relational ecology of institutional infrastructure; ii) remains hidden through being unrecognisable and unintentional; and iii) manifests in an environment of unequal power relations (Galtung, 1969). Interestingly, therefore, Furlong and Morrison (2000) suggest that while 'school violence' refers to incidents that occur on the school compound, 'violence in schools' identifies the school as a system that 'causes or exacerbates problems the individuals within it experience' (Furlong and Morrison, 2000, p.73). By narrowing the research scope even further, research on youth violence does not necessarily consider structural violence within schools.

Relatedly, in exploring the role of gender in school violence prevention, Sundaram (2014, p.27) observes that 'few studies have ...sought to elicit young people's ...conceptualisations of violence'. Further, her research at schools in

the north-east of England showed that gender was not only central to the students' conceptualisations of violence, but conditioned their views on whether given acts of violence were 'problematic; acceptable; deserved or preventable' (Sundaram, 2014, pp.8-9). Although research on youth violence can be used to generate data on students' perceptions, this is less likely if violence is perceived to result from the students' deviant behaviours. In this case, a top-down punitive response by school management is foreseeable (Harber, 2004; Osher et al, 2010; Sundaram, 2014), and the gendered dimension of school violence is likely to remain under-researched (see sub-section 2.3.3).

In order to broaden the scope of my research, I have opted to structure my discourse around the term school violence. By so doing, I have identified 'the student' as the focal unit of analysis, to take account of students' perceptions and, in effect, conceptualisations about the research thematic. Yet, I have given myself the flexibility to explore contextual factors, within the school setting in particular, that influence emergent violence. As school violence remains 'visible and manifest among school students' (Henry, 2000, p.17), the students' perceptions are central to an enhanced understanding of its manifestations and can inform preventative efforts. Further, as student-initiated violence does not 'constitute the scope of the problem' (Henry, 2000, p.17), as discussed in the next sub-section, institutionalised violence within contextual school settings merits exploration.

2.3.2 School violence as institutionalised violence

A growing discourse on institutionalised school-place violence, based on the concepts of systemic; symbolic; and structural violence, has been informed by the view that institutional authority can create 'emotional and psychological pain' and 'systemic social injury' (Henry, 2000, pp.17-18). First, within the field of educational studies, systemic school violence refers to 'practices and procedures that prevent students from learning, thus harming them' (Watkinson and Ross Epp, 1997, p.190). It includes, for example, student exclusion policies and large impersonal schools and classes (Ross Epp, 1996; Watkinson and Ross Epp, 1997). Further, as inequality is one of its inherent features, systemic violence in schools 'adversely impacts on disadvantaged individuals or groups by burdening them psychologically, mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically or physically' (Ross Epp and Watkinson, 1997, p.xi). Notably, systemic violence in education is unintentional, as it derives from processes that are established by educators and policymakers for students' well-being (Ross Epp, 1996; Watkinson and Ross Epp, 1997). Consequently, 'both perpetrators and victims, are often unaware of its existence' (Ross Epp, 1996, p.1), as it is 'built into ...educational culture' to directly enhance 'educational organisation, leadership theories, and pedagogical practices' (Watkinson and Ross Epp, 1996, p.191).

Second, from a sociological perspective, with emphasis on social reproduction theory, symbolic violence in education manifests as a reproduction of the existing power relations between social classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.6). It perpetuates the status quo by legitimating 'an already existing social

structure founded on and strengthened by social inequality' (Bernstein, 1975; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990; Collins, 2009; Scott, 2012). One of its common formats is student labelling, based on social perceptions of the superiority of certain forms of cultural capital, such as the language and/or ethnicity of a dominant socio-economic group (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Herr and Anderson, 2003; Collins, 2009; Khanal, 2017). Interestingly, however, symbolic violence is 'imperceptible and invisible even to its victims', as it is 'exerted through ...purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition ...recognition, or ...feeling' Bourdieu (2001, p.1). In line with its imperceptibility, symbolic violence is used to shape 'acceptable behavio[u]rs, thoughts and beliefs' (Goldstein, 2005, p.34) based on an institutionalised habitus, namely, 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions ...predisposed to function ...as principles...' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). As a result of being undetected, therefore, symbolic violence can have a restrictive effect on student educational outcomes and social mobility, as well as the capacity for educators to eliminate it from the education system.

Third, in the domain of peace and conflict studies, structural violence takes the form of social injustice that is interwoven with a sense of normalcy, rendering it hidden; unrecognisable; and thereby, unintended (Galtung, 1969; Parsons, 2007; Dilts, 2012). As it is embedded into the existing social infrastructure, it demonstrates 'a certain stability' relative to situational context (Galtung, 1969, p. 173). Furthermore, structural violence is based on 'inequality, above all in the distribution of power' (Galtung, 1969, p. 175). Within the school context, therefore, structural violence translates as '[v]iolence that is built into the way

things are done' (Cremin and Guilherme, 2016, p.1127) and includes, for example, student exclusion; zero tolerance policies; poor school infrastructure; and insufficient student engagement during lessons (Skiba and Peterson, 1999; Cremin and Guilherme, 2016; Fox and Fridel, 2018; Lester and Evans, 2018). Interestingly, as structural violence can be legitimated by institutional culture (Galtung, 1990), a point for debate is whether it remains invisible because its properties are unrecognisable or whether it is taken for granted as the norm, given that it is 'recurrent and iterative' (Winter, 2012, p.202).

Although they differ in terms of their parent discipline and standpoint, all three forms of institutionalised violence explore non-physical forms of school violence. They further challenge the view that students are the main initiators and victims of school violence, suggesting instead that students, as well as adults within the school environment, can be perpetrators and victims. To illustrate, as school personnel are required to implement and adhere to school policy and procedures, and not challenge the educational infrastructure, invariably, they contribute towards institutionalised violence and are victims of the same, albeit unknowingly. My reasoning draws on the evolution of institutionalised mass schooling/education, which has thrived on an authoritarian school environment to facilitate socio-economic control (Harber, 2002; 2004; Green, 2013). Within this setting, institutionalised education is based on the banking approach (Freire, 1972), which upholds the assumption that 'the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing' (Freire, 2010, p.53). As a result, manifestations of institutionalised school violence are misinterpreted, by teachers and students alike, as standard educational

practice. It follows that the institutional school environment can create a conducive context for school violence, particularly institutionalised violence, by reinforcing power inequalities through its institutional hierarchies (Jackson and Sundaram, 2020). Essentially, the conducive context for violence is a space in which interpersonal relations are governed by power, authority and domination (Kelly, 2016), which mirrors 'key forms of inequality' from the wider society (Harber, 2004 p.62) to the disadvantage of marginalised social groups (Jackson and Sundaram, 2020).

Of interest, as economic and political domination were prioritised during the colonial era, education at the colony-level entailed establishing schools and implementing school curricula that 'reflected ...the power and educational needs of the coloni[s]er' (London, 2002, p.56). Barnes (1982) has alluded, therefore, to the ethnocentric undertones of education under colonialism. Yet, in the aftermath of colonialism, students in the former colonies have been exposed to 'racialised education structures that continue as a legacy of colonialism' (Hickling-Hudson, 2006, p.207). As 'many restrictive approaches to teaching (and learning) ... are still in operation' (London, 2002, p.68), including manifestations of institutionalised violence, arguably, the effects of colonialism are still being felt in post-colonial nations (Harber, 2004). Moreover, institutionalised education does not necessarily challenge the existing status quo, but can serve to reinforce its longstanding inequalities (Galtung, 1969; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Ross Epp and Watkinson, 1997; Salmi, 2000; Stromquist, 1995; Cin, 2017). What is concerning, therefore, is the plausible effect of institutionalised violence on students' perceptions of capability and

self-worth, and the possible role of educators in enforcing a stereotype of the unsuccessful student. This reasoning is applicable to Trinidad and Tobago, given its status as a former colony.

Indeed, by deviating from the typology of student-initiated physical violence, the concept of institutionalised violence broadens the process of conceptualising school-based violence. In the next sub-section, therefore, I examine the contribution of gender to the discourse on school violence, given that gender relations have featured significantly in shaping violence at the school level.

2.3.3 School violence as gender-based violence

As school is a nexus for constant interpersonal exchanges within and between gender groups, it follows logically that the performance of gender would underpin all school-place interactions, including contextual manifestations of violence. Gender, in itself, is a product of its social and cultural environment (Mead, 1950; Oakley, 2005; Holmes, 2007; Connell, 2009; Sundaram, 2014; 2013; Oakley, 2015; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020), comprising the school environment in the current context and the wider society. As distinct from the biological differences that exist between boys and girls, gender is defined, here, as the socially produced differences that are associated with being male and being female (Holmes, 2007). Further, in line with a constantly evolving socio-cultural environment, gender is not static, but responds to the inherent mores that emerge (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Sundaram, 2014). As a result, the performance of gender by boys and by girls,

is not uniform within or across these groups, as neither group is homogenous (Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Sundaram, 2014).

Based on the above reasoning, I distinguish between incidents of gendered violence and gender-based violence (GBV) at the school level. Although GBV is inflicted in response to the gender of the victim(s), the discourse on GBV has often focused on intimate partner violence (IPV) as one of its more pervasive manifestations (Sundaram, 2014). Moreover, while the signs of IPV can be subtle and, thereby, not easily recognised by victims and perpetrators (Springer and Brown, 2019), there is a focus, albeit evidence-based (Sundaram, 2014), on a male aggressor-female victim binary (Heise, Ellsberg and Gottmoeller, 2002). I further argue, that while gendered violence in the school setting can be similarly unobtrusive, it remains markedly different from IPV. This is not to deny that instances of IPV can occur at the school level, but to affirm, rather, that gendered violence emerges during daily performances of gender by school-place actors and is not confined to intimate relations. Gendered violence is anchored, therefore, in the notion that gender is relational and performative (Butler, 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), given its responsiveness to factors within its contextual environment, including interpersonal exchanges and social expectations.

In this respect, the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity require consideration, insofar as they reflect the gendered underpinnings of peer relations, including emergent violence among students. First, hegemonic masculinity is strongly informed by the social expectations that underscore the performance of gender, including the practice of femininity (Sen,

2001; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Scott and Marshall, 2015). It is premised on the assumption of male power and privilege over female existence in a hierarchical gender order (Connell, 1996; 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). What is more, it is constructed on a plurality of masculinities in which hegemonic masculinity is idealised over non-hegemonic versions (Williams, 2014), although each form of masculinity can be adapted or revoked based on individual volition and responsiveness to external contextual factors (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Sundaram, 2014). Further, although hegemonic masculinity is not synonymous with aggressive behaviours, it has become increasingly associated with physical violence among schoolboys as a demonstration of manliness (Kenway and FitzClarence, 1997; Mills, 2001; Davies, 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Second, emphasised femininity within the school context denotes girls' compliance with a gender role that is subordinate to the hierarchy of masculinities (Connell, 1987). Yet, in practising femininity, the girls who emulate emphasised femininity generally have influence over the boys' construction of masculinity, and in particular, their aspirations towards the hegemonic ideal. Interestingly though, in their response to male domination, some girls establish a contextual gender identity by adopting elements of hegemonic masculinity (Mills, 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As a further challenge to male domination, other girls exercise agency, notably, a sense of feeling free 'to pursue and achieve their valued goals' (Cin, 2017, p.2), by combining an acknowledgement of their subordination with defiant behaviours (Bhana, 2018).

Essentially, in their efforts to establish their gender identity, some girls create alternative femininities that include displays of violence. Moreover, in exercising agency (Sen, 1985; Cin, 2017), arguably, the girls are not seeking to change their position in the gender hierarchy relative to male hegemony, but are focused more on establishing their school-place presence. Indeed, this process contrasts sharply with the presumption that girls are not violent or not as violent as boys, but present girls as possible victims and perpetrators of violence (Leach and Humphreys, 2007; Bhana 2008; Cameron and Taggar, 2008; Talbott et al, 2010; Esposito and Edwards, 2018; Madfis and Cohen, 2018; Rawlings, 2019). Yet, along with the alternative femininities from which it originates, violence by girls has often been trivialised in the discourse on school violence and remains under-researched (Brown, Chesney-Lind and Stein, 2007; Leach and Humphreys, 2007; Schippers, 2007; Esposito and Edwards, 2018). Furthermore, when girls contradict the social expectations for emphasised femininity, their behaviours tend to be judged by stricter social standards (Foschi, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020). In the context of school violence, arguably, the issue is not whether this judgement is unfair, but whether it detracts from efforts to identify and address the root causes of violence initiated by girls.

Undoubtedly, gendered school violence responds to the multi-dimensional nature of the gender thematic (Connell, 2009), including the effects of the contextual school setting on the students' efforts to create a gender identity. It is further conceivable that gender-specific peer networks influence manifestations of violence by students, given the importance of peer affiliations

to young persons (Schreck, Fisher and Miller, 2004). Notably, while the boys who aspire towards hegemonic masculinity associate with extended same-sex peer networks (Feiring and Lewis, 1989; Mills, 2001; Haynie, Doogan and Soller, 2014), in general, girls participate in smaller networks with other girls and are usually bound by a sense of friendship loyalty (Piehler and Dishion, 2007; Haynie, Doogan and Soller, 2014). I argue that the difference in peer network dynamics strongly informs the propensity for schoolboys and schoolgirls to engage in violence. Similar to boys who are compelled by the need to reinforce their gender identity, there are girls who are motivated by a wish to reciprocate friendship ties.

As indicated, gender is not static, but responds to multiple factors within its contextual environment. In Section 2.4 (sub-Section 2.4.1), therefore, I address the intersectional effects of gender, race and class on school level violence. Cognisant of the wider societal factors that can influence violence in the school setting, however, first I discuss the role of socio-economic status on emergent violence in the section below.

2.3.4 Emergent violence and the poverty complex

The need to identify the conducive contexts in which school violence occurs, including its causal factors and enabling conditions, is well supported by the social research literature. Most recently, in their study on laddism in higher education, Jackson and Sundaram (2020, p.117) advise that as educational institutions 'can be understood as microcosms of the wider societal and cultural context', they can enable conducive contexts for emergent violence. Relatedly,

therefore, the discourse on school violence reflects some measure of interest in contextual factors at the school level that can, conceivably, influence emergent violence in this setting (Felson et al, 1994; Elliott, Hamburg and Williams, 1998; Astor and Meyer, 2001; Akiba et al, 2002; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005; Fuchs, 2008). There is an equal recognition, however, that contextual factors from the wider society, including at the community and household levels, have a similar capacity to inform manifestations of school violence.

Insofar as school violence is influenced by factors that are external to the school environment, the empirical research of Phillips (2010) is of relevance, particularly as it was conducted within the Trinidad and Tobago context. In the effort to foster an enhanced understanding of school violence, based on the real-life conditions and experiences of students, Phillips (2010) engaged students from a sample of Junior Secondary Schools³ in Trinidad, in which the highest levels of violence had been recorded. The results of the study suggest that in schools that are more at risk for emergent violence, (some) students harbour a poverty complex, which derives from challenges they face because of material deprivation and abusive domestic circumstances. Phillips (2010, p.38) further opines that as ‘the poverty complex drives [the students’] concern to get more comfort in their lives’, the students create and adopt a hidden

³ The Junior Secondary Schools have been de-shifted (see Chapter 4, sub-Section 4.4.1) and are now equivalent to the Comprehensive Schools within the English education system.

curriculum that manifests as emergent violence. In this situation, 'school becomes a domain, not for concentrating on academic subjects, which have no meaning for the students, but on having their needs met' (Phillips, 2010, p.48). Indeed, education should build an individual's capacity to participate in 'political and social life ...with dignity as citizens, and with agency ...to bring about change' (Lopez-Fogues and Cin, 2018, p. 1).

While I find it significant that the notion of the poverty complex highlights the effects of the wider society on emergent school violence, I see the need for caution in clustering external causal factors (Frosch and Johnson-Laird, 2006) together as the reason why some students engage in violence. Indeed, Phillips (2010) alludes to the combined effect of external factors and education that lacks meaning to the students on student-initiated violence. The suggestion, here, is that the students are unable to foresee the contribution of their education to an improvement in their personal circumstances. Consequently, follow-up research on school violence, at a de-shifted Junior Secondary School in Trinidad and Tobago, has shown that there are 'deeper issues at work' that remain under-researched (Williams, 2013, p.56). Importantly, these issues derive from multiple sub-contexts within individual schools, (e.g. the classroom setting; student/staff cliques; the dean's office; etc.) and have influence on emergent violence (Astor and Meyer, 2001). Specifically, as shown by both empirical studies in the Trinidad and Tobago context (Phillips, 2010; Williams, 2013), the school violence debate has been inadequately informed by empirical research on structural violence (Galtung, 1969) at the school level.

Critically, therefore, school violence does not necessarily result from deviant student behaviours, including the behaviours of students with special and/or psycho-social needs. I acknowledge, unreservedly, that some students may exhibit violent behaviours in response to the challenges of their home situations. Similarly, I agree that if classroom instruction is not informed by the differences in students' learning capacities, or does not meet their specific psycho-social needs, student-initiated violence is possible. It is concerning, however, that the logic underlying the poverty complex does not include considerations that are external to the students' home situations, including factors that originate within the institutionalised school system. In essence, by attributing school violence to a complex held by students, Phillips (2010) adopts a generalised view that school violence is a manifestation of individualised student behaviours, as influenced by the students' domestic environments. Interestingly though, the allusion to academic subjects that 'have no meaning for the students' (Phillips, 2010, p.48) implies that there are factors within the institutionalised school system that can influence emergent violence. I address this issue further in Section 2.4, in the context of social (in)justice.

2.4 Identifying social injustice within school violence

As school violence often occurs in situations of social and economic inequality, and was first addressed as a law enforcement and public health concern, I choose to categorise all manifestations of school violence (physical and non-physical) as the results of social injustice. Interestingly though, the discourse on social justice has not been informed by a singular definition of this concept. On one hand, social justice has been associated with social bargaining to

ensure that social advantages are appropriately distributed (Rawls, 1999; Sandel, 2009). On the other hand, the call for social justice has been fixated on the need to empower the disenfranchised, by facilitating increased respect for diversity (Fraser, 2007), 'to ensure that no one is disadvantaged' (Rawls, 1999, p.11). Indeed, both Rawls (1999) and Sandel (2009) prioritise the need for economic redistribution, which are critical for redressing the economic insecurity that often emerges as a result of social injustice. I suggest, here, that while economic redistribution is significant in the school context, for example, to meet resource requirements for quality education, this argument is insufficient for the school violence debate. Significantly, therefore, Fraser (2007) does not negate the importance of socio-economic redistribution for attaining social justice, but emphasises the need for parity of participation, namely equal moral worth, and in effect contribution, during social processes.

Using a three-dimensional model of social justice, Fraser (2007) advocates democratic social justice by incorporating considerations for the 'what, who and how' components of 'an adequate theory of justice' (Fraser 2007, p.23). The fundamental assumption that underlies the three-dimensional model is the need to dismantle 'the institutionalised obstacles that prevent people from participating ...with others as full partners in social interaction' (Fraser, 2007, p.20). Fraser (2007) argues, therefore, that while Rawls (1999) and Sandel (2009) consider the economic (the 'what') and cultural (the 'who') dimensions of social justice, their 'theory of social justice' is inadequate as it does not account for the political (the 'how') dimension, to support representation.

By default, the three-dimensional model adds considerations for the 'how', component of social justice. In the interest of attaining adequate social justice, its principles include the need to establish: i) a sense of social belonging for persons/groups recognised as being in need of social justice; ii) criteria to determine which parties are entitled to make social justice claims; and iii) procedures for addressing these claims. In Table 2.2, I present an illustration of the Fraser (2007) three-dimensional model, which I have specifically adapted to the context of my research.

	Dimension of social justice	Action	Examples of indicative questions in the school context
1.	Economic ('what')	Redistribution	- What: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ do schools owe their students/staff? ○ do students/staff owe each other? ○ resources should be redistributed?
2.	Cultural ('who')	Recognition	- Who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is entitled to receive redistributed resources? ○ requires increased social respect? ○ needs increased access to opportunities for social participation/decision-making; social capital; etc.?
3.	Political ('how')	Representation	- How: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ should schools determine who needs increased access to resources/opportunities/services?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ should schools redistribute access to resources/opportunities/ services?
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Table 2.1 Adapted Fraser (2007) model of adequate social justice

In line with the principles of the model, the facilitation of adequate social justice entails incorporating considerations for: i) the re-distribution of resources and/or opportunities (the economic dimension); ii) the recognition of which individuals and/or groups require increased access to these resources and/or opportunities (the cultural dimension); and iii) determining how the resources and/or opportunities should be best redistributed (the political dimension).

To underscore the students' capacities for contributing to the school violence debate as knowing subjects and active agents (Balen et al 2006), I have used the Fraser (2007) three-dimensional model to justify, as well as develop, my conceptual research framework (see Chapter 3 and 4, respectively). Moreover, in applying the model to the study, I became aware of the need to explore the contextual, school-specific and wider societal factors that impede the attainment of social justice in the school setting. In this regard, I discuss two of these factors relative to school violence in the sub-sections that follow, the multiply-marginalisations and intersectional challenges of the students (2.4.1) and the engagement (albeit limited) of student voice in the school violence debate (2.4.2).

2.4.1 Multiply-marginalisations and the intersectionalities of gender, race and class

Within the school violence discourse, incidents of violence have been frequently disaggregated into a binary that identifies boys as perpetrators and girls as passive victims of physical attacks. On the one hand, physical aggression and violence are portrayed as intrinsically masculine traits, which (some) boys use to shape their masculinity according to idealised hegemonic values. The boys anticipate achieving power and status in the school setting by demonstrating masculine prowess during this process (Mills, 2001; Connell, 2002; 2005; Leach and Humphreys, 2007; Cobbett and Warrington, 2013; Le Mat, 2016). On the other hand, violence by girls, including among groups of girls, is usually trivialised or declared to be nonexistent (Sundaram, 2014) and ‘the primary focus ...has been on physical and sexual violence against female students’ (Leach and Humphreys, 2007, p.54). As gender is often conflated with ‘being female’, girls are especially depicted as being at high risk of male-initiated gender-based violence at school.

Importantly, the tendency to attribute given actions to a specific gender continues to be challenged by feminist post-structuralist thought, with its focus on ‘how women affect and are affected by their interrelationships’ (English, 2012, p.711), and the theory of masculinities (Connell, 2005), which similarly upholds the rationale that gender is relational. Human action has been increasingly recognised, therefore, as being situationally defined (Sundaram, 2013; 2014; Williams, 2014; Tucker and Govinder, 2017). It follows, that the performance of gender does not occur in isolation, but integrates with other

intersectional factors, to affect and/or respond to existing social phenomena (McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008; Sundaram, 2013; 2014).

Relatedly, therefore, the concept of intersectionality is predicated on the understanding that individual human experience is shaped by the interplay of multiple social identifiers, which leads to personalised encounters (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Although the concept emerged within feminist theorising to address perceived limitations in gender analyses, notably, the inadequate consideration of race, it has been used across disciplines and specialised fields, including the social and behavioural sciences (Paik, 2017). Taking gender as its starting point, the intersectional approach to analysis entails creating a lens to investigate the complexity of the individualised human experience. The focus is on how gender interacts with other social identifiers that determine individual social positioning and situational context (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). Interestingly, therefore, intersectional analysis is strongly informed by critical race theory, which comprises theoretical and activist components for examining the relationship between race, power and oppression, and facilitating improved relations across social strata (Crenshaw, 1991; 1989; Cho et al, 2013; Bilge, 2014; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Consequently, I argue that the intersectional lens has practical worth for identifying the effect of social identifiers on school-level violence and can be used to inform related situational change.

Crenshaw (1989, p.140) advises that a failure to acknowledge the multidimensionality of lived experiences ‘...creates a distorted analysis ...of... experiences that actually represent a subset of a much more complex

phenomenon'. I note, therefore, that while manifestations of school violence are influenced by contextual and wider societal factors (Astor and Meyer, 2001), instances of student-initiated violence can also reflect a diversity of unmet needs among these young persons (McAra and McVie). Indeed, these needs cannot be pre-supposed, but based on the results of youth-focused research, they can range from the educational to the psycho-social (Davies, 2004; Martino, 2008; Jha and Kelleher, 2006; Tate 2007; Cobbett and Younger, 2012; McCree, 2014; Esposito and Edwards, 2018;). Notably, therefore, school violence can result from the combined effects of multiple intersectionalities, denoted as complex inequalities (McCall, 2005; Few-Demo, 2014; Ferree, 2010), on the lives of the perpetrators of violence within the school setting, and the victims who respond by being violent themselves. As a result of the compounded workings of these intersectionalities, the affected parties are described as being multiply-marginalised (Ferree, 2010).

A question arises, here, as to whether the school violence debate, with its theoretical arguments about social disorder and individual 'behaviourisms' (Zembroski, 2011), suitably accounts for the effects of intersectional factors on emergent violence. I argue that it does not. Specifically, the discourse on school violence has drawn heavily on theories of crime and delinquency, which are based on general assumptions of macro-societal disorder and/or individualised behavioural deviance, and do not consider the effects of contextual school-place realities on school violence. Indeed, the retrofitting of these theoretical assumptions on the analysis of school violence can lead to inaccurate conclusions, followed by ineffective policies and interventions. Cavanaugh

(2012, p.608) further notes that ‘there is no singular paradigm that adequately explains the “causes” of violence’. In this regard, an intersectional analytical approach supports the examination of contextual institutional dynamics on violence within the school setting, which can remain unexplored during theoretical work (Benbenishty and Astor, 2005; Choo and Ferree, 2010). From a social justice standpoint, the input of all actors who are implicated by school violence would be critical during this process. I address this issue further in the next section, by discussing the extent to which the students’ voices, in particular, have been represented in the school violence debate.

2.4.2 The underrepresentation of student voice in the school violence debate

In the late 1980s, the emergence of the new sociology of childhood facilitated an increased recognition of the potential of children/young persons⁴ as social actors and knowing agents during research, beyond the role of research objects (Barker and Weller, 2003; Prout and James, 2003; Grover, 2004; Balen et al, 2006; Morrow, 2008; Powell and Smith, 2009; Mason and Hood, 2011; Jacquez et al, 2012). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990) also supported their active participation in social research, by advocating young persons’ capacities to ‘express their views freely, in all matters affecting [them]’ (UNCRC, 1990, Article 12, 1). Further, the Ladder of Participation

⁴ I use the terms children and young persons interchangeably to refer to persons under the age of 18 years.

typology (Hart, 1992) endorses research 'for and with' young persons, to allow them to become 'fully functioning ...and contributing members of society' (Cremin and Bevington, 2017, p.31), to create 'the kind of society we need' (Hart, 1992, p.5). Yet, although young persons' understanding of violence is critical for preventative work (Sundaram, 2014), the voices of students have been largely underrepresented in the school violence debate (Brown and Winterton, 2010; Sundaram, 2016).

Undeniably, it is challenging to engage young persons in social research, given the conflict between their 'inherent rights to participation' (Grover, 2004, p.90) and the need to protect them from exploitation (Balen et al, 2006; Powell and Smith, 2009). As the students I engaged in my research are affected by school violence, however, in the genre of democratic social justice, they are entitled to participate in related discourse 'on a par with others, as full partners' (Fraser, 2007, p.20). Moreover, as there are clear disadvantages to the top-down managerial approach to school violence prevention, in terms of reduced effectiveness and unsustainability (Brown, 2018), by engaging the students' inputs I have been able to better understand school violence from their perspective. Given the ongoing media coverage of violence involving students, which can lead to the equating of school violence with student-initiated incidents, the importance of the students' views cannot be overestimated. Preventative approaches that engage students further reflect efforts towards a whole-school approach to intervention (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007), with its advantage of facilitating collective priority action by entire school communities.

I argue that in the Trinidad and Tobago context, the underrepresentation of the students' voices in the school violence debate has ramifications for violence prevention that are far-reaching. As intimated above, a top-down approach to prevention, as developed within an authoritarian school environment, is unlikely to stem school violence into the long-term (Cameron and Sheppard, 2006; Goodman, 2006; Osher et al, 2010; Sharkey and Fenning, 2012; Kline, 2016; Bell, 2019). Examples of the top-down approach include zero-tolerance policies and punitive disciplinary approaches, which do not involve adequate prior consultation with the wider school community, including students and external actors who have bearing on school violence (Skiba and Peterson, 1999; Harber, 2004; Lawrence, 2007; Osher et al, 2010; Lester and Evans, 2018). Zimmerman and Rees (2014) note, in particular, that while these interventions might have an immediate deterrent effect, they do not necessarily prevent future misconduct.

Significantly, violence prevention, including the maintenance of school discipline, is a transactional process (Osher et al, 2010; Brown, 2018). Conceivably, therefore, the sustainable effectiveness of preventative work, including beyond the school setting, requires input from all implicated key actors. As the students are central to the school violence debate, key considerations for violence prevention include enhancing their capacity to support this process. On the one hand, if students are continuously policed and are not given an equal opportunity to speak and be heard, they will likely respond defiantly (Goodman, 2006; Cremin and Bevington, 2017). Indeed, multiply-marginalised students who do not display anticipated 'good

behaviours' usually have less access to opportunities to voice their concerns at school (Wong, 2008; Ferree, 2010). Yet, the issue is not whether they have ideas or are capable of sharing them, but rather, whether they are encouraged and provided with skills to do so without fear of repercussion. Freire (2010, p.72) especially notes the importance of building students' 'critical consciousness', to allow them to become transformers of their milieu.

Of note, the discourse on school violence has increasingly explored student-centred approaches to prevention, such as peer mediation and restorative justice, in which students are guided towards supporting a conducive context for learning and development in their schools (Zehr and Mika, 1998; Zehr, 2003; Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Cremin, 2007; Schellenberg, Parks-Savage and Rehfuss, 2007; Cremin, Sellman and McCluskey, 2012; Kline, 2016; Brown, 2018). While peer mediation involves the healthy resolution of disputes among student peers, restorative justice entails initiating a process of healing to avoid reoccurrence. Notwithstanding the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches, they present as alternatives to zero-tolerance policies and punitive discipline.

On the other hand, as school violence is influenced by unique factors within each school environment, it is imperative for schools to lead preventative interventions that are informed by their specific contexts (Cremin, 2007; McCluskey et al, 2008; Standing, Fearon and Dee, 2011). This rationale is based on the understanding that each school is well-placed to identify the contextual factors within its setting that contribute towards emergent violence. Further, each school is a community in which the key actors have increased

opportunities to become familiar with each other to enhance collaboration, and gain insights on accessible resources for resolving and preventing violence in the school setting. Even more, the effectiveness of violence prevention efforts is highly contingent on the assumption of ownership by entire school communities (Cooke-Davies, 2002; Ozer, Ritterman and Wanis, 2010). Consequently, I have used my research to place merit on the capacity of students to contribute to this process, and the necessity of collaborative action at the school level to facilitate success. Indeed, from a social justice perspective, the views of all the members of each school community require equal consideration. Schools do need support, however, to initiate the transformation that is envisaged (Cremin and Bevington, 2017), especially as it relates to hidden structural violence, which is usually mistaken for discipline.

2.5 Summary

I have used this chapter to examine the existing discourse on school-based violence, to ground my preliminary understanding of the term in salient issues from the peer-reviewed and grey literature. The emergent conceptualisation identifies school violence as a multi-faceted and complex construct that is further influenced by situational context. Moreover, it has been defined in the public consciousness by media reporting, which focuses on physical violence that is student-initiated and/or occurs among students. As a result, there has been much less recognition of the indirect, hidden violence that is institutionalised within the education system and manifests, especially, within the school setting. This conceptualisation will inform and be informed by the data generated from my research. I note, especially, that as hidden violence is

equally harmful relative to physical violence, it should be given similar consideration during violence prevention efforts, which need to be owned by entire school communities. In the interest of effective and sustainable interventions, the students should be engaged as active partners during preventative interventions. What is more, the standard for determining the effectiveness of school violence prevention should not be restricted to programming that fosters a conducive context for learning within schools. On the contrary, students need to receive support and encouragement to develop positive behaviours to enhance their school environments; effectively confront the challenges they face; and transform their communities and nation (Cin, 2017; Lopez-Fogues and Cin, 2018). I have used this rationale to inform my research design, the justification for which I discuss in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Building a Case for Data-driven School Violence Research and Intervention

3.1 Introduction

As a preamble to my research methodology, I have used this chapter to highlight the importance of data-driven research for the effective analysis of contextual school violence in Trinidad and Tobago. As discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2), media reports about student-initiated violence in this country have led to public outcry about this issue. Further, there is limited evidence of efforts to engage students in the school violence debate, including at the intervention level. As the Salmi (2000) framework is cited as ‘a useful categorisation of ...violence that can be applied to schools’ (Harber, 2004, p.44), it has been prudent for me to attempt a similar application to my own research. Indeed, Harber (2004) submits that the framework’s four categorisations are all applicable to the institutional school setting. In the sections that follow, therefore, I present Salmi’s analytical framework (Section 3.2), and assess its applicability to the analysis of school violence in the Trinidad and Tobago context (Section 3.3). I then describe how the results of this assessment have informed my research methodology (Section 3.4).

3.2 The Salmi (2000) framework

The Salmi (2000) framework is a typology of violence that comprises four categorisations (direct; indirect; repressive; and alienating violence) and examples of violence, which are linked to four levels of perpetrators (individuals; groups; firms; and governments). While direct violence is synonymous with

physical violence, the other three categorisations reflect non-physical forms (see Table 3.1).

	Category of Violence	Description	Examples within education
1.	Direct violence	Deliberate injury to the integrity of human life	- Physical violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ corporal punishment ○ physical fights ○ use of weapons to inflict harm ○ physical maltreatment
2.	Indirect violence	Indirect violation of the right to survival	
2.1	- Violence by omission	Lack of assistance/protection to persons in danger	- Lack of assistance/protection against all forms of school violence, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ physical violence ○ psychological bullying ○ environmental/infrastructural hazards and inadequacies ○ barriers to learning ○ inequitable access to education

2.2	- Mediated violence	Acts of destruction or modification to the natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate provision of safe school facilities and infrastructure, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o potable water o sanitary facilities o harmless construction material o protection from exposure to rain and heat
3.	Repressive violence	Violation of fundamental human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate evidence of democracy at school, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o delivery of politically dominant knowledge o non-recognition of equal rights and freedoms o limited civic education
4.	Alienating violence	Deprivation of persons' higher rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inappropriate curriculum - Non-use of national language or bilingualism during curriculum delivery - Inadequate evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o education that encourages tolerance and cultural diversity

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ pedagogical practices for encouraging emotional and intellectual growth ○ harassment-free schools <p>- Bullying</p>
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Table 3.1 The Salmi (2000) typology of violence (Summarised adaptation)⁵

As the ‘dynamic relationship between different forms of violence ...can be mutually reinforcing’ (Salmi, 2000, p.7), arguably, violence under any categorisation can lead to violence under another. Salmi (2000, p.7) advises, therefore, that the framework is a ‘flexible analytical tool’ for systematically analysing violence, including ‘interconnections and causal relationships’. As such, he applies the framework to the concept of education and concludes that institutionalised education can contribute towards violence and also reduce manifestations of violence in the wider society.

The appeal of Salmi’s typology for my research has been its potential to support data analysis. Yet, although the framework is well-supported by a detailed description of its main categorisations and an overview of its advantages, it lacks clear guidelines for its practical application. By default, the question that

⁵ Table 3.1 draws on Salmi’s original typology and that applied to the concept of education (Salmi, 2000, p. 6; p.20).

emerges is whether an in-depth analysis of school violence can be effectively supported by a typology (see Section 3.3).

3.3 Assessing the Salmi (2000) framework

As a flexible analytical tool, Salmi (2000) notes that the framework can be adapted to explore several dimensions of analysis, including the multiple contexts that occur at the school level. To maximise the accuracy and usefulness of the results of analysis, however, the framework has to be tailored to the needs of each institution. Specifically, in its current format, the Salmi (2000) framework has limited usefulness beyond facilitating initial high-level discussions on the nature of school violence. Notably, it does not easily accommodate discussions with key actors who are unfamiliar with its technical descriptions. This creates a risk for ineffective start-up discussions, especially if the terminology within the framework is inadequately clarified. The framework also does not support forward-planning for violence reduction and prevention, which is critical for effective preventative interventions.

Further, at the level of its categorisations, the Salmi (2000) framework is restrictive in its definition of indirect violence. If violence is a deliberate intention to inflict harms (WHO, 2002), it is practical to distinguish between two forms of violence; the first being violence that is direct, physical and deliberate and the second, indirect non-physical violence that is unintentional and often unrecognised (Galtung, 1969). Yet, Salmi (2000) presents three distinct categorisations of non-physical violence, one of which is labelled as indirect violence and is based on an assumption of no direct relationship between

perpetrators and victims. Importantly, all schools in Trinidad and Tobago are mandated by the national Education Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2015) to provide students and staff with a safe environment for learning and teaching. The deliberate infliction of harms would, therefore, violate this directive. Moreover, albeit arguably, all key actors within the school setting are engaged in a direct relationship as facilitators of the learning environment (through school management; teaching; and/or administration) or as students. I argue, therefore, that it is worthwhile for the term indirect non-physical violence to aggregate the framework's categorisations for repressive and alienating violence, and its sub-categorisations for indirect violence. Relatedly, although the Salmi (2000) framework is a tool for investigating mutually reinforcing forms of violence, it does not explicitly articulate possible interconnections between its categorisations. As incidents of violence can lead to further violence under any categorisation, however, data on possible interconnections across categorisations would be useful for informing evidence-based prevention.

If school violence prevention is to be attained through adequate social justice à la Fraser (2007), in the interest of effectiveness and sustainability, it should be informed by school-specific contexts and wider societal factors that have bearing on emergent violence (Astor and Meyer, 2001; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005). My assessment of the Salmi (2000) framework has shown, however, that it does not easily facilitate the level of analysis that is required to identify these contextual factors. Nevertheless, the framework remains conceptually viable, as it can be used to inform typologies of school violence. In the next

section, therefore, I revisit the Salmi (2000) framework to enhance its usefulness for data-driven research on school violence, including its support for my own research methodology.

3.4 Salmi (2000) revisited

In order to redress the limitations of the Salmi (2000) framework, my research is informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)⁶, to support systematic data generation while increasing its capacity to yield rich contextual data. As a data-driven approach, grounded theory supports increased results credibility through an inductive process involving iterative data generation, triangulation and analysis. In this respect, I refined the Salmi (2000) framework with two aims in mind. First, to enable schools to easily generate data on school violence from all categories of implicated key actors, I replaced the framework's technical categorisations with simplified questioning and descriptions of categories. The result has been a user-friendly tool, given that it is more important for schools to understand the nature of contextual school violence rather than the technical categorisation(s) of each manifestation of violence. Second, to demonstrate its practical application, in my main analytical chapters (Chapters 5-7) I refer to how the revised framework can be used to facilitate data generation.

⁶ See Chapter 4

My approach to refining the Salmi (2000) framework involved establishing two main categories of violence, to distinguish between physical and non-physical forms within the school setting (see Table 3.2). As discussed in Section 3.3, non-physical violence signifies the non-contact forms of violence within the original framework, namely, violence by omission; mediated violence, repressive violence and alienating violence. In the revised framework, these forms of violence correspond, respectively, with: i) No protection from violence; ii) Poor or unsafe facilities; iii) Oppression; and iv) No respect for individual rights. In the revised framework, these categories correspond, respectively, with: i) No protection from violence; ii) Poor or unsafe facilities; iii) Oppression; and iv) No respect for individual rights.

1. What type of violence takes place in this school? (Please tick all that apply)		
A. Physical violence		<input type="checkbox"/> Fights
		<input type="checkbox"/> Use of weapons
		<input type="checkbox"/> Corporal punishment
		<input type="checkbox"/> Physical bullying
		<input type="checkbox"/> Physical maltreatment
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe):
B. Non-Physical Violence	i. No protection from violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical violence
		<input type="checkbox"/> Bullying
		<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse
		<input type="checkbox"/> Absent teachers
		<input type="checkbox"/> Poor teaching

		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe):	
ii. Poor or unsafe facilities		<input type="checkbox"/> No access to safe water	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Unsanitary toilet facilities	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty environment	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe classroom furniture	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe school buildings	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe school equipment	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe school compound	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe):	
	iii. Oppression		<input type="checkbox"/> Harassment
			<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of freedom to express ideas
		<input type="checkbox"/> Unfair punishment	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Different rules for different persons	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe):	
iv. No respect for individual rights		<input type="checkbox"/> Racism	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Online bullying	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal bullying	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Physical bullying	
		<input type="checkbox"/> No encouragement in classroom	
		<input type="checkbox"/> No respect for differences (e.g. differences in culture; religion; language; etc)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> No accommodation for special needs	

		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe):
2. Who is responsible for this violence? (Please tick all that apply)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers		
<input type="checkbox"/> Students		
<input type="checkbox"/> Office staff		
<input type="checkbox"/> Security officers		
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety officers		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other school staff (Please identify the position of the school staff):		
<input type="checkbox"/> Persons who do not attend the school (Please identify these persons):		
3. Where does the violence take place? (Please tick all that apply)		
<input type="checkbox"/> In the classroom		
<input type="checkbox"/> On the school compound		
<input type="checkbox"/> Outside the school		
<input type="checkbox"/> Online		
<input type="checkbox"/> In certain parts of the school		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other location (Please identify this location):		
4. What are the reasons why this violence occurs?		
5. When does the violence take place? (Please tick all that apply)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Before school		
<input type="checkbox"/> During classes		
<input type="checkbox"/> During breaks or lunchtime		
<input type="checkbox"/> After school		

<input type="checkbox"/> Anytime
<input type="checkbox"/> Other time (Please indicate the time):
6. What happens as a result of this violence? (Please tick all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> More of the same type of violence occurs
<input type="checkbox"/> A different form of violence occurs
<input type="checkbox"/> Students who are involved get punished
<input type="checkbox"/> Students get help to stop being violent
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults who are involved get punished
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults get help to stop being violent
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please indicate if anything else happens):
7. What should the school do to stop the violence?
8. What can you do to stop the violence?

Table 3.2 Salmi (2000) framework revisited for schools

To simplify Salmi’s original categorisations, I drew on the descriptions that were provided in the accompanying narrative, as well as the examples of violence that were outlined for general and education-specific contexts. Although the process of refinement has generated distinct categories, there is a noted overlap between categories i), iii) and iv). Indeed, the revised framework highlights the mutually reinforcing relationship between different categories (and forms) of violence (Salmi, 2000), confirming its usefulness as a tool for

investigating the interconnections across categories of violence at the school-level.

As the framework has been adapted to the research thematic, it supports a deeper analysis of school violence from a contextual perspective, as well as forward-planning for adequate social justice. Notably, it combines fixed-response questions with open-ended options, which consider the ‘what;’ ‘who;’ and ‘how’ elements of adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007). Further, the incorporation of open-ended questioning into the revised framework, in particular Field 4, with its focus on causal factors/enabling conditions, increases the possibility for schools to identify possible interconnections between categories of violence. Schools also have the option of disseminating the revised framework in paper and/or electronic format.

3.5 Summary

The conceptual underpinnings of the Salmi (2000) framework are valid, to the extent that they support the establishment of typologies of violence for situational application and analysis. At the analytical level, however, the framework is limited by its focus on technical categorisations of violence and a lack of clear guidelines for usability. In the effort to build on the framework’s conceptual strengths, and minimise its practical limitations, I have produced a revised version to better support the analysis of contextual school violence and the initial forward-planning of preventative actions. In addition to generating data to facilitate adequate social justice within schools, the revised framework

aligns strongly with my research methodology, which is informed by grounded theory, as I discuss in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

“...[R]esearch findings may well continue to be ignored, regardless of how well they are communicated if they bypass the ways in which practitioners formulate the problems they face and the constraints within which they have to work”

(Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006, p.195).

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the main research methodology, including its underlying rationale and the main research methods. The aim of my research was to explore the views of secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago, about the causes and consequences of school violence and their recommendations for its reduction and prevention. I structured my research, therefore, around three questions:

- i. What are the causes of school-based violence from students' perspectives?
- ii. What do students believe are the consequences of their/fellow students' violent behaviours?
- iii. How do students think school violence can be effectively reduced and prevented?

I used the main research questions to create focus (Bryman, 2012) and at the same time, generate the conceptual research framework through an inductive

process (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). I provide an overview of this process in the section that follows, in relation to the main research design.

4.2 Research design

With its emphasis on exploring the subjective views of students, my research is located within the interpretivist research paradigm. As interpretivism builds on the meanings that are attached to the actions and lived experiences of social actors (Brewer, 2003; Flick et al, 2004), it creates an opportunity for researchers to enhance their understanding of the research foci from diverse perspectives. To gain further insight on the dynamics that underlie school violence, therefore, the starting point for my research has been the assumption that students attach specific meanings to contextual violence in their schools, including specific actions that can incite or stem violence.

In order to implement a cross-sectional study that engaged a sample of research schools and students (see Section 4.5), my research was informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Specifically, I used a systematic and iterative process to generate, triangulate and analyse the students' shared perspectives, to formulate theory that was data-driven. Research that is informed by grounded theory differs markedly from research that is implemented using a grounded theory approach. While the former involves using selected principles of grounded theory to extract meaning from data generated by inductive analysis, the latter extends beyond inductivism. Research implemented using a grounded theory approach involves recursive

data generation and analysis until theoretical saturation is achieved (Bryman, 2012), whereby no new theoretical insights emerge from data generation.

As a result of student contact time limitations, iterative research implementation to facilitate theoretical saturation was not possible. Indeed, a major limitation of grounded theory is the restricted timeframe that is available for inductive analysis (Bryman, 2012). Given the importance of the data-driven approach for this study, however, I chose to inform my research with elements of grounded theory. As such, I allowed a data-driven conceptual research framework (see sub-Section 4.2.1) to emerge during research implementation, to better inform my understanding of school violence from the students' perspectives.

4.2.1 Articulating the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual research framework for this study (see Figure 4.1) is premised on the notion that it is difficult to meaningfully explore school violence from a single perspective, given its complexity. Indeed, the conceptual framework does not depict a linear process of cause and effect, but has been informed by the discourse on school violence; the students' perspectives; and my own contextual insights (Maxwell, 2005). Using an inductive process, therefore, I allowed the conceptual framework to emerge as I 'piece[d] together ... concepts from ... theoretical perspectives and empirical findings' (Imenda, 2014, p.193) that were relevant to my research. As the purpose of the conceptual framework is to direct the research trajectory, including results interpretation (Imenda, 2014; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014), it has not only facilitated the

students' voices during research implementation, but has also minimised researcher bias.

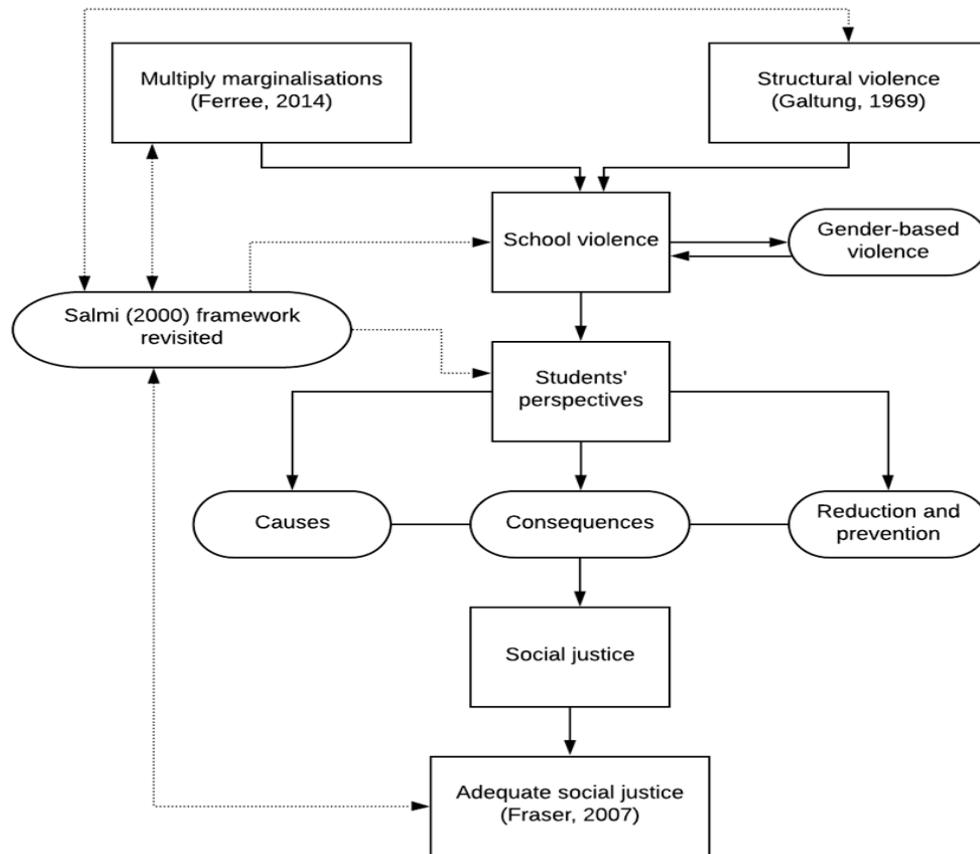


Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework

The students' perspectives on school violence are at the core of the framework and are mapped to the key issues that are identified within the main research questions (see Section 4.1). To support the exploration of these views, the main research questions are linked to the students' interest in attaining social justice to compensate for their experience with school-level violence. I chose to incorporate Fraser's concept of adequate social justice (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4) into the framework, to allow my research to delve further into the students'

perspectives. In essence, I have used the concept of adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007) to enhance the analysis of contextual school violence and the development of effective preventative interventions, including the extent to which the students are engaged as key actors during both processes.

Significantly, the school violence discourse underscores the relevance of multiply-marginalisations (Ferree, 2010) and structural violence (Galtung, 1969) for the in-depth analysis of the main research thematic (see Chapter 2). By incorporating these perspectives into the conceptual framework, I have positioned my research to investigate some of the deeper social and/or contextual issues that implicate violence within schools, including whether the students are aware of these issues. While multiply-marginalisations refer to the combined effects of intersectional factors on school violence, structural violence is indicative of the school-place factors that facilitate hidden violence.

As the emergent results from data generation highlighted contextual manifestations of gender-based violence (GBV) at the school level, it was also critical for me to integrate this secondary thematic into the framework. Further, as the performance of gender is socially responsive (Mead, 1950; Oakley; 2005; Holmes, 2007; Connell; 2009), by integrating GBV into the framework I acknowledge that it is, at once, a form of school violence and a wider societal issue that contributes towards school violence. This dual role is depicted within the framework as bi-directional arrows that connect the entries for school violence and GBV.

Notably, the unit of analysis for my research is the student, with emphasis on the combined perspectives of the student discussants about school violence. The main research questions for this study are premised, therefore, on the assumption that the students have the capacity to contribute towards the school violence debate. By engaging the students' views on the research subject, the revised Salmi (2000) framework supports data generation, which can be used to inform effective intervention. This data generating capacity is illustrated by a dotted uni-directional link between the revised Salmi (2000) framework; the main research subject; and the students' combined perspectives. Similar interconnections, albeit bi-directional, are depicted between the revised Salmi (2000) framework and the concepts of structural violence; multiply-marginalisations; and adequate social justice. On the one hand, these interconnections signify the contribution of each concept to the revised framework. Specifically, the revised Salmi (2000) framework has been informed by the existence of hidden structural violence (Galtung, 1969); multiply-marginalisations that increase student susceptibility to school violence (Ferree, 2010); and the need for adequate social justice entailing parity of participation (Fraser, 2007). On the other hand, the bi-directional connections denote the inherent role of the revised Salmi (2000) framework, as a tool for generating data on each concept relative to the school violence thematic.

As a pre-requirement for research implementation, including the establishment and integration of the conceptual framework, all aspects of my research needed to comply with ethical social research procedures. In the next section, therefore, I discuss the steps that were taken to ensure ethical compliance.

4.3 Research ethics

The ethical procedures for this study were informed by the Lancaster University Code of Practice for Research (Lancaster University, 2009), and the university's legal and ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, including children and young people (FASS-LUMS-REC, 2017). My research further complied with the ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association (SRA, 2003)⁷ and the UNICEF (2002) guidelines for engaging children in research (see sub-Sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.5).

4.3.1 Ethical clearance and fieldwork permission

To comply with the university's regulations for engaging human subjects in research, I applied for ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of my parent department, the Department of Educational Research. After receiving ethical clearance, I subsequently applied to the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, in conformity with its requirements for research in schools, to seek its written permission to recruit students in a sample of secondary schools. Each application was accompanied by copies of all supporting research material, including, the data generation protocols; letters and information sheets to schools and parents/guardians; consent forms for

⁷ SRA is a professional organisation for social researchers and practitioners that promotes good practice and ethical standards in social research.

parents/guardians; student assent forms; and a safeguarding protocol.⁸ I also submitted a copy of my research proposal to the Ministry of Education and clarified elements of my research to both the Research Ethics Committee and the ministry.

As the gatekeeper for field entry (Creswell, 2014), the Ministry appointed a staff member from its Educational Planning Division (Programming Section) to act as the institutional focal point during my research. The Ministry also forwarded a letter of endorsement to the school supervisors of the educational districts from which I had selected a sample of research schools, including alternative school choices. In its letter, the Ministry introduced me as an external researcher and outlined the purpose of my research. It further encouraged participation by schools, while maintaining that the decision to participate was voluntary (see sub-Section 4.3.2). In hindsight, it was indeed critical for the research schools to be allowed to retain autonomy over their research participation. As my fieldwork coincided with the schools' end-of-year examinations, including the terminal examinations for students in Form 5, school management needed to carefully consider whether my research could be accommodated. Moreover, the sensitivity of the school violence thematic created some measure of discomfort among school management, as to why their schools had been selected for the study (Fieldnotes April–May 2018). One principal specifically alluded to the research fatigue that was being generated

⁸ The safeguarding protocol is described in Section 4.3.5.

by the ongoing selection of her school through ‘a random survey’ by external researchers (Fieldnotes, May 2018). Indeed, in seeking school-level permissions for my research, I became more aware that the higher-level ethical clearance by university departments and parent institutions does not supersede the need for ethical entry into the field (see sub-Section 4.3.2).

4.3.2 School entry and the research pilot

As the schools did not respond to my initial contact by email, and follow-up communication by email and telephone, I paid a courtesy visit to the proposed pilot and research schools, to submit copies of the letter of endorsement and supporting research documents. Further, I used this visit to informally meet with the school principals, who were the gatekeepers for institutional entry. I provided each principal with a verbal overview of the study, and clarified elements of the research upon their request. In the absence of school principals, I provided this information to a vice-principal for transfer to the principal. Although I had included courtesy visits to the schools in my research design, I had not anticipated the non-response by the principals to my emailed requests for school entry. Consequently, as I needed to visit each school several times to share copies of my research documents; make an appointment to see the principal; and finalise the details for student engagement, the timeframe that was available for my fieldwork was reduced significantly. As a consideration for future research, therefore, the initial contact with the schools would be more effective if conducted through an in-person visit, instead of through email or telephone communication. This would not, however, negate the possibility of repeat visits for finalising data generation logistics.

The schools that agreed to participate in the study (see sub-Section 4.4 for a description of the sampling and student recruitment process, including school selection) were asked to appoint a focal contact person to support student mobilisation and data generation logistics (in particular, locating a venue and establishing a timeframe for this activity). Most schools appointed a guidance officer, dean or senior teacher to this role. Through their focal contact, the research schools were responsible for student selection; distributing consent forms to parents/guardians and returning completed consent forms for researcher review prior to student engagement. The focal contact was further responsible for functioning as a point of referral for the implementation of an approved Student Safeguarding Protocol (see sub-Section 4.3.5). As the research schools were generally responsible for their students' wellbeing and were usually in direct contact with the students and their parents/guardians, it was important for me to assign these responsibilities to them. Furthermore, given the sensitivity of the research topic and the need to minimise disruption to school-place routine, I was astutely aware that I needed to respect the oversight role of school management and show appreciation for the research permissions that had been granted. Essentially, successful data generation was not only dependent on my sessions with the students, but relied highly on good interpersonal relations with school management. While it was challenging to establish this relationship in most schools, the lessons I learned from the research pilot allowed me to refine the logistics for engaging the schools and their students. I proceeded to generate data only after completing the research pilot, including using its results to enhance my research, as discussed below.

The research was piloted over two half-days in a secondary school bearing the same characteristics as the sampled schools. I used the pilot to test the efficiency of the data generation process and the effectiveness of the research methods and tools. In particular, the pilot allowed me to test the extent to which the students understood the questions they were asked and were able to engage fully in the discussions, as anticipated. During the pilot, I followed all the ethical procedures that had been approved for student recruitment and engagement, including acquiring the consent of parents/guardians; acquiring student assent (see sub-Section 4.3.4); and adhering to the approved Student Safeguarding Protocol. I engaged eight students through focus group discussions, followed by six students through in-depth interviews during the pilot.

As the results of the pilot showed that the time required for in-depth interviews was less than anticipated, I was able to reduce the data generation timeframe from two half-days to one full day. This development increased the efficiency of the student-engagement process, as it minimised the disruption to school-place schedules, including the students' commitments. Further, after initially asking the students to individually review and complete their assent forms during the pilot, I used the results of the pilot to enhance this process by converting it into a group activity during data generation. By reading and explaining each question on the form aloud to each group of students, they were better able to understand what was being requested. This adjustment reduced the time required by the students to complete the form, thereby creating extra time for the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Critically, I experienced some data loss while recording the pilot phase discussions. This incident reinforced the need for me to fully enable my recorder at the start of each data generation session to minimise further data loss, and facilitate an accommodating environment for the students, to distract them from the recorder. In creating a safe space for data generation (see sub-Section 4.5.1), my approach included inter alia, advising the students that by using the recorder and not taking notes I would be better able to give them my full attention during our discussions. This explanation was acceptable to the students, as they engaged fully in all data generation activities, with minimal hesitation to share their views.

Overall, I used the results of the pilot to refine student recruitment and engagement (sub-Section 4.3.3); the acquiring of informed consent and assent (sub-Section 4.3.4); and student safeguarding (sub-Section 4.3.5). As the focus group protocol mirrored the simplicity of the main research questions, and included several probes to further engage the students, the results of the pilot did not lead to any changes in question wording or sequencing. Similarly, as the in-depth interviews were designed to investigate emergent issues from the focus group discussions, adjustments to the interview protocol were not required. The experience of the pilot re-emphasised the importance of this activity during fieldwork preparations. While its elimination would have added to the data generation timeframe, it would have reduced the quality and efficiency of this process (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

4.3.3 Ethical considerations for student recruitment and engagement

The criteria for student recruitment included perpetrators and victims of violence, as well as students with socially-defined limitations (Mechanic and Tanner, 2007), for example, disabilities. To avoid a perception that the students were being labelled, however, I asked the research schools to advise the students and their parents/guardians that the research invitation was being extended to students from diverse backgrounds. This information was also included in the information sheets that were disseminated to the students and their parents/guardians.

In response to the consent that was provided by their parents/guardians, I advised the students who assented to participate in the study (Dockett and Perry, 2011) that their participation was voluntary (see sub-Section 4.3.4). They were also informed that while a student would be allowed to physically withdraw from a focus group discussion after it had started, the student's contribution to the discussion up to that point would not be withdrawn, for reasons of impracticality. In essence, it would have been difficult for me to infer meaning from transcripts in which the voice of one student had been removed. It would have been more practical, however, for me to withdraw the participation of the students who had been interviewed individually. As a result, I informed the students that if they were selected for the in-depth interviews, they would be allowed to withdraw their participation up to three weeks after being interviewed. There were, however, no requests for research withdrawal.

4.3.4 Informed parental consent and student assent

With the support of the focal contact at each school, consent forms and information sheets were disseminated to the parents/guardians of students under the age of 18 years, to seek their written consent for their child's involvement in the study. Further to acquiring parental/guardian consent, I requested the written assent of the students (Dockett and Perry, 2011), to allow them to decide on their participation. By using this approach, I ensured that the research was conducted for and by the students. I remained available, however, to parents/guardians and the students during both processes, to provide further information about the study upon request.

4.3.5 Safeguarding policy

Given that applied social researchers are ethically responsible for their own well-being and that of the research subjects (McAuley, 2003; Silverman, 2005), I developed a Student Safeguarding Protocol to protect the students' well-being during all research activities (UNICEF, 2002; Social Research Association; 2003) and ensure that the needs of all students were prioritised throughout the study (FASS-LUMS-REC, 2017). The safeguarding protocol comprised the following clauses and procedures:

- i. **Avoidance of risk and harm:** During the focus group discussions, I actively discouraged the students from sharing their personal experiences as perpetrators or victims of violence. I also provided them with the option of terminating their participation at any time, without fear of penalty. If a student displayed signs of duress or revealed information

about self-harming; the intention to harm others; or of being in danger, as the research lead, I would have terminated the data generation activity immediately, and would have referred the student to the research focal point at their school for follow-up care. Importantly, prior to contacting the focal point, I would have advised the student of the action that was going to be taken;

- ii. **Respect:** I actively encouraged the students to respect the contributions made by their peers through attentive listening and healthy discussion; and
- iii. **Confidentiality:** During the transcription of focus group discussions and interviews, I de-identified the views that were shared by the students to safeguard individual identities, including school affiliation. The transcribed data were stored in a secure, password protected location, to which I had sole access. In communicating this information to the students, I also emphasised that their views constituted raw data that would only be used for research purposes, after I had de-identified all discussants, as well as other individuals/groups/places identified by name or individualised physical descriptors during our discussions.

(Kimmel, 1998; Social Research Association, 2003; FASS-LUM-REC, 2017).

As my research was being conducted during schooltime, the students' participation in research activities was also covered by the Ministry of Education's safeguarding procedures for maintaining safety, security and student well-being in each school. The daily management of discipline, safety and student well-being is the responsibility of a team comprising deans from

the teaching faculty; guidance officers or social workers (where appointed); and school safety officers. This 'school safeguarding team' is also supported by security officers, who are responsible for securing the school compound. In most schools, therefore, school management selected the research focal point from the safeguarding team. This would have facilitated the immediate activation of the school safeguarding procedures, in response to emergent incidents during student engagement.

Interestingly, the social research literature notes that emotion is 'a crucial part of the research experience' (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2001, p.119), such that Grinyer (2005, p.2) admits to not having 'considered the effects of the narratives on me as the researcher'. Likewise, although there was no need to enable the Student Safeguarding Protocol or the school safeguarding procedures, at times data generation challenged me emotionally. To illustrate, some students were quite vocal about the frustrations they faced at school, to the extent that one student was hopeful that I, as the researcher, could somehow facilitate her transfer to another school, an action that was outside of my remit. Conceivably, the openness of the students reflected effective data generation through the creation of a safe space for discussions in each school (see Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). Yet, in the above example, I was overwhelmed by this student's expectations that I could somehow improve her individual situation.

As my research had afforded the students an opportunity to speak freely about an issue that concerned them, I equated their frankness with the trust they had placed in me. I was constantly aware, however, of the need for reflexivity while

fulfilling my researcher role, to address researcher bias during the data generation and subsequent research phases. Essentially, I was cognisant of the need to safeguard myself emotionally, an action that is often overlooked within the social research literature (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2001; Grinyer, 2005), to maintain the credibility of my research. To complement the process of reflexive safeguarding, therefore, I opted to encourage the students on their educational journey, as well as suggest that they relay their concerns to their parents/guardians. Further, I shared my own concerns with my research supervisor, who was an external source of quality control for ethical research compliance (FASS-LUM-REC, 2017).

4.4 Sampling and student recruitment

Sampling was conducted in two stages: i) school selection; and ii) student recruitment and selection, as described in in the sub-Sections that follow.

4.4.1 School selection and overview

In 2017, the Ministry of Education identified 35 secondary schools, across seven educational districts in Trinidad and Tobago, as being most at-risk for incidents of school violence (Ministry of Education, 2017). Using a generic, purposive approach to sampling, I established the sampling frame for school and student selection from this listing of schools. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that is used to ensure the strategic relevance of the research sample to the main research questions (Bryman, 2012). It thereby supports greater results validity for the uptake of the research results by follow-

on policy and programming. By using purposive sampling, I aimed to increase data relevance by aligning the research sample to the main research questions.

The research schools were selected based on three criteria: i) geographic location; ii) educational district; and iii) type of school. As all the schools that were categorised as most at-risk were located in Trinidad, sample selection did not include schools from Tobago. Further, as three of the educational districts were located in the southern part of the country, I selected one educational district from this location only. To diversity the sample, at least one school was selected from each type of educational institution that had been categorised as being most at-risk to school violence. Included among the initial sample of schools, therefore, were de-shifted junior secondary schools; converted senior comprehensive schools; de-shifted and converted composite schools; and newly-established schools.

While the junior secondary, senior comprehensive and composite schools were established during the post-colonial independence era,⁹ the newly-established schools were constructed during the 1999-2008 Inter-American Development Bank-financed Secondary Education Modernisation Programme (SEMP) (James; 2014; Lochan, 2014; Ramsook, 2016). The schools in these four categories have all been government-run and have largely followed a technical-vocational curriculum. Junior secondary, senior comprehensive and composite schools (new sector schools) operated under a two-tier system, involving a

⁹ Trinidad and Tobago gained independence from Britain in 1962.

morning and afternoon shift system for the students in Forms 1–3 (the junior secondary schools), followed by the final two years of compulsory secondary schooling at the senior comprehensive schools (London, 1994). Composite schools were located in certain communities, usually rural or hard-to-reach areas, and housed both junior secondary and senior comprehensive schools. The new sector schools were established as alternatives to the government-assisted denominational secondary schools of the colonial period, to democratise education through increased access by the general public (Jules and Kutnick, 1990).

As the denominational schools were modelled after the traditional English grammar schools, they were owned and governed by their denominational boards; followed an academic curriculum; were single-sex institutions; and catered to the elite social classes (London, 1994; James, 2014). Further, through a concordat agreement with the government, these schools maintained the right to select a given percentage of its student population, while the remaining percentage was to be allocated by the government based on the results of the national secondary entrance examination. During the independence era, government secondary schools that followed an academic curriculum were also established to provide equal opportunities for education (James, 2014). Along with the denominational schools, they gained a reputation for facilitating higher performing and more disciplined students (London, 1994; James, 2014). The schools in both categories were, therefore, the first-choice options of the parents/guardians of students seeking secondary school entrance.

By contrast, the new sector schools do not have a reputation as first-choice institutions, particularly because they facilitate access to ‘broad-based... technical-vocational skills... believed to be crucial in planned industrial[i]s]ation’ (London, 1994, p.409). In essence, these schools have catered for students from the working classes, and students whose secondary entrance examination scores have not met the requirements of the denominational or government secondary schools. Consequently, the new sector schools have had a higher student intake; a high pupil to teacher ratio; and are viewed as low performing, under-resourced, undisciplined and overcrowded (Jules and Kutnick, 1990; London, 1994; Ramsook, 2016). Under the 1999-2008 SEMP, therefore, the newly-established schools were constructed in underserved areas to further increase educational access (Lochan, 2014) and phase-out the two-tier system. This development did not, however, erase the stigma attached to the new sector schools, which was similarly applied to these newly-established schools. In this regard, although the education system in Trinidad and Tobago is generally perceived to facilitate upward social mobility, it is equally observed to reproduce social class divisions (James, 2014). Conceivably, therefore, many students who attend the new sector and newly-established schools are from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Based on this context, my research sample comprised five research schools and five alternate schools, which were drawn from new sector and newly-established schools from five educational districts. I also selected a pilot school, with similar characteristics to the research schools, from one of the five districts. Further, I used oversampling to select alternate schools (including an alternate

pilot school) to mitigate the possibility that some of the schools would decline the research invitation. Each school was also de-identified using a pseudonym, to maintain the anonymity of the research sample. Of note, on the first day of data generation at School #1, a lower than anticipated number of students had returned signed consent forms. To mitigate the reoccurrence of this situation in other schools, which would have lowered the sample of students to a less than acceptable range, I included the alternate school for the associated educational district in the final sample of research schools. As a result, the final sample of schools comprised six schools from five educational districts (see Table 4.1). In addition to being government-run, the research schools are co-educational and are equivalent to the comprehensive schools in the English educational system.

	Research Schools <i>(Pseudonyms)</i>	Description	Average student population	Pupil to teacher ratio
1.	Burlington High	De-shifted and converted Co-educational Government-run	300-400	12
2.	Chesterville High	De-shifted and converted Co-educational Government-run	700-800	9
3.	Claremont Secondary	Converted Co-educational Government-run	400-500	17

4.	Richmond Secondary	Newly-established Co-educational Government-run	400-500	9
5.	Vermont Secondary	De-shifted and converted Co-educational Government-run	700-800	8
6.	Ryedale Secondary	De-shifted and converted Co-educational Government-run	700-800	7

Table 4.1 Summary characteristics of school sample

4.4.2 Student recruitment and selection

Although I provided specific criteria to the research schools to guide student recruitment, they were given full autonomy to lead this process. This approach allowed the recruitment to benefit from the school personnel's familiarity with their students, and minimised the possibility of researcher bias, as well as school perception of the same (Bryman, 2012). The focal contact at each school was, therefore, responsible for disseminating all informational material to students and their parents/guardians. Yet, as some manifestations of violence within the school setting are not easily recognised or categorisable (Salmi, 2000; Galtung, 1969), the suitability of schools to lead student recruitment and selection is debatable. At issue is whether school personnel would have been able to identify all student-victims and/or -perpetrators of violence. Consequently, I provided each research school with criteria that were to be

used to select a wide range of students, to facilitate the fundamental aim of my research, the exploration of the students' perspectives on school violence.

I asked each school to recruit a maximum of 10 students using the following criteria: gender; victims and perpetrators of violence; students who do not normally have the opportunity to share their views on school matters; students with disabilities; gang members; students who are outspoken; and popular students who have influence on their peers. As indicated in sub-Section 4.3.3, however, schools were also asked to refrain from sharing these criteria with students, to mitigate the students' perceptions of being labelled. The students were informed instead that as diverse views were required, they were being called upon to represent their peers. I further advised each school that students who were in conflict with each other, for example in a victim-perpetrator relationship, should not be assigned to the same focus group. I relied, here, on the ministry-approved disciplinary plan of each research school, which guides schools towards maintaining detailed records of altercations involving students.

Thirty-nine students were recruited (28 girls and 11 boys) based on a target of 20 to 50 students across all schools, as recommended for research involving grounded theory (Morse, 1994; Creswell, 2014)¹⁰. Student recruitment and selection was also informed by the research design, with its focus on engaging students, and the need to minimise school disruption. In combination, these

¹⁰ Creswell (2014) recommends a sample of 20–30 individuals and Morse (1994) recommends 30–50 individuals.

factors supported generic purposive sampling based on fixed research criteria (Bryman, 2012). Yet, after the positive experience of the research pilot, it was a personal disappointment that student recruitment was lower than anticipated in some schools. Moreover, time constraints did not permit a second round of recruitment, including the acquisition of parental/guardian consent. As the final sample of students was within the recommended range, however, the results of the study were not compromised (Appendix 1 presents an overview of the research sample).

In the next section, I describe the specific methods that I used to engage the students, and the measures I took to ensure data security.

4.5 Data generation and storage

Data generation was based on an inclusive participatory approach that involved two methods, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. It was followed by secure data storage for the next stage of the research. In each research school, I first engaged small groups of three to five students in focus group discussions, following which, I conducted individual in-depth interviews with 25 students (16 girls and 9 boys) based on a sub-sample of students from each focus group. To minimise school disruption, I collaborated closely with the focal point in each school to agree on the timing of data generation.

Each data generation method was guided by protocols that addressed the main research questions and had been approved by the Research Ethics Committee. I describe these methods in the sub-Sections below, followed by an overview of the steps that were taken to ensure secure data storage.

4.5.1 Focus group discussions

I conducted focus group discussions with groups of three to five students, for one hour on average. A maximum of two focus groups were conducted in each school. The discussions were conducted in private spaces allocated by schools, usually an unoccupied classroom, meeting room or office.

In general, the focus group method facilitates interactive collaboration during a moderated discussion (O'Sullivan, 2003; Barbour, 2007; Flick, Kardoff and Steinke, 2009; Bryman, 2012). As I had limited time with each group of students, I also used the focus groups to create a safe space for encouraging the students to engage fully in our discussions. The concept of the safe space is associated with open communication in a trusting environment (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). It empowers discussants to become key informants, who share their honest and insightful views without inhibition (O'Sullivan, 2003; Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009; Bergold and Thomas, 2012). Of necessity, therefore, I created a safe space in each school to gain the students' trust, to allow them to feel that they could speak freely, without the fear that I would use their words against them. To facilitate this process, after the assent forms were completed, I started each session with a general introduction about myself. This included mentioning that I was also a student and was locally born, although I lived overseas. I further explained my reason for seeking parental/guardian consent and my interest in giving each student an opportunity to share their views on the research subject. Similarly, I invited the students to introduce themselves to enable all who were present to get to know each other better. To culminate the introduction segment, I activated the safeguarding process, by apprising

students of the confidentiality of our discussions and the need to respect each other's contributions.

The approach to establishing the safe space took account of the ages of the students, and was used to allow students to feel at ease with each other and with an external researcher, as well as demonstrate that there were no expectations about 'right or wrong answers'. Based on the quality of the interactions I observed between the students, the introductory session contributed towards facilitating a safe environment for our discussions. While I used moderate probing to encourage contributions from the students who were less vocal during the discussions, I also invited these students to participate in the follow-up in-depth interviews. By so doing, I created a more accommodating environment for them to share their views, and I noticed that they were more forthcoming with their opinions during these interviews. In research that pairs interviews with group discussions, researchers tend to be divided on the order in which these methods should be used. Undoubtedly, there are merits to using either approach to commence data generation. My rationale for commencing with the focus group method, however, was based on my interest in following up on the issues that would have been triggered by group interaction. Moreover, I argue that students who openly share their views during individual interviews, are not guaranteed to do so during a subsequent group discussion.

The focus group discussions were structured around four questions, with a direct or indirect link to the main research questions. Figure 4.2 illustrates these questions cyclically, to emphasise their logical sequence and interconnections. The first question was a general enquiry into the students' understanding of the

research subject. In essence, to support my exploration of their' perceptions, I sought a definition of the term school violence from the students' perspectives, to allow our discussions to build on their comprehension of violence in their schools. Sundaram (2016) notes, in particular, that there is a dearth of information on young persons' understanding of violence. If, according to the popular perception, however, young persons/students are the major perpetrators and victims of school violence, an understanding of their 'characterisations of what constitutes violence' is critical for preventative work (Sundaram, 2014). Following the initial discussion on the definition of school violence, the logical sequence of questioning was: what causes school violence; what are the consequences of school violence; and what should be done to reduce and prevent it. Indeed, there was a direct link between the recommendations that were made by the students, in response to the final question, and their understanding of school violence, as offered in response to question #1.

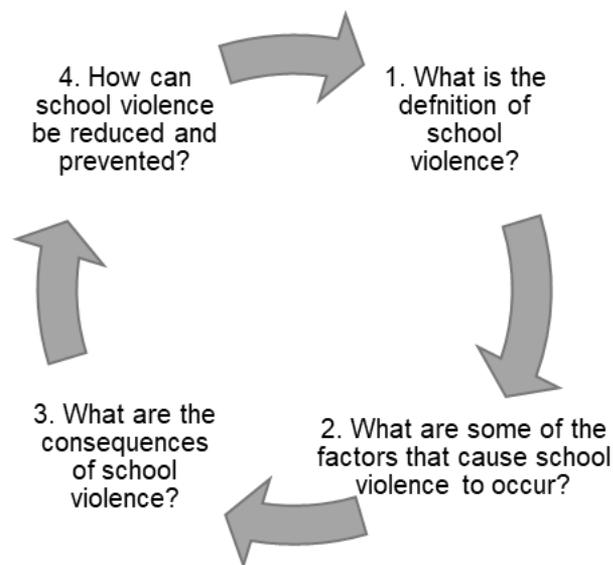


Figure 4.2 Question sequencing, focus group discussions

4.5.2 In-depth interviews

Following each focus group discussion, I invited the students to volunteer for an individual in-depth interview. As indicated, to mitigate the low contribution to the discussions by a few students, and to further explore issues that had been discussed, I also selected students for follow-up interviews. Importantly, the students who had been less inclined to speak during the group sessions were more outspoken during their interview. While some students cited a predisposition to being shy, the narratives shared during the interviews also highlighted a reluctance by other students to share their experiences and frustrations with violence in their schools.

In-depth interviews were conducted with two to seven students from each focus group. Each interview addressed salient issues raised by the students during their focus group discussion, as well as my own observations from these discussions. As the interviews were conducted with individual students, the questions that were discussed were more sensitive, for example, a student's personal experience of violence and how it was addressed. The interviews lasted for a maximum of 30 minutes. As they were conducted within the safe space environment, they provided students with an opportunity to nuance statements and actions from the earlier discussions. To deepen my enquiry into these emergent issues, I used the in-depth interviews to build on the rapport that I had established with the students during the focus groups (Johnson, 2001; Legard et al, 2003; Seidman, 2006). Together with the data generated from the focus group discussions, the data from the in-depth interviews were

stored securely for post-fieldwork analysis and results interpretation (see sub-Section 4.5.3).

4.5.3 Data transcription and storage

To facilitate the re-examination and preliminary analysis of generated data (Bryman, 2012), I transcribed each discussion and interview myself to ‘remain close to the data’, as I prepared to extract meaning from the students’ narratives. In addition to supporting preliminary data analysis, self-transcribing allows the researcher to directly manage the quality of each transcription (Flick, 2009). Relatedly, therefore, I de-identified each transcription by removing all names and individualised descriptors, to safeguard individual identities and minimise the possibility of deductive disclosure (Yang et al 2017). I replaced the names of the students and their schools with standardised numerical identifiers (e.g. STU001 for Student #1, and SS003, for Secondary School #3), to maintain the integrity of the transcripts for data analysis and results interpretation (Section 4.7) upon field exit (Section 4.6).

Data generated during fieldwork, including the pre-fieldwork research pilot, were stored in a secure, encrypted location, using the guidelines provided by Lancaster University. During fieldwork, audio recordings were encrypted using 7-zip software and were transcribed to create encrypted Microsoft Office documents, which were stored on a password-protected personal computer, to which I had sole access.

Undeniably, data transcribing is time-consuming, leading to the recommendation that transcriptions should reflect data of direct relevance to

the main research questions (Flick, 2009; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). As my research has centred on the views of the students, however, the audio recordings were transcribed in full, and no edits were made to the verbatim narratives, to accurately reflect the students' voices.

4.6 Field exit

I left the field five months after research permission had been granted by the Ministry of Education, upon completing my fieldwork. Since I had created an environment of trust that encouraged the students to share their honest views on the research subject, ethical field exit was required (Dickson-Swift et al, 2007; Morrison, Gregory and Thibodeau, 2012). As a token of appreciation for their contributions to the study, therefore, I provided each student with stationery at the end of the focus group discussions, in both the pilot and research schools. Verbal appreciation was also extended to principals and school focal points at the end of data generation in each school. Using electronic mail, the exit from the field was also communicated to the focal contact at the Ministry of Education.

4.7 Data analysis and results Interpretation

In line with the interpretivist research design, data analysis and results interpretation occurred throughout the study and was strongly supported by grounded-theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Creswell, 2014). To illustrate, as the unit of analysis was the individual student, I continuously drew on the students' analytical insights in relation to the main research questions during data generation. By so doing, research

implementation remained grounded in the issues that emerged from my discussions with the students. In the sub-Sections that follow, I describe the data analysis and results interpretation processes in more detail, relative to the fieldwork that was completed; and the post-fieldwork coding of generated data (sub-Section 4.7.1 and 4.7.2, respectively).

4.7.1 Data analysis during fieldwork

The analysis of the research data commenced during data generation as an integrated aspect of this process. This approach is common during qualitative research (Flick, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014) and served to enhance the study in two ways.

First, as data generation included the preliminary analysis of the research data, given the students' critical reflections on contextual violence in their schools, it supported the genuine engagement of young persons in social research (Hart, 1992). The research design deviated markedly, therefore, from tokenistic research that relegates young persons to the role of 'the researched', and instead engaged the students as 'individuals with inherent rights to participation' (Grover, 2004, p.90).

Second, by maintaining a fieldwork journal to document my observations (on behaviours; fieldwork activities; etc.), as well as emergent issues from research implementation, I was able to anchor theory-formulation in the research data (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Through the ongoing analysis of my journaled data, followed by results interpretation (albeit both

preliminary), I was better able to document and further explore emergent trends during my discussions with the students.

4.7.2 Coding and thematic saturation

Data generated by student engagement and fieldwork journaling were subject to three levels of coding: open (Level 1), axial (Level 2) and selective (Level 3) coding (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin; 1998). During open coding, I clustered the research data under emergent concepts (codes), following which, I used axial coding to develop thematic categories based on a review of the Level 1 codes. I then used selective coding to establish the main results of the study, by developing the research storyline around a core thematic category. The aim of the coding process was to derive meaning from the students' narratives, in alignment with the research aim and its main questions. Data coding was integrated into an extensive review of the research data, therefore, to identify patterns and areas of divergence across the emergent themes, up to a point of thematic saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Flick, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014; Saunders et al 2018).¹¹

As a continuation of the preliminary analysis of my fieldwork journal, I coded this dataset by hand, with the advantage that it allowed me to remain close to

¹¹ At the point of thematic saturation, no further themes are forthcoming from the coding process.

the research data. Conversely, I used NVIVO computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to code the larger datasets from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The use of CAQDAS supported data management at each level of coding. To illustrate, the focus group and in-depth interview transcriptions/transcripts were imported into the NVIVO platform and were stored in separate folders. Each transcript was coded individually by creating nodes (containers) to collate emergent codes from the students' narratives. During open coding, I reviewed each uploaded transcript and highlighted sections of text that reflected the emerging codes. The highlighted text was stored within each node for reference during the next level of coding. Importantly, the identification of thematic codes was not a static activity, as it was possible to amend existing codes, as well as formulate new ones throughout the review. Table 4.2 provides examples of the nodes and associated codes, as well as the texts that were coded during open coding. The examples show the direct alignment between the coding process and the main research questions, and by extension, the research aim.

Research question #1 Causes of violence
<p>Nodes\\Causes of school violence\\Friendship and Loyalty</p> <p>Files\\Focus groups\\Focus group1_SS002</p> <p>STU25_SS004: If yuh [you] have a friend right, ...we real talking about friends, but if yuh [you] have a friend ...and if they doing bad ...a teacher go have to [will] call one of the students and talk about yuh [your] friends with yuh [you] ...that not nice</p> <p>Researcher: Okay</p> <p>STU25_SS004: ...cause it come like the teachers them want me stop talk to the girl ...and I don't want to do that ...cause she was there for me from ever since</p>

Research question #2 Consequences of violence
<p>Nodes\\Consequences of school violence\\ School reaches out to parents and guardians</p> <p>Files\\Focus groups\\Focus group 1_SS001</p> <p>STU4_SS001: I don't talk to no dean, bean, cause they quick to throw a parents' letter in yuh face...</p> <p>STU3_SS001: They quick to give yuh a parent's letter and seven days home, "Here, bring yuh mother and they have to sign in this and sign in that"</p> <p>STU4_SS001: And sign in book</p>
Research question #3 Reducing and preventing violence
<p>Nodes\\Reduction and prevention of school violence\\ Motivational activities arranged by school</p> <p>Files\\In-depth interviews\\STU24_SS004</p> <p>Researcher: ...[I]f you were the principal of this school, what would you do to ensure that ...all the violence stops?</p> <p>STU24_SS004: ...[A]s a principal I find I woulda get [would have gotten] speakers from all over ...to come and talk to all the students, put them in the hall and have a conversation with everybody... yuh know ...make it exciting ...get a motivational speaker...</p> <p>Researcher: Yes</p> <p>STU24_SS004: to come every... every other week ...and talk to the students...</p>

Table 4.2 Open coding, examples of coded text

During axial coding, I reviewed the Level 1 nodes to identify connections between the codes that were stored in each node. This process involved adjustments, where applicable, entailing the merging or renaming of nodes, and the relocation of codes to different nodes. Level 2 coding resulted in key emergent themes that further clarified the transcribed data for the final level of coding. During selective coding, I reviewed the Level 2 themes to selectively code text and identify a core thematic category for the students' narratives on

school violence. In Table 4.3, I outline the main storyline on the students' perceptions of school violence, which emerged as a direct result of the coding process.

Research aim	Research questions	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
To explore the views of secondary school students on the causes and consequences of violence and their suggestions for reducing and preventing violence	#1: What are the causes of school-based violence from students' perspectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom issues - Community violence - Domestic issues - Drugs and alcohol - Friendship and loyalty - Peer pressure - Perception of self - Peer envy - Peer rivalry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actions by adults in school setting - Social stressors - Peer relations 	School violence as a multifaceted construct requiring a collaborative response
	#2: What do students believe are the consequences of their/fellow students' violent behaviours?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School reaches out to parents/guardians - Punishment - School personnel intervention - General public intervention - General public perception - Law enforcement response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adult response within school system - Bystander and law enforcement response 	

	#3: How do students think violence can be effectively reduced and prevented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extra-curricular activities - PTA involvement - Student behavioural change - Trust - Use of support services - Motivational activities - Peer intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students' use of initiative for behavioural change, seeking assistance and supporting each other - Support from adults within and external to the school setting 	
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Table 4.3 Coding map and emergent storyline

I aligned the finalised storyline with the conceptual research framework, to articulate the results of the research as substantive theory, specifically, results that have been ‘grounded in research on one particular substantive area’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.79).¹² Notwithstanding my achievement in reaching this research milestone, my research has not been without limitations, as discussed below.

4.8 Limitations and mitigation measures

The main challenge to the study was the purposive approach to sampling. Purposive sampling facilitated the direct alignment between the core research

¹² I discuss the research storyline in Chapters 5–7.

components (data generation; analysis; and results interpretation) and the main research questions, thereby increasing the potential for results accuracy and validity (Bryman, 2012). By using this approach, I was able to engage students with first-hand experience of school violence, as well as students who did not normally have the opportunity to share their views on social matters at school. Purposive sampling does not, however, support results generalisation to a larger population. The results of my research do not, therefore, reflect the views of the entire student populations of the research schools, and are not representative of student perceptions across Trinidad and Tobago. Of note here, is the small size of the research sample (39 students from six schools) relative to the average student population of the research schools (lower range, 300-400 students; upper range, 700-800 students). What is more, given my focus on the male-female gender binary (see Chapter 6), boys only accounted for a small percentage of the research sample (28 percent; 11 students). Further, there were only three East Indian students in the study (8 percent of the research sample), although East Indians are one of the two numerically dominant races in Trinidad and Tobago.

By design, however, this study holds relevance for educational policy and programming, as it provides insights into students' perceptions on an issue of national interest. Consequently, as I used the research design to demonstrate the students' capacity to critically reflect on contextual school violence it has mitigated the lack of results generalisability.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the research methodology, including the research design and methods, and the ethical procedures that were applied during research implementation through to field exit, to safeguard all research actors and ensure the secure storage of the research data. Given its focus on the lived experiences of the students, to derive meaning from their subjective views on school violence, this study is located within an interpretivist paradigm. To facilitate an exploratory study for an enhanced understanding of the research subject, therefore, research implementation was informed by grounded theory. As this approach was used to formulate data-driven theory, the conceptual framework emerged from the research data as a product of inductive reasoning. Further to its alignment with the main research aim and questions, the conceptual framework highlighted the key emergent themes from the research data, which were used to inform the research trajectory. Overall, while this study was challenged by the non-generalisability of its emergent results, this limitation was mitigated by the insights that were gained on the students' understanding of school violence.

Chapter 5: Student Contextualisation of School-based Violence

“Government keeps ...a lot of educational forums ...speaking to the parents, ...the teachers, the staff, ...but ...leaving out one person ...the student; ...in certain situations yuh [you] should involve students themselves ...to get a better perspective”

(Mitch, age 16, male, Richmond Secondary).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three analytical chapters in which I examine the issues raised by students, from six secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, on contextual school violence within their respective schools. My aim has been to engage the students as knowing subjects with a capacity for critical thought (Balen et al, 2006), to build on pioneering studies on school violence in this country (Phillips, 2010; Williams, 2012). Yet, while school violence is described as resulting from interpersonal interface at the school level in one of these studies (Williams, 2012), in the other study, it is associated with a poverty complex that is conditioned by the students' home experiences (Phillips, 2010). Significantly, therefore, this chapter is important on two levels. First, as indicated, it identifies the role of students as key discussants in the school violence debate. Second, it examines the structural school-level factors that are often overlooked as violence-enablers because of a general fixation on student-initiated physical violence and individual psycho-social causes. The theoretical framework for my discourse is anchored, therefore, in the concept of structural violence (Galtung, 1969), the manifestations of which are usually unrecognised by victims and perpetrators alike within the school setting. By default, structural

violence is largely untargeted during preventative interventions. Indeed, the focus on structural considerations fills a gap in the school violence discourse. Further, as intimated by Mitch (student, aged 16) above, the students believe they have a viable contribution to make to discussions on school violence.

5.2 ‘What is this violence?’ Defining school violence from a student perspective

Media reporting and bystander observations of student altercations in Trinidad and Tobago have fuelled a primary, though not exclusive, focus on physical violence among students in this country. School violence continues to be a hot topic that identifies students as both perpetrators and victims of violence on the school compound, as well as in the external vicinity. Using this backdrop as a starting point for focus group discussions with small groups of students, I invited the students to reflect critically on violence in their respective schools. This invitation led to animated discussions among the students, as they sought to explain their understanding of school violence (see Excerpts 1–3).

Excerpt 1, Burlington High:

Justine (age 17, female): School violence could be bullying ...other students

Researcher: When you say bullying, what do you mean?...

Tiffany (age 18, female): Taxing

Researcher: [W]hat is taxing?

Justine: Asking them for ...money, and they don't want to give yuh¹³; they will hit yuh or take it themselves

Excerpt 2, Richmond Secondary:

Stacy (age 16, female): It could be a release of rage...

Amber (age 17, female): Beside the fact that yuh angry, it could ...be a situation where ...somebody push yuh to a certain point...

Stacy: It could also be where yuh work hard for something ...and somebody just try to tarnish it, so ...yuh get vex because of that

Excerpt 3, Vermont Secondary:

Jamel (age 14, male): School violence is when people touching yuh and taking yuh [your] money ...and carrying yuh and giving yuh thing to smoke ...and influencing yuh to do wrong things

Researcher: I see. Did you hear that? Do you agree?

Gemma (age 13, female): I agree, I surely agree

Furlong and Morrison (2000) observe that there is no universal definition of school violence in the literature.¹⁴ As such, my analysis of the students' views is not set against a fixed definitional benchmark to determine accuracy, but delves into the combined perspectives of the students based on their individual

¹³ 'Yuh' is dialect for the word you, unless otherwise indicated in the text.

¹⁴ Specifically, the exploration of school violence across disciplines

understanding and experiences. In fact, Henry (2000, p.19) opines that ‘a more inclusive, integrated definition of school violence is necessary’, to take stock of its ‘broader dimensions’. Fields 1-4 of the revised Salmi (2000) framework (see Table 3.2) are central, therefore, to data generation on the contextual dimensions of school violence, in terms of its format; perpetrators; and the location and timing of occurrence. Relatedly, evidence of structural violence would be discernible from generated data.

The excerpts cited above show that, on the one hand, the students identify the physical elements of school violence, as denoted by student-initiated violence. In Excerpt 1, Justine and Tiffany speak about physical bullying through taxing, whereby students are forcibly relieved of their money by other students and are subject to physical attacks for non-compliance. Jamel (Excerpt 3) recounts a similar understanding of school violence, in which students force their peers to part with their money, but he goes a step further to identify the negative peer influence that can lead students towards delinquent behaviours. Importantly, as well as the difference in gender between both sets of students, there is also a noted age gap. Justine and Tiffany are aged 17 and 18, respectively, and Jamel is 14. Yet these three students have the same understanding of what school violence entails. On the other hand, Stacy and Amber emphasise that there is a reactionary element to school violence, when students are pushed to “a certain point” by their peers, resulting in “a release of rage”. Stacy insinuates, in particular, that even well-behaved students can become violent if they are provoked by a perception that their efforts are being discredited. Interestingly, the students’ understanding of school violence, as physical altercations, mirrors

the media's portrayal of violence at the school level. As this type of violence is easily recognisable, unsurprisingly, it has received priority attention from both parties.

In light of the similarities and differences that emerged during our focus group discussions, I was able to cluster the students' understanding of school violence under four main categories: i) abuse; ii) coercive persuasion; iii) disrespect; and iv) reactive behaviour. Table 5.1, below, provides an unexhaustive list of the verbatim descriptors that were provided by the students to explain each definitional category, including sub-categories, where outlined.

Definitional categories		Description
1.	Abuse:	
	a. Physical	Real physical blows
		Somebody from yuh school who doh [doesn't] really like yuh ...could call yuh aside and beat yuh
		If yuh don't like somebody and yuh slap them
	b. Verbal	Verbal harm/Verbal abuse
		Bringing down people[someone's] self esteem
	c. Sexual	Sexual misconduct
		Sexual touch /Sexual abuse
	d. General	It have [has] to be related to the school since is [it's] school violence
		Picking on other children that [who are] younger than you/[H]arassing the youth/Harassment/The bigger ones picking on the smaller ones
2.	Coercive persuasion	Taxing/Taking other children[s] money

		Forcing someone to do something that they don't want to do ...knowing that they are smaller than you
3.	Disrespect	When students tend to disrespect the school rules ...and... they do things that isn't [aren't] appropriate for the school
4.	Reactive behaviour	Yuh lash out ...it may end up with words ...and the words may inflict some kinda [type of] ...rage in the other person ...and then, alyuh [both of you] battle it out

Table 5.1 Categorising students' definitions of school violence

While each category reflects a distinct understanding of violence, there is an observed overlap in the descriptions that were provided by the students for some categories. As an example, general abuse that involves bigger students “picking on the smaller ones” (Category 1d) is also demonstrated by coercive persuasion (Category 2), during which students are forced to perform given actions because “they are smaller” physically. This descriptive overlap is important from a relational standpoint, as it suggests that each definitional category forms part of a collective whole, namely, an overarching definition of school violence from the students' perspectives.

For the students, school violence is a manifestation of abuse (of all forms); coercion; disrespect and reactive behaviours (see Table 5.1). Further, given that the students' narratives also emphasise physical and behavioural responses to the use of force and power, their understanding of school violence directly aligns with the definition that has been evolving in the associated literature. Specifically, initial efforts to define school violence attempted to

merge the concept of juvenile crime, physical violence inclusive, with student indiscipline (Furlong and Morrison, 2000). As a result, school violence became synonymous with physical confrontations initiated by students, and was classified under behavioural deviance (Elliott, Hamburg and Williams, 1998). Yet, similar to the definitional categories that emerged from my discussions with the students, there has been a growing understanding that school violence is complex and multifaceted, and cannot be defined through a narrow focus on physical interaction and deviant behaviours (Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Henry, 2000; Astor and Meyer, 2001; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005). Interestingly, therefore, the students qualified their understanding of school violence by establishing dimensions of occurrence, in terms of time, place and the persons who are likely to be involved, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 4, Chesterville High:

- Researcher: ...[H]ow does this violence ...make you feel?
- Dianne (age 15, female): Is just ...it's so ...it['s] bad but it's something... it's becoming normal and that's a bad thing all round
- Researcher: When you say becoming normal ...what do you mean?
- Dianne: It doesn't bother me anymore because it's something ...I got accustomed to
- Researcher: Okay, and how often does it take place, this violence?
- Dianne: Almost every day ...More like five times a day and thing [in general]
- Researcher: And where ...does it take place?

Dianne: In the school, outside the school, on the street, all over

Excerpt 5, Chesterville High:

Researcher: ...[D]oes school violence only involve the students of this school

Courtney (age 15, male): Nope

Researcher: It involves other people?

Courtney: Yes

Researcher: People like who?

Courtney: Yuh [your] family members... friends, people yuh associate with

Researcher: ...[H]ow do they get involved in school violence?

Ava (age 15, female): They come, they wouldn't ask a question, they will come to... fight ...injure ...other people[']s] children ...do them harm ...they would not understand the two sides of the story

By indicating that she no longer feels bothered by school violence because it happens so often (see Excerpt 4), Dianne, in essence, is expressing her latent frustration with the violence in her school, particularly, its frequency and normalcy. These sentiments are shared by Ava (Excerpt 5), who takes issue with the involvement of external parties during physical altercations among students. Courtney notes that although these external parties are not a part of the school setting, they are affiliated with identified students in some way, for example, through family or friendship ties. Ava is adamant, however, that the basis for their involvement is bias and unsound reasoning (“they would not understand the two sides of the story”).

While I would not dispute the students' understanding about what constitutes school violence, as their views are based on their lived experiences, I cannot help but notice the emphasis they continue to place on physical violence that commingles with behavioural issues. On the one hand, this is unsurprising, as the students' narratives have been interspersed with tangible examples of physical violence and related inflammatory behaviours among their peers. On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 2, there is a noted distinction in the literature between 'school violence', which originates from social situations 'outside the school experience', and 'violence in schools', which arises from interpersonal relations 'within the school context' (Furlong and Morrison, 2000, pp.73-74). I have, however, chosen to use these terms and contexts interchangeably, to align with the popular usage of the term school violence by the general public, to describe violence at the school level. Importantly, however, the evolving definition of school violence is not confined to physical incidents that are committed mainly or solely by students, but includes violence that is facilitated by the institutionalised school environment.

In general, the literature on institutionalised violence is differentiated by field of study (see Chapter 2, sub-Section 2.3.2), across educational studies (Ross Epp and Watkinson, 1996; 1997); sociology (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977); and peace studies (Galtung, 1969; 1971). Each body of work is unified, however, by the recognition that non-physical violence at the institutional level takes the form of power differentials that are either systemic (Ross Epp and Watkinson, 1996; 1997), symbolic (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) or structural (Galtung (1969; 1971). Interestingly, therefore, while the students define school violence

in terms of physical and behavioural manifestations exhibited by their peers, with occasional support from external parties, they also identify school-place concerns that connote institutionalised school violence. In providing examples of these concerns, the students note that they are often instigated by school personnel and not necessarily by their peers (see Excerpts 6 and 7). A question here, however, is whether the students perceive these actions to be forms of violence or examples of unfairness and inefficient practice.

Excerpt 6, Claremont Secondary:

Chantal (age 16, female): ...[T]eachers ...feel because they are teachers ...they are above you, and... you are beneath them. It's like do as I say and not what I do ...and it's so unfair because as children, we have to ...be able to express ourself [ourselves] freely, and not be worried ...this teacher will take it offensively..., so it's not only students, it's also teachers, MTS¹⁵ workers, cleaners, ...all of them ...They just see you do this and they have to pound you [criticise students harshly] ...and it's so unfair, ...they don't want to hear, "No, I didn't do this." Yuh was there... and yuh get blame ...because yuh was there [You get blamed because of being at the scene].

Excerpt 7, Richmond Secondary:

Marcia (age 16, female): ...[S]ome teachers pay attention to, like, one student and forget about the rest of the class, which

¹⁵ MTS – Maintenance Training and Security; The National MTS Company Limited provides security and maintenance services for secondary schools.

I find it unfair... like if the teacher is asking a question, she wouldn't ...go to other students and ask that question ...because she knows the student knows the answer ...instead of ...asking other students so they will help themselves...

Researcher: ... and how do you feel when that happens?

Marcia: Like generally ...for other students, sometimes they will feel less than because ...she[']s] making it seem as if that student is better than the others

In Excerpt 6, Chantal draws attention to a demarcation between teachers and students, and infers that students are relegated to a subsidiary position within the school setting. Chantal opines, therefore, that school violence engages both students and adults at the school level. She further notes that the issue of concern is not limited to status considerations, but extends to the restrictions that are placed on students' freedom of expression. While I understand the concerns of this student, I equally recognise the characteristics of an institutionalised setting, where the actions of the institutionalised, in this case the students, are regulated by established rules, whether written or implied. In line with this regulated context, Galtung (1969) notes the importance of understanding the 'science of social structure', including stratification and unequal power relations, to better understand structural violence. I do wonder, therefore, whether the real issue for the students is that they believe they are not being heard; or are not being given a chance to voice their opinions; and/or are not being taken seriously. Chantal implies especially that students are judged harshly ("they have to pound [criticise] you") and are punished by school

authorities for being on the scene, whether or not they were involved in an incriminating activity (“yuh was there and yuh get blame”).

Marcia goes a step further and identifies what she perceives to be inefficiencies within the classroom. She submits that some students are not often called upon to participate in class activities because they are weaker in certain subjects. For Marcia, the teacher’s attention is skewed towards that one student who “knows the answer”. She further notes that this action belittles the other students, namely, those who are perceived to not know the answer, as they are made to feel “less than”. In this situation, I surmise that the teacher is focused on advancing the lesson and, therefore, calls upon the student(s) who can support this aim. Marcia’s feedback does, however, raise the question of whether calling upon the ‘bright’ student only is good practice, given the effect on the morale of the other students. Moreover, it is conceivable that the teacher’s action can contribute towards deteriorating relations among students, for example, because of envy.

In light of the students’ perceptions, it is logical to add the notion of institutionalised violence to Table 5.1, to further depict their understanding of school violence. Importantly, however, the overarching issue that emerges from the discussions pertains to an ‘us versus them’ dichotomy, where ‘us’ refers to the general student population in each school, and ‘them’ refers to persons who are perceived to be in a preferential position, from the students’ perspective. The student discussants note that the category ‘them’ can comprise adults, as well as students who, from a peer perspective, are favoured by teachers. Conceivably, the students’ discontent about the power differentials and

classroom dynamics in their schools has been informed by multiple factors. Examples of these factors can range from the students' misinterpretation of teaching styles to bias by school personnel, whether intentional or situational, that manifests as structural violence during institutionalised schooling. It follows that the combination of the student-adult interface and the students' interpretation of the same can lead to enabling conditions that create a conducive context for school violence (Kelly, 2016; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020), as I discuss next.

5.3 Major causes and enabling conditions

The issue of attribution has been central to the debate on school violence, insofar as it supports the search for a solution by addressing the question of why school violence occurs. Indeed, Field 5 of the revisited Salmi (2000) framework (see Table 3.2), with its focus on the reasons that underlie school violence, is designed to generate data on this pertinent issue. As school violence has been largely attributed to juvenile deviance (Miller and Kraus, 2008), however, efforts to attribute school violence to identifiable causal factors have often entailed applying theories of crime/delinquency/deviance to the analysis of students' behaviours (Lawrence, 2007). Two issues are worth noting, here.

Firstly, theories of crime/delinquency/deviance focus on individual-level, psycho-social behaviours, and do not distinguish between school violence and juvenile crime in the wider society (Akiba et al, 2002). As there is a dearth of empirical work on 'the relationship between macro-level community

characteristics and crime and violence in schools' (Laub and Lauristen, 1998, p.140), however, there is limited evidence to suggest that the causal factors for juvenile crime also lead to school violence. Secondly, efforts to link school violence to students' socio-economic backgrounds (Phillips, 2010) do not consider the contribution of structural school-level factors to incidents of violence. What emerges, therefore, is the importance of context in exploring the school violence thematic (Felson et al, 1994; Elliott, Hamburg and Williams, 1998; Astor and Meyer, 2001; Akiba et al, 2002; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005; Fuchs, 2008). Frosch and Johnson-Laird (2006, p.1329) note, in particular, that while a causal factor 'brings about an effect ...an enabling condition makes the effect possible'. In essence, enabling conditions denote the situational contexts within which the causes and manifestations of school violence emerge.

The contribution of context to school violence is not limited to the school setting, but also extends to the wider society (Akiba et al, 2002; Phillips, 2010). Importantly though, the views shared by the students corroborate the role of context in generating enabling conditions that contribute towards school violence. In Table 5.2, therefore, I outline the six enabling conditions for school violence that emerged from my discussions with the students. I qualify them further under three categories, to outline enabling conditions that are: i) behavioural; ii) structural; and iii) external to the school setting.

Enabling conditions		Description ¹⁶
Behavioural		
1.	Disruptive students	If it have [there is] a teacher in the class and... people [students are] talking in the class, you wouldn't be able to hear what the teacher [is] saying ...and the teacher [will] have to stop ...to talk to that person and then half of the class gone [is wasted] (Bernard, 14, Chesterville High)
		He stop[ped] giving [homework] because he realise[d] that most of the students not [weren't] doing it (Amber, 17, Richmond Secondary)
2.	Peer pressure	Yuh don't want to look like a coward or yuh don't want to look girly in front of yuh peers in the school (Mitch, 16, Richmond Secondary)
		Yuh could gain rank [status], from fighting outside of school... and most... of them, that is what they actually want (Stacy, 16, Richmond Secondary)
Structural		
3.	Disrespect and lack of encouragement from school personnel	It had [There was] a safety officer [who was] selling water and she curse[d]. She say [said] "Give me the f***ing money" ...she right, we wrong ...we is [are] students (Tiffany, 18, Burlington High)
		Sometimes the teachers ...come to teach the class, and every little thing they quarrelling for [they find fault with everything] ...yuh can't talk to them, yuh can't ask them to explain nothing, they vex (Sonia, 16, Burlington High)
4.	Inefficient teaching practice	That kind of aggressive teaching, it might work for me, or I might be able to take it, but not everybody will be able to ...sometimes yuh might be real[ly] scared to say something or to ask a question (Amber, 17, Richmond Secondary)
		Sometimes we would go a whole day without no work ...It's like Peter pay for Paul and Paul pay for all (Dianne, 15, Chesterville High)

¹⁶ These descriptions are illustrative examples of the students' views and are, therefore, not exhaustive.

External		
5.	Domestic issues	Like if the father hitting the mother ...when you reach to [arrive at] school now, you will be like, if somebody touch[es] you, "Don't touch me! Wha'ham? [What's wrong with you?]" (Gail, 13, Ryedale Secondary)
		If yuh was [you were] raised thinking that violence and cursing is [are] the only solution[s], it will affect yuh, and yuh [your] judgement in certain situations (Mitch, 16, Richmond High)
6.	Social stereotypes	They does talk about like you going this school so you duncey [Society implies we are dunces because of the school we attend] (Eric, 12, Claremont Secondary)
		If we have nobody in society that looks at the good and only see[s] the bad, well then is [it's a] waste of time trying because you[re] only seeing the bad side of things (Fabienne, 15, Claremont Secondary)

Table 5.2 Student-identified enabling conditions for school violence

Similar to the categories that emerged from the students' definitions of school violence, there is some overlap across the categories of enabling conditions. Behavioural issues, in particular, are reflected in all three categories, as they are not exhibited by students only, but are displayed by school personnel and the wider society. The students note, especially, that external factors can influence violence by their peers. Gail draws attention to violent scenes within the home and concludes that they can be internalised by students and condition the way they behave. Mitch is also aware that it is possible for a student who is raised in a confrontational domestic environment to adopt similar behavioural traits. For Eric and Fabienne, however, the external conditions that can, possibly, enable school violence are not confined to the domestic sphere, but include the public perception of their schools. Eric observes that there is an automatic social stereotype that is attached to the schools and their students, and Fabienne notes the discouragement it engenders. Interestingly though, she

also implies that the behaviours of some students lead external parties to “only see the bad”.

Notably, the students ascribe enabling conditions that are behavioural to the actions of their peers. Bernard advises that when his peers talk among themselves during lessons, the teacher’s voice becomes inaudible to those students who are trying to pay attention. If the teacher stops teaching to admonish the disruptive students, or no longer assigns homework because “most of the students not doing it”, these actions are to the detriment of syllabus completion and student uptake of what is being taught. Importantly, therefore, as observed by Dianne, student-initiated classroom disruption does not occur in a vacuum, but affects the quality and the outcome of teaching practice. Specifically, “Peter pay[s] for Paul and Paul pay[s] for all” (Dianne, 15, Chesterville High) if teachers become demotivated and avoid the classroom. The type of violence that is implied, here, does not involve physical contact, but refers to a violation of the education experience, with emphasis on the purported benefits to students. Moreover, the teaching strategies that are used to engage students are called into question, given the possible conflict with the students’ expectations and their response to classroom teaching. Essentially, Amber observes that while “aggressive teaching” might work for some students, such an approach might scare other students into silence, leading to their non-participation during class-time. Sonia similarly insinuates that the demeanour of some teachers might lead their students to assume that they are unapproachable.

I argue, here, that the institutional school environment can generate a context that is conducive for structural violence (Galtung 1969), through the interplay between its regulatory culture and power dynamics at the classroom and wider school levels. Kelly (2016) submits, in particular, that power and authority create a sense of entitlement within institutions. Furthermore, structural practices and policies within schools, in particular, teaching practice and approaches to maintaining discipline, can 'exacerbate problems of violence' (Baker, 1998, p.36). Similarly, emergent gaps in the institutionalised school system, such as unsupervised class-time arising from unaddressed teacher absenteeism, fuels a conducive context for school violence. Effectively, some students can become "...idle ...roaming and doing whatever they want to do" (Dianne, 15, Chesterville High).

Given the time that teachers and students expend at school, I also maintain that there can be deleterious implications for the school-place experience if interpersonal relations between and within each group of actors are less than stellar. In light of the implications for emergent violence, I question, therefore, the meanings that are attached to the school-place experience by the students and the adults who form the school populations. Specifically, are the motivational factors for school attendance limited to: i) student-compliance with compulsory education requirements, and ii) income generation intertwined within career fulfilment by school personnel? In this regard, it is of interest that Stacy (Table 5.2, Item 2) infers that students can "gain rank" among their peers if they engage in physical battles, especially when they occur outside the school compound. She further opines that some of her peers want to gain this status,

a perception that is supported by Mitch, unwittingly, who notes that the boys, in particular, would not want to appear cowardly or “girlie” in front of their peers. A point for consideration is whether Stacy is referring to a status gain among the girls in her school, the boys or both groups. In similar vein, it would be of interest to know whether Mitch is referring to his male peers or the entire student population in his school. Indeed, I explore the issue of gender further in Chapter 6. I observe, however, that the pressure for the students to conform to social expectations around gender, including peer expectations, has contributed to emergent incidents of student-initiated violence. An example of the effect of this external pressure is provided by Mitch, who notes that he finds it necessary to avoid appearing less than masculine before his peers.

By drawing attention to the power differentials between school personnel and students, Tiffany redirects the discourse to the lines of demarcation that exist within schools. In recounting an incident during which a safety officer used language that she believed was inappropriate for the school setting, Tiffany suggests that as a student she has no right to complain about this choice of words (“she right, we wrong ...we is students”). I suggest, here, that not only could this situation have escalated into one of reactive violence, but it hints at the structural violence that is embedded within the administrative infrastructure of schools. Galtung (1969, p.171) advises that structural violence is embedded into existing structures to facilitate subordination, and thereby, ‘shows up as unequal power’. As it takes the form of an established norm, structural violence is ‘invisible’, and is, not recognised as violence (Galtung; 1969; Parsons). While Tiffany concluded, therefore, that the behaviour of the safety officer was

unbecoming, she tolerated it as part of the established norm, which further attests to the 'us versus them' dichotomy within schools.

Importantly, however, manifestations of structural violence within schools are not only exhibited by school personnel towards students, but also take the form of reversed power differentials within the classroom. In this situation, the students enable structural violence through classroom disruption, which becomes normative practice when the teachers are unable to take control of classroom dynamics. Consequently, disruptive students impede the intended purpose of the development trajectory in the classroom, namely, to encourage student learning and engagement. Yet, their peers do not classify this disruption as violence (see Excerpt 8).

Excerpt 8, Richmond Secondary:

Angelo (age 16, male): He does literally be teaching [he literally teaches], like, three students, and the whole rest of the class does be [while the rest of the class is] talking and carrying on ...

Researcher: ...What you've just described, would you consider that to be a form of violence?

Angelo: I wouldn't say that, just lack of discipline

To the extent that the structural violence, here, is not immediately apparent to Angelo, he classifies the situation in the classroom as an example of indiscipline. Conceivably, by exploiting an observable 'chink in the teacher's armour', namely, the inability to control the class, the disruptive behaviours of

some students constitute acts of rebellion against the teacher-student power differential.

Of importance though, the student discussants have demonstrated their capacity to impartially assess actions that contradict the intended education experience. This is not to state, however, that they would be able to independently redress the issue of concern. By demonstrating a capacity for critical and impartial insight, however, the students present as appropriate candidates for supporting localised initiatives for assessing school violence, including the development and implementation of corrective solutions (see Chapter 7). It is worthwhile, therefore, to explore the students' general perceptions of the consequences of school violence, including the classroom disruptions, as I discuss in the next section.

5.4 Students' perceptions of consequences

As indicated in Section 5.3, the students are aware that both their peers and school personnel can be the perpetrators, as well as the victims, of school violence. The students further acknowledge that teacher-disengagement from scheduled teaching, through absenteeism and/or reduced instruction, is a likely result of student-initiated classroom disruptions, which I class as structural violence. Overall, the students conclude that the student-perpetrators of school violence will face punitive consequences, as well as limited future prospects. Interestingly, however, they do not foresee any consequences for adult-perpetrators, who they rationalise are protected by the power differentials that exist within schools (see Excerpt 9).

Excerpt 9, Burlington High:

Justine (age 17, female): Even though we [are] right and they realise the students [are] right, they will never make the adult get in[to] trouble, they will just leave it as that

Indeed, Galtung (1969, p.173) notes that structural violence is silent and natural, as it emerges within a context of normalcy. To the extent that the institutional school structure facilitates unequal power relations as part of the school-place norm, the workings of structural violence are present within this setting.

Field 6 of the revised Salmi (2000) framework allows students to share their perceptions about the consequences of school violence, including, through its open-ended response option; consequences that might be overlooked by school communities. In this regard, Justine (Excerpt 9) intimates that school-place dynamics do not support social justice when the perpetrators of violence are adults. Conceivably, this situation can lead to a loss of respect by students for school authority. Of importance though, the students take pride in their schools, and are aware of the reputational harms that are caused when their peers are involved in violence.

Excerpt 9, Vermont Secondary:

Ramon (age 15, male): ...[W]hen fights and thing happen [when fights occur] it looks bad on the school...

Researcher: What are some of the things people in the community say about the school?...

Ramon: The school is a dunce school

Leanne (age 15, female): It need[s] more improvement

Clarkie (age 14, male): It have plenty [there are a lot of] fights

Researcher: ...[D]o you agree with what people are saying?

Ramon: No, remember we going [are attending] this school, so them [they] wouldn't know

In addition to acknowledging the effect of school violence on their school's reputation, the students are altogether aware of their school's low public ranking. As noted by Fabienne in the previous section (Table 5.2, Item 6), the possible effects of this stereotype include low student motivation. By default, while Ramon's response above is encouraging, as he asserts that the students of the school are best-placed to assess their potential, it also appears to be defensive.

In general, the students across the sampled schools associate schooling with their capacity to participate in the labour market in the future. They refer to the need to perform well in their examinations, to acquire 'passes' [good results] that will facilitate this end. As the education experience for these students is embedded within a capitalist system, it is to be expected that they would associate school with access to employment. Relatedly, therefore, they also reason that violent altercations would likely lead to their suspension or expulsion, with implications for their future prospects (see Excerpt 10).

Excerpt 10, Claremont Secondary:

Chantal: ...[S]uspended is like they giving yuh [they send you home for] seven days from school life, expel is like

-
- yuh out of school forever ...yuh could go in other schools, but ...it's a hard process...
- Fabienne: The school will want to know why you were expelled
- Chantal: ...So... in order for them to take you, they have to get the report...
- Fabienne: ...from the other school
- Chantal: If the report is not good, they [are] not going to take yuh ...yuh have no other option but to work... but... would they take you? ...No. Because why? ...yuh [you are] violent inside...

Both Chantal and Fabienne recognise that suspension and expulsion are immediate consequences that implicate a student's bargaining power within a capitalist setting. While their reasoning is logical, a question to consider is whether the education experience to which they refer is empowering students to make informed decisions within a capitalist market, or whether it is grooming them into compliance. In essence, although structural violence is hidden and not easily recognisable in the school environment, it can be 'used to threaten people into subordination' (Galtung, 1969, p.172). Freire (2010, p.73) notes, in particular, that '[t]he more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the... more they accept the passive role imposed on them' and demonstrate limited capacity to transform their world. Indeed, based on the contact time that the education system affords students and school personnel (approximately seven hours per day, breaks inclusive), in theory, schools are strongly-positioned to guide students towards socially-acceptable approaches for addressing the contentions they face, including the enabling conditions for school violence (Sundaram, 2014). The contextual realities of the school setting

can, however, challenge the effectiveness of support structures established by schools to address contextual violence. Further, if schools continue to facilitate a banking form of education (Freire, 2010) that engenders structural violence, the education experience will not equip students to envision and become the change their society needs. In the next section, therefore, I examine the students' views on the institutionalised support they identify as being available to them to address violence in their schools.

5.5 Support for reduction and prevention

Importantly, the students are cognisant of the steps that have been taken by their schools to reduce and prevent violence, and are well-informed of the support services that exist within the wider community (see Table 5.3). They estimate that three sources of support for addressing violence are available to them: i) their schools; ii) the wider community; and iii) their households.

Source		Service provider	Description of service
1.	Individual schools	MTS Security guards	– Daily scanning of students upon school entry
		Safety officers	– Patrolling of school compound – Intervention during altercations and conflict
		Deans	– Intervention during conflict
		Teachers	– Listening ear and advice
		Guidance officers/Social workers	– Listening ear and advice

		Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support during altercations and conflict – Advice
		School management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Security cameras – High-level intervention during conflict
2.	Wider community	Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Law enforcement during altercations and conflict
		Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support during altercations and conflict
		General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Intervention during altercations and conflict
3.	Individual households	Family members and relatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Intervention during altercations and conflict – Advice

Table 5.3 Student-identified violence intervention support

At the individual school level, physical intervention during violent altercations is the responsibility of the school safety officers, who are appointed on contract by the Ministry of Education to maintain school-place discipline (Ministry of Education, 2019). Within the wider community, interventions by individuals usually take place when disturbances among students occur in public spaces. At times, the family members and external associates/friends of students also become involved in these violent exchanges. Further, as a follow-up to given incidents or threats of violence among students, family members have also lodged complaints with school management and have made reports to the local police stations. Notably, however, schools are mandated by both the Education Act (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 1966) and the National

Code of Conduct for Schools (Ministry of Education, 2009) to intervene during incidents of school violence. The Ministry of Education has also established Learning Enhancement Centres at the education district level, to support targeted interventions for individual students, including students on suspension.

The support identified by the students in Table 5.3 largely reflects interventions that respond to specific incidents of violence, and zero tolerance policies that 'punish all offenses severely, no matter how minor' (Skiba and Peterson, 1999, p.373), to 'send a strong message to students' about intolerable behaviours (Lawrence, 2007, p.162). Interestingly though, the student discussants were unconvinced about the effectiveness of these preventative measures in their schools (see Table 5.4). Firstly, they shared the view that popular interventions, in particular, the use of security cameras; student suspensions; verbal condemnation of violence by school management; and the issuance of parents' letters, did not deter perpetrators. Secondly, they did not believe that their schools took the time to address their complaints about violence. Thirdly, they identified trust as a major determinant of whether they would seek advice or intervention support from designated school personnel as confidantes, including deans; guidance officers and senior management. Based on the rationale that any complaints they made about school personnel would be used against them, the students expressed a general reluctance to trust the adults in their schools.

Students' comments on in-school violence intervention support
<p>The guidance thing don't [doesn't] work</p> <p>Them does hardly [They hardly] listen to yuh</p> <p>Ah [I] trust one ah meh [one of my] Form teacher[s] ...that's the onliest [only] teacher I trust</p> <p>Even if yuh didn't cause it and the other person cause it, they will suspend yuh</p> <p>If I go and tell her my business...or if she know[s] something about me... she will have a group of children in the office and tell them all your business ...because I experience[d] that with her already</p> <p>The Guidance Counsellor is a good person to talk to fix me, but it didn't fix me as much and she couldn't stop the whole school from bullying me ...So to me it didn't make any sense</p> <p>...[S]he was like, "We'll deal with it" ...she never call no parents [she didn't call in any parents], nothing... and after it had a day she witness the lash [after she saw me get hit one day] ...she still didn't do anything about it</p> <p>People does be getting [students get] 14 days, a whole month and thing [a whole month sometimes] home from school and they come back and do the same thing ...so is like it not working [it does not seem to be working]</p> <p>And now they have more cameras ...that ain't improve nothing! ...[that hasn't improved anything]! They just waste[d] they [their] time drilling the school ...Them [they are] still fighting there</p>

Table 5.4 Student perceptions of in-school violence prevention support

It is natural for individuals, particularly young persons, to avoid sharing confidential information if they believe doing so would place them at risk. When previous instances of trust have been broken ("...she will ...tell them all your

business;” “she still didn’t do anything about it”), this reluctance to confide in figures of authority exacerbates. Further, there are questions around the effectiveness of the zero-tolerance approach at the school level, given, for example, the possibility for punishment to be excessive relative to the infractions committed (Skiba and Petersen, 1999; Fox and Fridel, 2018) and/or based on unclear guidelines (Lester and Evans, 2018). In effect, the excessive and/or unwarranted enforcement of the zero-tolerance approach builds on the existing power differentials within the school setting, thereby contributing towards structural violence through student subordination.

I argue, that in their efforts to address school violence, schools have the comparative advantage of extended contact time with their students and staff to support learning and development. Indeed, school management is aware of this, as one of the main challenges I faced in attempting to gain school entry for student engagement was the non-prioritisation of my research. Essentially, my study was perceived to be cutting into the timeframe that was designated for teacher-student interface. It is worth noting, therefore, that the Ministry of Education continues to work with schools to nurture student learning and development, including addressing school violence as an emergent and ongoing issue. I equally acknowledge, however, that both entities are considerably understaffed (Ministry of Education, 2019). Significantly though, if students are averse to in-school violence prevention support, a re-visiting of its quality and effectiveness is worthwhile. Input from the students would be critical for informing the next steps of intervention, as part of the process of: i) creating school environments that are conducive for the educational experience; and ii)

incorporating the perceptions of all parties that are implicated by school violence. Indeed, the students are key actors in the school violence debate. An investment in their capacity to support and maintain violence-free school settings, as a steppingstone to their greater societal contribution, would, therefore, merit further exploration (see Chapter 7).

All the same, the students provided limited evidence of being engaged in forward-looking violence prevention interventions, in collaboration with other school-place actors. I argue, here, that if schools invested in building their students' capacities to support violence prevention, invariably, they would create the possibility for the students to assume ownership of preventative interventions. Significantly, ownership by the students has the potential to facilitate sustainable implementation and positive change, including results beyond the school setting. I note, especially, that a peer mediation programme ended abruptly in one of the research schools, upon the transfer of the teacher with oversight for implementation to another school. As the students expressed fervent interest in the continuation of this initiative, I consider it a lost opportunity that their capacities had not been built to support programme continuity to generate the results that were anticipated.

Importantly, the revised Salmi (2000) framework (see Table 3.2) can be used to initiate discussions on the role of the students in supporting violence prevention efforts in their schools.¹⁷ As a tool for generating data on contextual

¹⁷ This issue is discussed further in Chapter 7.

school-level violence, the revised framework further supports the aggregation of recommendations on preventative interventions, including the specific contributions of individual schools and students (see Table 5.5).

7. What should the school do to stop the violence?
8. What can you do to stop the violence?

Table 5.5 Salmi (2000) revisited for schools, Field 7 and 8

The issue to be explored, therefore, is how each school can channel the energies within its student body towards a viable solution to school violence. Conceivably, these energies include the students' capacities for critical thought, as well as the efforts some students expend in being disruptive/violent. The response to this enquiry is critical, as it would be utopian to conclude that schools will minimise existing teacher-student power differentials to facilitate this process or compromise safety by eliminating their zero-tolerance policies. Indeed, my reasoning is based on the structural violence that is embedded in the education experience (Galtung, 1969; 1971; Freire, 2010; Cin, 2017), as well as the possible harms that can result from the smuggling of weapons into schools.

5.6 Summary

I have used this chapter to show that it is possible to engage students in critical discourse on contextual school violence. The results of my analysis indicate

that, in addition to defining violence in terms of physical and behavioural attributes, students have been able to identify instances of structural violence in their respective schools. In line with the essence of structural violence, however, they do not classify related incidents as violence, but recognise that these actions are unbecoming and connote disrespect and/or indiscipline. Further, while the students are aware of support mechanisms that are available to them to address school violence, they remain considerably reluctant to avail themselves of the support provided by their schools, largely because of distrust.

As the most visible perpetrators and victims of school violence, the students maintain a vested interest in its resolution. It would be appropriate, therefore, for schools to engage them in discussions and follow-on actions for violence prevention. The students' participation in the school violence debate is impeded, however, by structural violence within their schools, which is supported by the power differentials that are used to enforce discipline and student compliance. Notably, the revised Salmi (2000) framework is an embryonic step towards changing the dynamics of school violence interventions, as it can be used to facilitate initial discussions on next steps. As a further contribution to the way forward, I explore one of the emergent themes from my research in the next chapter, namely, the intersections of gender, race and class, in terms of how they relate to the students' perceptions of school violence.

Chapter 6: Gender and School-based Violence

‘...ignoring difference *within* groups contributes to tensions *among* groups...’

(Crenshaw, 1991, p.1242).

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I apply a gendered analysis to the students’ contextual understandings of school violence, to explore their views on the perceptible differences between manifestations of violence by boys and by girls. As the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago disaggregates student data by sex, I have chosen to focus on the male-female gender binary, to conform with the trend in national statistical reporting. I acknowledge, however, that this approach centres on biological differences and does not consider individual perceptions of gender identity, as distinct from birth-assigned sex. Moreover, it is enshrined in country-specific mores that intertwine gender and sex and do not consider the responsiveness of gender to the socio-cultural expectations that govern the behaviours of men and boys, as well as women and girls (Mead, 1950; Oakley; 2005; Holmes, 2007; Connell; 2009; Oakley, 2015; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020). Of note, however, the notion of self-expressed gender identity did not feature in the views that were shared by the students.

To avoid the theoretical limitations and tensions created by a distorted analysis of gender (Crenshaw, 1991; 1989), I define gender as ‘socially produced differences between being feminine and being masculine’ (Holmes, 2007, p.2). By extension, in exploring gender relative to school violence, I use an intersectional lens to examine the combined intersectionalities of gender; race;

and class and, as applicable, other social identifiers that emerged from my discussions with the students. Based on the rationale that multiple social identifiers shape individual human experiences, the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; 1989) refers to the interplay of these social factors, and has been used across disciplines to explore this complexity. Relatedly, the need for an intersectional approach emerged during my research as a direct by-product of data generation and analysis, and thereby informed the conceptual research framework (see Chapter 4). In line with the inclusive participatory approach to research implementation, therefore, I continue to structure my analysis around the aggregated views of the students in this chapter, in combination with the emergent intersectional themes. I argue, moreover, that the application of an intersectional lens to analysis can be used to re-theorise school violence, as an embryonic step towards effective intervention.

Indeed, gender, like school violence, is multi-faceted (Connell, 2009)¹⁸, and can be influenced by the interplay of intersectional factors within the localised school setting. As educational institutions have been observed to mirror the normative practices and discourses of the wider society (Jackson and Sundaram, 2020), the interplay of gender and co-intersectionalities can reinforce the effects of social stratification during interpersonal relations. In examining lad culture in higher education, therefore, with its similarities to school-level violence, Jackson and Sundaram (2020, p.122) note that a

¹⁸ Connell (2009) uses the term multi-dimensional.

gendered and intersectional analysis can facilitate a better understanding of the main 'causes, manifestations and impacts' of the research thematic, leading to enhanced theorisation. Using this rationale, I have sought to move away from analysis that limits the school violence debate to a discussion of juvenile delinquency and social psychology. As a prelude to constructive and effective intervention, I use the sections that follow to discuss the key issues on gender and related intersectionalities that emerged from the students' narratives, starting with power, identity and hegemonic masculinity.

6.2 Power, identity and hegemonic masculinity

Insofar as gender is a product of the social environment, it is informed by existent social systems and normative culture, including inequalities at the household level. Gender inequality has been especially perpetuated by idealised standards for normative masculinity, as signified by social hierarchy that legitimates the domination of women (and girls) in a patriarchal gender system through the hegemonic masculinity ideal (Connell, 1996; 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In line with the power relations that underscore gender, therefore, including aspirations towards the hegemonic ideal, male aggression through intimate partner violence; sexual assault; and sexual harassment, have been recurrent sub-themes in the school violence literature (Leach and Humphreys, 2007; Shute, Owens and Slee, 2008; Cobbett and Warrington, 2013; Parkes, 2016; Gentle-Genitty et al; 2017; Bhana, 2018). Interestingly, however, these sub-themes did not emerge during my discussions with the students. Indeed, the signs of intimate partner violence, in

particular, are sometimes subtle and unrecognisable by victims (Springer and Brown, 2019).

With certainty, I could have used a different line of enquiry during our discussions to delve further into sensitive issues, to unearth possible evidence of occurrence. As my research was student-centred, however, it was important for me to focus on the issues that the students chose to voice. In this instance, they identified peer contention as a priority concern. Given the significant discourse on the prevalence of sexual harassment and gendered violence within schools, however, my study might appear to be limited because of the paucity of research findings on these issues. In retrospect though, in addition to insufficient probing on my part, the reasons for the lack of emergent results on these themes likely pertain to cultural mores about sexual matters, including open discussions of the same within the school setting. To support my reasoning, during the focus group discussions, the subject of sexual relations was raised by one student only (Leanne, age 15, female, Vermont Secondary), in relation to possible retaliatory violence by girls if their peers publicised their sexual intentions (“...when girls want to do things with boys ...and somebody spread the talk [spreads gossip] around the school ...that person will want to find the person who spread the talk [started the gossiping] ...and beat the person”). In questioning Leanne further during our follow-up interview, she was adamant that sex between students was wrong (“...first to begin [in the first place], yuh [you are] not supposed to be having intercourse in school”). I surmise, therefore, that within a different research context, such as the engagement of tertiary students or students who live in a country where sex

education is included in the school curriculum, there might have been more open discussions on sexual violence at the school level, particularly during student relations. Notably, however, with its focus on physical and non-physical manifestations of violence, Field 1 of the revised Salmi (2000) framework supports data generation data on all forms of sexual violence, through its fixed and open-ended questions.

Based on the students' prioritisation of peer contentions, they reasoned that the wish to gain notoriety, by establishing a school-place identity, was the basis for violence among their peers. Both boys and girls were described as being on a quest to develop "rank", by creating a name for themselves as an intimidator or reactive victim of school violence (see Excerpts 11 and 12).

Excerpt 11, Richmond Secondary:

Mitch (age 16, male): Miss, is like, ...peer pressure ...yuh don't want to look like a coward or yuh don't want to look girly in front of yuh [your] peers in the school, so yuh might go and ...start a fight or yuh might say I not taking that [I won't stand for this]

Stacy (age 16, female): Miss, ...they know it have other means [they know there are other solutions] ...but because of the peer pressure ...they decided to take that avenue ...and because of that, ...yuh could build a certain amount a [of] rank [status] ...and most people ...that is what they actually want...

Excerpt 12, Claremont Secondary:

Beverly (age 15, female): ...[L]ots of boys or girls ...want to show off to their new friends, especially in Form 1, like, "Yeah she

now come in [just arrived] so I can take advantage of her,” or ...“She [is] not wearing ...brand shoes, ...I could make fun of her,” ...it could be bullying or fighting, mostly due to someone showing off ...to make a name for theirselves [themselves]

Researcher: ...[W]hat do you mean when you say bullying?

Chantal (age 16, female): ...[B]ullying is abusing your power or your authority or your knowledge or forcing someone to do something that they don't want to do, like for example, taking advantage of...

Significantly, peer pressure and the need to 'make a name' for oneself were identified by the students as the driving factors behind peer-initiated violence. In Excerpt 11, Mitch opines about the effects of peer pressure on the male students, with the explanation that boys would not want to appear cowardly or "girlie" in front of other students. Stacy further alludes to the strength of peer influence, by emphasising that although the students know better, they feel compelled to choose the option of physical violence. Moreover, Beverly points out that some students become the targets of peer-initiated violence because of their inability to afford brand name footwear to accessorise their school uniforms. In this latter instance, school-place dynamics among students informally stratify the student populations into students with 'rank', who are less likely to become victims of peer-initiated violence, and those without 'rank', who face a higher risk of violence. Although these two social strata are established within the contextual school environments, they reflect the social stratification system in the wider society, whereby the 'haves', the more affluent social classes, have access to resources to maintain a privileged position, and the

'have nots' remain vulnerable to the vicissitudes of life through inadequate resource access.

The general reaction of the boys to peer pressure is unsurprising, given the standards of power and dominion that have been established through the hegemonic ideal. Connell (1985, p.263) notes especially that '[b]oys are praised for being aggressive and ridiculed for being girlish'. Consequently, although both boys and girls give in to peer pressure, some boys are especially inclined towards the hegemonic ideal in order to gain 'rank'. It follows, that this study has shown that violence among boys has generally manifested as physical confrontations, based on the social expectation that boys need to exude masculine power, as opposed to feminine weakness. In providing examples of altercations between boys and girls, therefore, the students alluded to the differences in their physical abilities. Moreover, their narratives reinforced the importance they place on the hegemonic ideal (see Excerpts 13 and 14).

Excerpt 13, Vermont Secondary:

Robert (age 13, male): A day in class, Miss ...Susan ...tell [told] me something real[ly] bad ...and I get real vex [I got very angry] ...and I just floor she [I threw her on the floor]. ...Me ain't want to cuff, kick nothing [I didn't want to punch or kick her] ...kick a girl ...is just... all the girls who want to fight with me, I does just, like, [I just] throw them on the ground

Excerpt 14, Ryedale Secondary:

Debbie (age 12, female): Well, the boys and them, them [they are] different ...is who on *Gang 1* and who on *Gang 2*... [it's a case of who is involved in Gang 1 or 2]

Nina (age 13, female): [W]hen them fighting is to move... cause is who does have steel... [when they are fighting, everyone should move as they might have weapons]

Gail (age 13, female): The girls does pelt stone and thing

Laughter from students

Nina: No, no, no, serious, they does try [they normally try] to look for a weapon, nah, but the boys and them...

Gail: ...Them taking anything they get and beating yuh with it [They will beat you with anything they get hold of]

While acknowledging that he was provoked by his female schoolmate, Robert infers that he took her gender and physical abilities into account during his reaction and would have reacted similarly if provoked by any other girl. He further implies that it is 'taboo' for a boy to be physically violent towards a girl, "because that is wrong" (Chantal, age 16, female, Claremont Secondary) and boys are 'dealt with' by other boys if they strike girls. The question that arises, here, is whether Robert's reaction is commendable, in that he did not "cuff, kick, nothing". Of greater importance though, by tempering his reaction to Susan's behaviour, Robert has, in effect, exhibited the power that is ingrained in hegemonic masculinity, as his decision to "floor" her was, in his opinion, based on biological difference. The explanation he provides for his reaction further suggests that, for a boy to demonstrate his physical prowess and advance

towards the hegemonic ideal, his aggression must be directed towards other males only.

Interestingly, Excerpt 14 shows that some schoolgirls, inadvertently, reinforce the power and dominion that underscore hegemonic masculinity, by sanctioning violence by boys while trivialising similar behaviours by their female peers. Effectively, the schoolgirls have implied that the boys should be given room to exercise their masculinity (“when them fighting is to move”), to avoid being labelled as ‘girlie’. For Jackson (2006) and Foschi (2000), this mindset reflects gender double standards, whereby criticisms levelled at one gender group for the behaviours they exhibit are different from, and usually harsher than, those that are directed at another group for the same behaviours. By appearing to condone the schoolboys’ behaviours, therefore, the girls have unknowingly subscribed to the adage that ‘boys will be boys’ and so, should be allowed to act accordingly.

Within the literature on masculinities, violence is described as ‘...a major component of normalized masculine performances ...often used to protect boundaries of privilege’ (Mills, 2001, p.52). Notwithstanding its conceptual emphasis on power and status, however, hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily translate into acts of aggression and physical violence, although it does advocate the subordination of feminine values and non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Two points should be (re-)emphasised, here, relative to the pursuit of in-school ‘rank’ by the students.

First, as gender is relational, when hegemonic masculinity predominates social interaction involving boys, 'manliness' in the school setting becomes increasingly synonymous with force and interpersonal violence (Kenway and FitzClarence, 1997; Mills, 2001; Davies, 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Le Mat 2016). Conceivably, therefore, as intimated in Excerpt 14, for boys who aspire towards the hegemonic ideal, the attractiveness of the power commandeered by gang membership is its ability to address their need for 'status, reputation and resources... to sustain a sense of masculine identity and as a form of 'self' protection' (Kenway and FitzClarence, 1997, p.122). Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that boys only accounted for 31 per cent of the students who agreed to engage in my research (12 out of 39 students). Reports by school focal points indicated that some boys expressed a reluctance to speak about school violence in front of their peers (Fieldnotes, September 2018). I interpret this reluctance as the boys' preference for maintaining their image, relative to their progress towards the hegemonic ideal. Specifically, the boys who aspire to achieve hegemonic masculinity would not "want to look girly in front of [their] peers" (Mitch, age 16, male, Richmond Secondary) in disclosing their experiences with school violence.

Second, the research schools are converted or newly-established government secondary schools. These schools are lower in social status to the government-assisted denominational schools and the government secondary schools that were established during the era of country independence, to deliver an academic, as opposed to technical-vocational, curriculum (London, 1994; Jackson, 2010). Importantly, the difference in school status does not negate the

possibility for high scholastic performance by students in each category of schools. At the same time, however, a secondary school of lower social-standing is not the first choice for parents/guardians, especially members of the socially-defined local elites. Consequently, the student populations of the sampled research schools primarily comprise students from lower income households, as the local elites have greater access to social capital, which can facilitate entry to schools of higher social and educational standing. Indeed, the students were aware of their schools' status, and by extension their own status as attendees, and admitted to initial disappointment with their school-placement.

The students' performance of gender does not, therefore, occur in a vacuum, but is embedded in the contextual school setting, which, in this instance, facilitates an interplay (intersection) between gender and social class. Overall, efforts by the students to affirm their power and school-place identity through violence, including aspirations by some boys towards the hegemonic ideal, respond directly to a combination of social expectations; peer pressure; and socio-economic standing. Since it is also possible for girls to embody elements of the hegemonic ideal (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), it is worth exploring whether they, too, aspire to achieve power and status through school-place violence (see Section 6.3).

6.3 Interpersonal relationships and the influence of social media

In line with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, research on school violence has aligned closely with the discourse on gender-based violence, centring on

sexual assault; relationship abuse; and intimate partner violence, with girls as the intended victims of boys and men. By contrast, there has been less research emphasis on violence among girls (Leach and Humphreys, 2007). Arguably, the rationale for this omission stems from the influence of social expectations on the construction of gender and the perception of violence. Gender construction acknowledges that as the performance of gender is performative and relational, it responds to external stimuli, in the form of social expectations and existing mores (Butler, 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Sundaram, 2014; 2013), which are processed at an individual level to yield a gendered response. In this regard, the performance of emphasised femininity is premised on female compliance with a role that is subordinate to 'the interests and desires of men' (Connell, 1987, p.183). Moreover, while violence among girls has often been trivialised in the literature (Brown, Chesney-Lind and Stein, 2007; Esposito and Edwards, 2018), violence among boys has been masculinised as a demonstration of manhood (Mills, 2001). Consequently, a girls-as-victims discourse has equated gender-based school violence with heterosexual violence against girls, who are portrayed as the passive targets of male-initiated violence.

Discussions with the students have, however, contradicted the image of girls as passive victims during school violence, as some girls were described as being initiators of violence and/or relational aggression, to establish a school-place identity among their peers. Interestingly though, the students were of the view that violence among girls was influenced by myriad factors, in particular, peer-rivalry; the interpretation of social media posts; and friendship loyalty, and

did not necessarily arise from a need for power and control, as addressed in the sub-Sections that follow.

6.3.1 Peer rivalry

This study has shown that peer rivalry among some girls is linked as much to scholastic performance, as to their school-place presence/identity. While classroom competition among the girls does not mirror behaviours displayed by the boys, there is some similarity between the girls' interest in a sense of school-place presence and the efforts of some boys to establish a masculine school identity. Indeed, as a contradiction to the girls-as-victims discourse, the results of my research suggest that some girls respond to hegemonic masculinity by exercising agency (Bhana, 2018), through their belittling of some boys' claims to hegemonic masculinity. To illustrate, as education is free and compulsory for all students aged five to 16 in Trinidad and Tobago (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 1966), girls are not constrained by a lack of educational access. This can lead to scholarly competition, as well as bullying (see Excerpt 15), because girls are equipped to compete with their peers, in theory, to attain their individual educational goals. It is of relevance, therefore, that the students observed that some girls taunted boys about the presumption of female subordination (see Excerpt 16).

Excerpt 15, Ryedale Secondary:

Ruth (age 14, female): ...my Mummy came for bullying and... I had to write a report ...and I came and I dealt with it, with the principal and the girl's parents

Researcher: Okay, how did the girl's parents react?

Ruth: Well ...she said I... told her daughter things too, which I did not at all because ...that girl, she had a problem with me... because me and her, is like a competition... Me and she does go ...hand on hand [we compete head-to-head]... If I don't come first [in test], she will come first, so she never like[d] me...

Researcher: ...[H]as your relationship improved in any way...?

Ruth: No, she just don't [doesn't] talk to me now ...I just leave her because at the end of the day, I don't want anybody calling me back things [harassing me]...

Excerpt 16, Richmond Secondary:

Dave (age 16, male): ...[I]t does have times the girls does harass them [boys]... [There are times when the girls harass the boys]

Aisha (age 15, female): ...[T]hey does say [They say] because I am a girl you can't do me nothing

Dave: Yeah, and they does get boys extreme [the boys become very angry]

Undoubtedly, there are feelings of empowerment associated with each described manifestation of violence. First, as Ruth's school facilitated a mediated audience, with all parties implicated by her experience as a victim of bullying, she gained some redress by being heard. Moreover, she has been able to initiate a workable solution to minimise the possibility of future bullying ("I just leave her... I don't want anybody calling me back things"). By limiting her contact with the bully, Ruth has regained access to her higher rights in the school setting (Salmi, 2000). Second, in response to the presumption of female subordination and weakness, some girls capitalise on this perception by pre-

empting boys' retaliation to violence/provocation by girls ("...because I am a girl you can't do me nothing"), leading to the girls' further self-empowerment. In essence, the girls exercise their freedom to pursue the goals they value (Sen, 1985; Cin, 2017), namely, to subtly, albeit defiantly, challenge the principles of hegemonic masculinity, in this instance. Notably, the girls do not purport to change their gendered positioning relative to boys who aspire towards the hegemonic ideal. As their intention is to establish (or maintain) their school-place identity, there continues to be ongoing contention between some girls. To illustrate, notwithstanding the inevitability and benefits of healthy classroom competition, Ruth's experience (Excerpt 15) highlights the negative response to scholastic competition by some girls. Indeed, an issue to ponder is whether a boy competitor would have evoked a similar response. Further, a question emerges about whether institutionalised education inculcates students with requisite skills for collaborative teamwork, including mutual appreciation of gains and 'graciousness in defeat'. In light of Caribbean-specific and international interest in underachievement by boys (Martino, 2008; Jha and Kelleher, 2006; Cobbett and Younger, 2012), further investigation into the attitudes of boys towards education, including classroom performance, would be worthwhile.

Indeed, some girls willingly or unconsciously accommodate their role as supplements to the hegemonic ideal. In essence, by challenging each other for power and identity, they seek to emphasise their individual school-place presence through the construction of femininity (see Excerpts 17 and 18).

Excerpt 17:

Gemma (age 13, female): Miss ...the people dem does look for they bacchanal [some students create their own problems]... like this stupid girl... upstairs, I want [to] beat she[her] bad[lly]

Susan (age 14, female): Yeah, Miss, nobody doh like she [nobody likes her]...

Researcher: So why don't people like her?

Susan: Because she have [has] too much mouth [back chat] and attitude, ...she like to play all that [she thinks she is more attractive than everyone else]...

Gemma: Yeah and ...she doh [doesn't] even have a good shape ...and when ...the people and them have they man [girls are with their boyfriends]... she does go round them [she parades around them] ...

Excerpt 18, Burlington High School:

Tiffany (age 18, female): ...[S]ince I did come in [since I arrived in] this school ...it had [there were] some sisters... and they didn't liking [like] me at all and they used to come and just follow me right through ...and chook meh [poke me]... and then ah get [I got]... fed up ah [of] them ...and ah just tell them [I told them] hit meh [me] and they did and then after we fight [fought]

Researcher: This was when you were in Form 1?

Tiffany: Form 1 straight to [until] Form 4... the principal did have [called] both parties in the office and was asking us what was the problem... and them don't [they didn't] even know...

Interestingly, the reasons underlying Gemma's and Susan's dislike for "this stupid girl ...upstairs" (Excerpt 17) is the combination of her confidence and assertiveness. She not only retaliates swiftly during verbal confrontations ("she have ...too much mouth"), but she is, apparently, confident in her physical appearance and appeal ("she feel she all that"). Similarly, although Tiffany was unable to discern why she was a victim of physical violence from other girls (Excerpt 18), she was of mixed race; light-skinned; attractive; and had clear career aspirations (Fieldnotes, June 2018). Yet, as the contextual school setting is a nexus for re-creating the social, cultural and economic strata that exist in the wider society (see Section 6.2), Tiffany's experience is not unexpected. Although upward social and economic mobility has been fostered by the independence era in Trinidad and Tobago, an informal colour code based on racial phenotype persists as an untoward legacy of colonialism (see Section 6.5). Conceivably, therefore, Tiffany was singled out by the 'sisters' as a target to be 'follow[ed] ...right through and chook[ed]' because she was perceived to be socially privileged from a phenotypical standpoint. As the open discussion of race continues to be a contentious issue in many societies, including Trinidad and Tobago, the perpetrators in this instance were unable (or unwilling) to voice the reasons for their discontent and behaviours.

In addition to implying gender double standards, the scenarios depicted in Excerpts 17 and 18 highlight the intersectional effects of race and social class. Given the social class originations of the student populations in the research schools, it is conceivable that sentiments founded on an 'us' versus 'them' mentality would be underscored by phenotypical differences, on the one hand.

On the other hand, the harsh disapproval of some girls' performance of emphasised femininity occurs in a context where all the girls in the research schools are in a subordinate position to the hegemonic ideal. Further, girls who are the actual or intended victims of violence from other girls have, seemingly, established a school-place identity, whether deliberate or unintentional, to which (some) other girls aspire, creating peer envy and rivalry. The source of contention is the confluence of gender performance and other intersectional factors, which threatens the established presence or intentions of some girls (Esposito and Edwards, 2018). In this context, girls' construction of gender bears some similarity to boys' efforts to establish a hegemonic masculine identity. Interestingly, during our discussions, the boys did not express their disapproval of other masculinities, a reminder that individual 'constructions of masculinities are ...variable' (Sundaram, 2014, p.18) and can be adopted or revoked, as appropriate (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In general, however, the girls were open about exhibiting violence if they disapproved of the gender performance of other girls, as I discuss next.

6.3.2 Interpretation of social media posts

The use of social media, especially Facebook, is a major contributor to violence among girls, largely because of misinterpreted status posts by recipients. Boys, however, are observed to be less likely to engage in violence for this reason. For the girls, as the issuer of a status update might not be well-known to all recipients in her social media network, misinterpreted posts have often led to verbal and/or physical confrontation (see Excerpt 19).

Excerpt 19, Ryedale Secondary:

Debbie (age 12, female): ...On them [their] status they might type something ... then somebody else will read it... and think they talking bout them [and think it is about them]..., then after a whole bacchanal [confusion] start when school over [will occur after school]

Ruth (age 14, female): Keyboard ranker

Researcher: So if a keyboard ranker... said something... but Debbie ...decided it was about her..., what would Debbie do?

Nina (age 13, female): Debbie... might approach yuh... no, some ah dem [some girls] might just start to fight, but it have [there are] the sensible ones [who] will ask a question like, "That status... yuh put up the other day, that was for me or that is for somebody else?"

Gail (age 13, female): Miss, the rankers, [are] the ones who feel they ain't [don't] have no stats [status]...

Nina: They will come and they will ask and before yuh could open yuh mouth [before you even speak] they hold yuh and beating yuh [they attack you]

In their retaliation to unsettling social media posts, girls appear to construct a contextual gender identity through which they 'can be measured, by themselves and others' (Mills, 2001). As noted by Gail (Excerpt 19), these girls believe they have not fully established their school-place identity ("the ones who feel they ain't have no status"). Their performance of gender does not, however, accord with the social hierarchy of gendered behaviour or the notion of emphasised femininity. Instead, this behaviour embodies elements of hegemonic masculinity, often depicted through the use of force, including violence, to

reinforce gender identity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Mills, 2001). With certainty, the term emphasised femininity was developed as a replacement for hegemonic femininity, to underscore its subordination to hegemonic masculinity. Importantly, however, the practice of femininity 'whether real or imaginary' informs the construction of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.848). In line with social expectations, therefore, girls' performance of gender is not supposed to deviate from the expected norm. Yet, by engaging in direct violence, girls contradict the normative expectations of femininity, thereby producing alternative femininities, the dynamics of which remain under-explored (Schippers, 2007).

Upon reflecting on social media communication among their peers, the schoolgirls continued to be especially harsh on the behaviours exhibited by other girls. I argue that further to being illustrative of gender double standards, in that criticism directed at boys' behaviours was less harsh and more dismissive, the girls' judgment of their peers was strongly informed by the gender regime within their school. The notion of a localised gender regime is germane to institutional settings and signifies a pattern of gender relations that reflects the gender order of the wider society (Connell, 2005; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020). As noted in sub-Section 6.3.1, intersectional factors have significantly informed the social gender order, which has, in turn, informed the gender regime within schools, thereby influencing the girls' performance of gender. Notably, these factors include individual disapproval, bordering on resentment, of challenges to girls' school-place identity by other girls. Of interest, though, while the schoolgirl discussants were unaware of the double

standards underlying their analyses, they were more cognisant of the value girls place on camaraderie (see Section 6.3.3).

6.3.3 Friendship loyalty

Although school violence among girls continues to be an under-researched issue (Leach and Humphreys, 2007), the literature has gradually contributed to the recognition that girls can be both victims and perpetrators of violence (Bhana 2008; Cameron and Taggar, 2008; Talbott et al, 2010; Esposito and Edwards, 2018; Madfis and Cohen, 2018; Rawlings, 2019). While the students generally agreed, therefore, that both boys and girls engage in violence, they opined that many acts of school violence were initiated by girls. Yet, while both boys and girls questioned the rationale for the violence, the schoolgirls were more inclined to trivialise the reasons for girl-initiated violence. Ava, in particular, is of the view that girls tend to exaggerate given issues to “make a whole big bacchanal” (see Excerpt 20).

Excerpt 20, Chesterville High School:

- Researcher: When the school violence occurs ...is it the boys or is it the girls?
- Bernard (age 14, male): ...[Y]uh [you] could say mostly girls...
- Ava (age 15, female): Miss, to be honest, I find... these girls does get away [fight] for stupidity and make it seem like is [it's] a big problem... and make a whole big bacchanal [create a lot of confusion] and lead it to something that you don't want it to be

Researcher: [W]hen they get away [fight] with someone... it's physical between the girls ... it's one person against one person...?

Bernard: To be honest ...it will never have a one-one fight because if somebody see [saw] their friend getting beat[en] up, they will ... jump in and then the person who beating up the person friends will jump in [the friends of the perpetrator will get involved]...

Significantly, although Bernard notes that one-on-one violence between students is rare (“it will never have a one-one fight”), girls have been observed to defend their female friends, unreservedly, during verbal and physical confrontations. This leads to group altercations based on a loyalty code of genuine friendship among girls, such that, “if yuh don’t fight fuh yuh friend yuh fake [if you don’t defend your friend you are not a real friend]” (Ingrid, age 16, female, Burlington High School). In general, this loyalty code reflects the importance of peer affiliations to young persons (Schreck, Fisher and Miller, 2004), and further reflects the effects of gender dynamics on behaviours within peer groups (Haynie, Doogan and Soller, 2014). Of note, however, friendships between boys are generally built on extended peer networks that are strongly influenced by the idealisation of hegemonic masculinity (Feiring and Lewis, 1989; Mills, 2001; Haynie, Doogan and Soller, 2014). As a result, fighting among boys often takes the form of one-on-one confrontations, during which boys make efforts to conform to social expectations of masculinity.

Nevertheless, they might, later seek out ‘reinforcements’¹⁹ to exact revenge. Conversely, friendship among girls is built on a small network of peers and is characterised by emotional involvement, reciprocity and responsiveness (Piehler and Dishion, 2007). As a demonstration of their loyalty, girls in the current study indicated a willingness to provide immediate physical and verbal support to female friends who were under threat or were victims of violence, as noted by Aisha (see Excerpt 21), who came to the defence of her “calm” friend.

Excerpt 21, Richmond Secondary:

Researcher: Were you ever a victim of violence in this school?

Aisha (age 15, female): No, just probably a bit of verbal feud...

Researcher: ...[W]hat started it?...

Aisha: ...[S]omebody simply pick[ed] on meh [my] friend, but she kinda real calm [she is a quiet person]... and the girl was, like, bringing she whole crew [her friends as backup] ...to ...pick on her alone, so we decided to talk to the girl about it... but it kinda get a lil out-a-control [it got out-of-hand]

By engaging in emergent violence as a show of loyalty, girls are challenging the notion of emphasised femininity, including the idea that they are either averse to behaviour that is not gender-normative or engage in violence that is ‘less overt and physical than that by boys’ (Leach and Humphreys, 2007, p.56).

¹⁹ Reinforcements, in this context, refers to boys from higher Forms (Clarkie, age 14, Vermont Secondary).

Empirical work on gender and delinquency has shown that once girls form friendships, they are generally influenced by the behaviours of their peers, whether prosocial or delinquent, and to a greater extent than boys (Haynie, Doogan and Soller, 2014). The issue to consider though, is that girls who defend their female friends do not necessarily perceive of their behaviour as delinquent, but as a form of social justice and show of loyalty. While the use of violence remains contestable, I argue that the 'girl-defenders' are demonstrating agency (Sen, 1985; Bhana, 2008; Cin, 2017) by pursuing a goal that they value, namely, their friendships with other girls.

Notably, the notion of exercising agency also involves seeking to facilitate situational change, to yield improved circumstances (Sen, 1985; Bhana, 2008; Cin, 2017). If, as I have argued, the girls are not seeking to change their position at school relative to hegemonic masculinity (see sub-Section 6.3.1), the inference of girls' agency might become contestable. I argue, however, that by demonstrating that they are not 'fake' friends, girls who defend their female friends are seeking to establish a school-place identity for themselves and these friends, to ensure that both parties gain the same 'rank'. Admittedly, this ranking can be polarised as students who cannot be victimised, on the one hand, and notoriety as perpetrators of school violence, on the other hand.

The question to be addressed, therefore, is whether all students in the research schools are being guided towards effective conflict resolution practice, and whether their schools are equipped with the resources that are required to facilitate this end (see Chapter 7). Effectively, limited access by schools to violence prevention resources can lead to ongoing conflict among students,

including in the form of disruptive and/or deviant behaviours at the classroom and the wider school-level, as discussed below.

6.4 Classroom disruption and school-level deviance

Within the institutionalised school environment, the classroom setting facilitates structured interaction between teachers and students to foster educational growth by the latter. Freire (2010, p.72) argues that classroom interchange is based on a 'banking' concept, in which teachers deposit knowledge for receipt, memorisation and repetition by students (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2). The banking approach to education assumes that teachers are knowledgeable and students are in school to be taught. Undeniably, it is standard practice for teaching faculties to comprise educators who are specialised in at least one subject area. An issue of concern, however, is the effect of the banking approach to education on classroom management and student learning, including the maintenance of student interest during class-time. Specifically, the students in the research schools identified teachers and fellow students as both victims and perpetrators of classroom disruption, as well as deviant practices at the wider school-level. As a conceivable response to the banking approach, a reversal of power relations within the classroom has, at times, led to uncontrolled disruptions by a student faction. These disruptions often affect the capacity of the other students to assimilate what is being taught.

Given the contribution of classroom-based power relations to structural violence, I have reviewed the disruption of lessons by students separately from deviant behaviours in the wider school setting (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3). The

latter actions include delinquent behaviours by students (such as, taxing; use of drugs and alcohol; gambling; smuggling of weapons; and sexual relations during schooltime), and untoward language by teachers and auxiliary school personnel. In Excerpt 22, for example, Robert confirms being aware that his male peers smuggle weapons into the school and abuse narcotics. He is fearful, however, that he will be a target for physical violence from these boys if he reports them to school management.

Excerpt 22, Vermont Secondary:

Researcher: ...Do students bring weapons to this school?

Robert (age 13, male): Yeah ...knife ...to keep people frighten [scare people]... Some people does bring drugs, rum [some students bring drugs and alcohol]... but I don't like to rat them out [report them] because I afraid I get in a fight with them [I am afraid they will fight me]... and I know... one... he does buy [he buys] drugs ...and... bring it in...

Researcher: And does he sell it to students in this school?

Robert: No... [g]o in the bathroom with other students and smoke it

The aspiration of some boys towards the hegemonic ideal is demonstrated by this scenario, as their choice of delinquent behaviours bolsters their image as aggressive males who flout the existing school rules. Notably, in their performance of gender, the schoolboys do not carry weapons to inflict harm, but to establish an individualised school-place identity that instills fear in other students. Moreover, narcotics, in this instance, are not being smuggled based

on a profit motive, but rather, to enable the young person to command the respect of his peers as a supplier.

In the area of communication, the use of untoward language towards students by school personnel (Excerpt 23) has led to mixed views about appropriateness by the students. While Dave and Malcolm justify the action taken, on the premise of student provocation, Aisha maintains that this language is inappropriate.

Excerpt 23, Richmond Secondary:

Aisha (age 15, female): It have some teachers does use some funny language [Some teachers use strange language]

Researcher: ...[B]y funny language, what do you mean?

Aisha: Obscene... We heard her inside...

Researcher: ...[D]o you think it was right of her to do that?

Dave (age 16, male): It is sometimes in the situation ...If yuh have to explain something, if yuh have to get the message across ...

Aisha: But it have [there are] other words yuh could substitute [that could be used]

Malcolm (age 16, male): Well I observe [heard] MTS guards cursing... but they wouldn't curse for no reason... sometimes... the students does be provoking them [the students provoke them]...

It is interesting that both Dave and Malcolm defend the use of obscene language by school personnel. Dave, in particular, does not discredit the female teacher for her choice of language. As discussed in Section 6.2, hegemonic

masculinity is associated with manliness and power, and often includes manifestations of aggression and violence. I suggest, therefore, that boys who aspire towards the hegemonic ideal would generally accept and/or understand the aggression displayed by the MTS guards, irrespective of whether the guards are male or female. Specifically, in addition to being a response to provocation, the aggression of the guards accords with their need to commandeer respect among the student population to maintain a secure school environment. Similarly, as the female teacher is an authority figure within the school, she is not in a subordinate position relative to male students who aspire towards hegemonic masculinity. It is conceivable, therefore, that Dave recognises that 'Miss' needs to assume certain traits that align with hegemonic masculinity, such as aggressive language, to demonstrate the power she would not have had as a female student. Importantly, my reasoning does not imply agreement with the behaviours displayed by the guards or the teacher. Invariably, it is concerning that the use of violent language is seen as necessary or permissible by both school personnel and students. Yet, the behaviours described are manifestations of the hidden structural violence that is often embedded in authoritarian school environments, reflecting the unequal power relations that mask violence as normative acceptable practice.

While the students are concerned about delinquency by their peers and school personnel, they do not consider related behaviours as forms of violence. Further, as power relations within the school setting are not skewed towards students, it remains debatable whether delinquent student behaviours can be categorised as structural violence. I argue that if delinquent student behaviours

become normative practice in a given school sub-context, and are classifiable as indirect non-physical violence, they constitute forms of structural violence. Indeed, as the students are embedded in authoritarian school systems, they have firsthand experience of school-place norms and behaviours, including those at the classroom level, that are inherently violent (Harber, 2004). It is worth considering though, that when students observe inappropriate behaviours by authority figures within their schools, they 'do not learn how to communicate and relate to each other or to authority in ways that feature peaceful co-existence, creative co-operative problem solving and conflict resolution' (Harber, 2004, p.36). I examine this scenario further, in the final section of this chapter, by considering the effects of intersectional factors on school violence.

6.5 The intersectionalities of gender, race, class and ethnicity

To better understand the effects of the students' lived realities on emergent school violence, an exploration of the multidimensionality of their contextual experiences has been critical. Crenshaw (1989) notes, especially, that distorted analyses of human experiences are likely if the plausible links to wider social phenomenon are not considered. As school violence can result from the influence of multiple intersectionalities on the students' lives, identified as the combined effects of complex inequalities (McCall, 2005; Few-Demo, 2014; Ferree, 2010), I used a group-centred intersectional approach to delve further into the students' experiences. For Choo and Ferree (2010), a group-centred intersectional approach to analysis is facilitated by a third-party moderator, but the discussion is led by the persons who experience the effects of

intersectionalities. My aim in using this approach to engage the students, therefore, was to delve further into their experience of complex inequalities (McCall, 2005; Few-Demo, 2014), by including their voices in the school violence debate. Indeed, my research has highlighted the unequal power relations, among students and between students and school personnel, that challenge the maintenance of constructive relational ecologies at school, namely, the relationships that occur between school-place actors (Brown, 2018). Importantly, therefore, the revised Salmi (2000) framework has been designed to generate data on the complex inequalities that lead to the school violence, to inform effective intervention. Notably, data generated from Fields 1-4 of the framework would allow users to identify the nature of the emergent violence, including the factors that contribute towards situational inequalities. By facilitating an open-ended response on the reasons for the violence, Field 5 of the framework further supports the contextualisation of lived realities.

Significantly, the intersectional analysis has shown that in addition to being underrepresented in the dialogues on school violence, the students who attend the research schools are multiply-marginalised (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Ferree, 2010). They face 'multiple forms of subordination' that derive from 'intersectional systems of disadvantage' (Ferree, 2010, p.428). On the one hand, the students are overshadowed by the hierarchies that are embedded in the performance of gender, through multiple masculinities and femininities (Connell, 1996; 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As the performance of gender is relational, however, it integrates with other intersectional factors in response to social expectations, and thereby conditions individual human

experiences (McCall 2005; Shields, 2008; Sundaram, 2013; 2014). On the other hand, the students face inequalities that are linked to the national ranking of their schools; the classification of their schools as most at-risk for violence (Ministry of Education, 2017); social stratification based on household income; and informal social stratification based on phenotypical differences (Tate 2007; McCree, 2014). Indeed, the students are aware of the social marginalisation that results from these inequalities (“They does talk about like you going this school so you duncey,” Eric age 12, Claremont Secondary). Moreover, as a result of the multiple forms of marginalisation they face, in effect, the students are multiply-marginalised (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Ferree, 2010). They observe, however, that their experiences within the school setting are especially conditioned by marginalisation based on racial phenotype, as denoted by the intersectional factor of race (see Excerpts 24 and 25).

Excerpt 24, Vermont Secondary:

Researcher: ...[Y]ou said... your ...teacher ...has one ethnicity²⁰ on one side of the class and the other on the other side. You want to tell me a little bit more about what is taking place?

Clarkie (age 14, male): Well, Miss, yuh see ...the Indian side, Miss,... she does participate more on them side... [she pays more attention to them] ...and leave the other side [and ignores the other students]... She always have

²⁰ The use of the word ethnicity mirrors the term used by the student, namely ethnic group, but actually refers to race.

[has] something bad to say about we [us]... She say [said] the Indian ones... does do [does] more work than the other ones there, Miss

Researcher: So she told them to go and sit on one side?

Clarkie: Yeah, she said this side of the class... she don't [doesn't] really care about this side of the class... Miss, well the Indian side was normal, but we [our] side now... we wanted to know why she saying them kinda stuff...

Excerpt 25, Burlington High School:

Researcher: ...[Y]ou said... you're fed up with the situation that's happening in the school... You want to explain some more?

Julia (age 16, female): Well, yeah, because... racism is a big thing [racism is a big issue here], racism with bullying... like the African race... always feel that they bigger and stronger than the East Indians... and because of that most of the African boys does be bullying [boys bully] the East Indian boys... because they much smaller and quiet...

Researcher: ...[W]hat happens when you see this happening?

Julia: Miss, ...when I go and report it, it does be like [it is as though it creates] a problem in the office... they will talk to them about it... and warn them, but as yuh go outside it continue [once you leave the office the problem continues]...

Although the concept of race is typically associated with differences in phenotype, similar to gender and as advanced by critical race theory, race is socially constructed, as it is informed by social perceptions and experiences,

including cultural, economic and political mores (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). As such, inequalities based on race are likely to be equally influenced by the combined effects of race and other intersectional factors, in particular, gender, class and ethnicity, on social relations. Arguably, in the multi-cultural context of Trinidad and Tobago, there is less contention associated with ethnic difference, given the emergence of a 'Trinbagonian' culture that comprises multiple ethnicities. Further, as indicated in previous sections, access to education has created opportunities for upward social mobility for persons from the lower socio-economic households. Yet, as a result of Trinidad and Tobago's colonial history, during which social standing was determined by race and colour, racial phenotype continues to be further gradated based on an informal colour code (McCree, 2015). Lighter complexions have, therefore, been associated with privilege; influence; social acceptance; etc. and darker complexions with a lack of entitlement to the same.

In line with this context, the issue of contention for Clarkie (Excerpt 24) is what appears to be discrimination based on race by an authoritative figure at school. Interestingly, he does not feel singled out, as he observes that other students from the same race are similarly discriminated against within the classroom. For Julia, the discrimination takes the form of bullying initiated by schoolboys from an identified race. She further implies that although the issue is not treated lightly by school management ("they will talk to them... and warn them"), it remains unresolved ("as yuh go outside it continue").

Importantly, the concerns of both students reflect the wider societal contentions that exist between the two numerically dominant races in Trinidad and Tobago.

I argue, therefore, that in this instance, the school violence issue extends beyond interpersonal conflicts among students or between students and school personnel, as it is influenced by wider societal grievances. Admittedly, time limitations, combined with the research design, did not permit further triangulation of the students' views through long-term participant observation or interviews with other school-place actors. In this regard, it is possible that individual teaching style contributed to the situation described by Clarkie in Excerpt 24. This does not, however, negate the overtones of structural violence that are apparent. To recount Galtung's contribution on this thematic, structural violence emerges within a context of unequal power relations and is built into the established institutional structure (Galtung, 1969). Within the school setting, therefore, structural violence typically manifests as the power differentials between students and school personnel at the wider school level. This manifestation is reinforced by the banking approach to education (Freire, 2010) within the classroom setting, which relegates students to the role of learners and positions teachers as knowledge experts. As such, although my research has shown that there are students who disagree with the teaching methods of some teachers, arguably, many more students defer to the authority and knowledge of the teaching faculty.

Relatedly, in her narrative on incidents of bullying at her school, Julia draws attention to school-place violence that occurs at the intersections of gender, social class and race. In the example she provides, the perpetrators of violence are boys of African descent and the victims are boys of East Indian ethnicity. Julia attributes the emergent violence to racism, based on the view that the

perpetrators harbour sentiments of being “bigger and stronger” than their “much smaller and quiet” victims (Excerpt 25). Notwithstanding the stated difference in physical stature and demeanour, the manifestation of violence, as described, strongly reflects the aspirations of some boys towards idealised hegemonic masculinity. Although hegemonic masculinity is not synonymous with violence, aggression and similar behaviours, it has been increasingly associated with these traits by students within the school setting, to signify masculine power and status (Kenway and FitzClarence, 1997; Cobbett and Warrington, 2001; Mills, 2001; Davies, 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Leach and Humphreys, 2007; Le Mat, 2016). In response to the social expectations around the performance of gender, therefore, schoolboys see the need to avoid any semblance of being “girlie” (Excerpt 11). Consequently, in attempting to emulate the hegemonic ideal, the bullies firstly ensure that their targets are other boys, as opposed to girls. Moreover, as a rejection of non-hegemonic masculinities, their victims are boys who are lower in the hierarchy of masculinities because of their physical capacities and disposition. Yet, as the students who attend the research schools have similar socio-economic backgrounds (see Chapter 2, sub-Section 4.4.1), conceivably, social class in isolation has played a minimal role in the interchange between these boys. Given the existing race tensions within the wider society, however, it is more likely that a major impetus for the cited incidents of bullying has been the difference in racial phenotype. Notably, post-colonial society in Trinidad and Tobago has been plagued by ‘tensions arising from status competition [and] the quest for ethnic equilibrium’ between persons of African descent and East Indian ethnicity, who belong to the two ‘formerly oppressed groups’ of the

plantation slavery and indentureship periods, respectively (Deosaran, 2016, pp.1-2).

Of significance, both Clarkie and Julia felt empowered to initiate discussions about the sensitive issue of race. On the one hand, their actions are indicative of the ambience of trust that was forged through the creation of safe spaces (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). To illustrate, the difference in race between these students and myself did not prevent them from airing their perceived grievances in relation to race. Clarkie was of mixed race, Julia was of East Indian descent, and they were engaging with a researcher of African descent. On the other hand, the students took full advantage of the opportunity to voice their views on what they perceived to be a pressing matter within their schools. Consequently, the experiences they shared provided significant insight into the lived realities they face daily.

It is altogether interesting that as an external researcher whose purpose was not immediately known to school staff, I too faced some measure of discrimination in the research setting, such as unconcealed hostility from administrative staff, who seemingly dismissed me as a parent and in one instance, made efforts to deny me access to the principal (Fieldnotes, May–June, 2018). This raises a question of the nature and quality of the exchanges that occur between schools and the parents/guardians of their students. Indeed, as key actors in the school violence debate, who are affected by all actions at the school level, including violence, parents/guardians need to be directly engaged as co-partners in each school's efforts at preventative interventions. As I waited in the schools' reception areas, I was also able to observe that the

interaction between some school personnel (teachers and auxiliary staff inclusive) and the students ranged from positive exchanges to unprovoked condescension by the former (Fieldnotes, September 2018). Moreover, it appears that my race informed the selection of students for research engagement in one school with a high East Indian student population. Specifically, with the exception of one East Indian student, who was a victim of school violence, the sample of students comprised perpetrators of violence who were all of African descent or were mixed-race. Yet, the discussions with the students in this school suggested that incidents of violence were also initiated by their East Indian peers.

Drawing on the logic of Jackson and Sundaram (2020), the intersectional dynamics observed at the school level have created a conducive context for violence within this setting. Furthermore, as schools are a microcosm of macro-society, the manifestations of violence are largely influenced by external societal relations. As indicated, the students' perceptions of conflict between races mirrors similar tensions within Trinidad and Tobago post-colonial society, which largely occur between persons of African descent and East Indian ethnicity. Notwithstanding the foremost need for parental/guardian consent for student engagement the current study, it is of interest that the majority of student discussants were of African descent (67 per cent; 26 out of 39 students). Further, an observational scan of the student population in the research schools, combined with informal researcher enquiries, indicated that the students in these schools are primarily of African descent and East Indian ethnicity.

What remains relevant, here, is that the students in the sampled schools are multiply-marginalised (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Ferree, 2010). As such, they have limited access to the social capital and bargaining power they require to fully address their social and educational needs. Arguably, therefore, as a major effect of the intersections of gender, race and social class, multiply-marginalised students have used violence to express their frustrations about the social inequalities they face. The institutionalised school environment has been further identified as a setting in which students ‘rush for social inclusion’, including through ‘high-status friendships’ (Davies, 2004, p.68). Moreover, within the literature on criminology, violence among young persons is described as a reflection of ‘deeper-seated needs’ that are linked to vulnerability and disempowerment (McAra and McVie, 2016, p. 76). A question that arises, in consequence, is whether these needs signify behavioural issues or are influenced by contextual factors that are within and/or external to the school setting. All the same, the main issue to consider is the students’ situational interpretation of school violence. Essentially, if they feel marginalised, unheard and/or discriminated against, these are salient issues that need to be addressed in violence prevention programming (see Chapter 7).

6.6 Summary

Gender dynamics, combined with intersectional social identifiers and resultant complex inequalities, have featured significantly in contextual violence at the level of the research schools. This combination of intersectional factors has led to multiply-marginalisations that are the lived realities of the students who attend these institutions. In addition to exploring the performance of gender

during incidents of violence, therefore, I used an intersectional lens to identify the effects of race, social class and ethnicity on school-level violence, given their contribution to student identities and related behaviours. The strength of the intersectional analysis has been its close alignment with the inclusive participatory approach to research implementation, as they both allowed for a critical review of individual experiences by the student discussants themselves, as a precursor to researcher analysis.

What is striking, is that in contrast to the socially-constructed image of school, as a safe haven for educational growth, the school environment presents as a conducive context for emergent violence, as it reflects the social contentions that exist in the wider society. Significantly, the revised Salmi (2000) framework supports data generation on the complex inequalities that constrain the students' educational experience, with a focus on emergent violence, to further inform preventative actions. In the effort to effectively chart the next steps for intervention, therefore, in the next chapter I explore the students' perceptions on possible solutions for the way forward.

Chapter 7: Reducing and Preventing School Violence: Towards Institutionalised Social Justice

“And, Miss, we tend not to have that much of a voice”

(Amber, age 17, female, Richmond Secondary).

7.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I structured my analysis around the critical reflections of a sample of students in Trinidad and Tobago, on contextual violence in their respective secondary schools. Using an inclusive participatory approach to student engagement, I placed the views of the students at the forefront of data generation and analysis, to delve deeper into what has become a nationally prioritised issue. Indeed, the voices of students have been underrepresented in preventative efforts in this country, as interventions have been largely developed using a top-down approach. Moreover, the social advancements that were heralded by UNCRC (1990) and the new sociology of childhood (Prout and James, 2003; Morrow, 2008) have not been mirrored by similar developments within the local education sector. Specifically, in the context of secondary school violence, there has been limited evidence of an increased understanding among education professionals of:

- i. The rights of all young persons to be consulted on matters that affect their lives within the school context; and
- ii. The capacity of students to become change-makers to redress the social challenges they face.

As an example, in my efforts to acquire research permission from individual schools, one of the hurdles I faced was a perception by school management that the students “would not know what to say” or would present an untoward image of their school or a particular phenotypical group (Fieldnotes, May–June 2018). Consequently, it was altogether evident that some schools had selected their ‘star students’ to participate in my research. While this approach to student selection did not impinge on the diversity that was required for the research sample (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4), it led me to question the extent to which student voice is being facilitated within schools, as well as which student voices are being heard. Effectively, if the banking approach to education relegates students to the role of receptacles of information at school (Freire, 2010), conceivably, only certain students will have the privilege to voice their opinions. These students are likely to be those who recount learnings as instructed and display expected behaviours. It is further likely that they will be provided with established school protocols to guide this process. Conversely, the students who deviate from school expectations, whether scholastic or behavioural, and are multiply-marginalised (Ferree, 2010), would have limited access to this opportunity (Wong, 2008).

Drawing on the above context, I continue to explore the students’ capacities to function as active agents during the school violence debate, with emphasis on violence reduction and prevention. In this regard, I engaged groups of students in discussions on feasible interventions within their schools, following which I assessed the social justice underpinnings of their recommendations. By way of comparison, I also assessed the effectiveness of the facilities that have been

institutionalised by the research schools to redress contextual violence in their respective settings. As a starting point for our discussion, I encouraged the students to examine their schools' disciplinary culture, including the supporting services that are provided to address emergent violence (see Section 7.2).

7.2 Disciplinary policies and supporting services: Punitive, palliative or preventative?

The Education Act of Trinidad and Tobago authorises schools to suspend the attendance of students and, as applicable, initiate their expulsion for behaviours that are 'considered injurious or dangerous to other pupils' (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2015, para. 44). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the student discussants were acutely aware of school policies for maintaining discipline and stemming student-initiated violence. They were also attuned to the in-school supporting services that are available to them, in the form of specialist or general guidance from school staff and informal advice from their peers (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3). Interestingly though, the students expressed a preference for confiding in close friends or a trusted adult on confidential matters, including violence-related issues, because of their mistrust of school personnel. ("I would prefer [to] approach a friend because of the fact [that] I have more confidence in her than in teachers," Stacy, age 16, female, Richmond Secondary). Moreover, in addition to their doubts about the effectiveness of school-place measures for resolving violence (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5), they indicated a general reluctance to report violence, for fear of reprisals by students and teachers alike. This reluctance was coupled with a belief that school management would not act on reports made by students

(“Them eh go [they won’t] do nothing for yuh... If you... talk to the principal... he eh go [won’t] have nothing to do with that,” Bernard, age 14, male, Chesterville High).

There are several issues to consider here. First, in line with Ministry of Education requirements, the research schools have taken steps to institute school-specific discipline plans for addressing emergent violence. Disciplinary measures include an initial ‘hearing’ between school management and the student perpetrators and victims of violence, followed by an extended audience with parental representation. Students on suspension are further referred to Ministry of Education-managed Learning Enhancement Centres, which operate in four districts, for rehabilitative psycho-social intervention (Ministry of Education 2017; 2019). Undeniably, these measures align with a systematised approach for ensuring the students’ conformity to the existing school rules. While the need for conformity is critical for establishing a conducive context for student learning and development, it does not negate the importance of building the students’ capacities for critical thought and informed decision-making. In essence, although the students in the research schools are unified by the intersectional challenges they face on a daily basis, they are individuals with unique needs, and are likely to react differently to their lived realities. As such, whether their reactions are un contemplated or premeditated, student-initiated violence is a possible response to the emergent challenges of the school setting. In concurrence with Freire (2010, p.72), therefore, I argue that as long as formal education remains anchored in the banking concept, students will not ‘develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in

the world as transformers of that world'. Indeed, a comparative study on approaches to education and student development, in schools that are less at risk for violence in Trinidad and Tobago, would be worthwhile. Unfortunately, this line of investigation has been external to my research scope.

Second, when school-level interventions occur 'after the fact', following student involvement in violence, both perpetrators and victims are likely to perceive these measures as being punitive or palliative. Further, if student victims are punished for retaliating, as intimated by the student discussants, herein lies the source of their reluctance to report future victimisation ("Even if yuh didn't cause it and the other person cause[d] it, they will suspend yuh," Robert, age 13, male, Vermont Secondary). Essentially, the students would fear unwarranted punishment by school management, as well as peer-retaliation. Of note, the option taken by some students to remain silent rather than report violence, is similar to societal behaviours that reflect a general fear of revenge attacks by criminals. What makes the school context distinct, however, is the punishment that is meted out to victims and perpetrators alike by schools. The issue of concern, here, goes beyond the punishment that is delivered and rests on the students' lack of confidence in school-place justice. This has led to instances of low student-uptake of in-school violence prevention support, as their schools have, inadvertently, contributed to their perception of a punitive school-place culture. The students believe, for example, that they are sometimes disciplined for trivial matters or are victimised by school staff (see Excerpt 26).

Excerpt 26, Vermont Secondary:

Researcher: Do parents get letters often?

Students: Yeah

Researcher: And what would be the reason?

Leanne (age 15, female): Miss, I get one for laughing in class... It have [There is] a teacher who just like to give it out for fun...

Clarkie: Miss, they don't like children that not in their category... like, ethnic background, nah [you know], Miss... She want give we a set ah penance [She wants to give us a lot of penance]

Leanne: Thousands of penance

Ramon: Just for not bringing yuh [your] excuse for staying home

In exploring the social context in which structural violence emerges, Galtung (1969) associates violence with interpersonal influence, and contends that 'a person can be influenced ...by punishing him when he does what the influencer considers wrong ...[and] by rewarding him when he does what the influencer considers right' (Galtung, 1969, p.170). Conceivably, therefore, teachers anticipate that the issuance of parents' letters will engender good behaviours among student populations, to deter future incidents of student-initiated violence. As institutionalised education is also designed to complement the capitalist work structure, school disciplinary policy is a vehicle for equipping the students, as future workers, with the competencies and behaviours that are required to comply with work-place hierarchies (Bowles and Gintis, 1976;

2002). Yet, the effectiveness of the approach to discipline is called into question if the students believe that they are being victimised. In Excerpt 26, Leanne opines, in particular, that some teachers issue parents' letters on impulse for questionable cause. Further, Clarkie links the teachers' actions to the difference in "ethnic background" between some teachers and students. Importantly, school disciplinary policies will not be effective if the students believe they are being disciplined unfairly (Goodman, 2006), even when the actions taken can be legitimately justified (for example, when the students do not bring their "excuse for staying home").

Third, I submit that it is debatable whether punitive school disciplinary policies will automatically foster anticipated changes in students' behaviours. Essentially, 'if students are treated as criminals... it makes it more likely that they will respond in kind' (Cremin and Bevington, 2017, p.19). I argue that the criminalisation of students translates as disciplinary actions that are embedded in an authoritarian and punitive school culture (Harber, 2004; Osher et al, 2010). Consequently, punishment at the school level is strongly supported by power differentials between the students and the staff, and thereby contributes towards structural violence masked as discipline. The indiscriminate issuing of parents' letters for trivial matters ("laughing in class") not only renders disciplinary policy as ineffective, but borders on the abuse of authority and signifies limited capacity for classroom control. It follows, here, that the combination of authoritarian power dynamics and punitive disciplinary practice within schools, has contributed towards a conducive context for violence

(Jackson and Sundaram, 2020). Arguably, within this setting it is possible for students to believe that violence resolves violence (see Excerpts 27 to 29).

Excerpt 27, Burlington Secondary:

Researcher: ...So, ...is there anything else... you think can be done to stop the violence?

Tiffany (age 18, female): Miss, I find [think] the Ministry should put back the teachers to beat children... they need some... kinda [kind of] punishment... if a child do [does] something wrong... put them to kneel down in a [an] ants patch so they could learn; some not learning. These children nowadays, we not easy [we are difficult]

Excerpt 28, Richmond Secondary:

Researcher: ...If you were the principal of this school, what are some of the main things you would do to ensure that the violence stops?

Marcia (age 16, female): ...I think corporal punishment should be placed back because if it start[s] in Form 1, like they will know the consequences of that action, so they wouldn't do it again

Researcher: So you think it will work for the boys and the girls...?

Marcia: Both boys and girls

Excerpt 29, Vermont Secondary:

Researcher: ...[O]ne of the things you said was we should rough up the students who are giving trouble... you want to tell me a little bit more about that?...

Jamel (age 14, male): When they give trouble... the teacher ...the Dean who does handle [who handles] the matter... they should hold them and rough them up, shake them up... and tell them not to do them thing [those things]... they does deserve [they deserve] that treatment... to change... I believe that

In Excerpts 27 through 29, the discussants conclude that student-initiated violence would be effectively addressed by corporal punishment and brutal treatment (“put them to kneel down in a ants patch”; “hold them and rough them up”), as the students of today are “not easy”. Marcia is aware that the Ministry of Education has banned corporal punishment in schools. Yet, she advocates this punitive measure based on the reasoning that student perpetrators of violence need to “know the consequences” of their behaviour so that “they wouldn’t do it again”. Jamel similarly advises that the students need someone to “shake them up ...to change”.

Overall, 15 percent of the students who participated in this study (six out of 39 students) recommended physical punishment as a deterrent to school violence. Interestingly, 67 percent of the students who advocated physical punishment (four out of six students) were girls. As the students are all aware of the illegality of corporal punishment at the school level, it is conceivable that they view physical punishment as a last resort to contextual school violence. My reasoning draws on the possible influence of a punitive disciplinary culture

within individual schools and/or exposure to domestic violence on the students' perceptions. Indeed, a punitive response by school management to peer-initiated school violence can provide palliative respite to student victims and, in theory, serve as a preventative intervention. It is, nevertheless, concerning that physical punishment was largely recommended by female students as the solution to school violence. An emergent issue to ponder is whether the students who recommend punitive discipline would approve of physical violence in the wider society, as the modus operandi for resolving interpersonal contentions. The centrality of this reasoning for informing school anti-violence programming cannot be over-emphasized. If there is a general perception among students that violence resolves violence, a vicious cycle can emerge, whereby they not only emulate societal violence at school, but actively engage in violence in the wider society after graduating. Further, it is possible that the students will become compliant with the use of violence in their homes and communities, as an effective way of addressing localised dissent and socially-motivated stress. The consequences of this way of thinking are severe, given the increasing reports of domestic violence that have been occurring globally in response to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic (Bradbury-Jones and Isham, 2020; Campbell, 2020; Marques et al, 2020; Usher et al, 2020).

In the interest of effective policy and intervention, therefore, it is important for schools to provide all their students with opportunities to contribute towards the dialogue on school violence. Further to the students' entitlement to do so (UNCRC, 1990), Brown (2018) notes that the effectiveness and sustainability of a top-down approach to violence prevention is rare. Moreover, while there can

be plausible arguments in favour of violence as self-defence, in general, violence is a form of social injustice. This classification includes the hidden structural violence (Galtung, 1969) that occurs within the school setting. As a result, efforts to redress school violence need to be strongly informed by social justice considerations. From a social justice standpoint, therefore, in the next section I examine the students' recommendations for effectively resolving contextual school violence .

7.3 Students' perspectives on school violence reduction and prevention

As a corollary to social injustice, access to social justice is linked to the increased interpersonal influence that results from reduced power inequalities and greater access to life opportunities (Galtung, 1969). For Fraser (2007), therefore, adequate social justice is attainable when 'who'; 'what'; and 'how' considerations are incorporated into policy and practice.

Arguably, punitive school policy can provide some measure of redress to student victims in the form of social justice. A decline in student delinquency and violence is also possible with punitive school practices (Zimmerman and Rees, 2014). There is greater evidence, however, to show that a punitive school culture usually leads to a worsening of student behaviours and scholastic performance (Cameron and Sheppard, 2006; Goodman, 2006; Osher et al, 2010; Sharkey and Fenning, 2012; Kline, 2016; Bell, 2019). Bell (2019) notes, in particular, that students who are suspended or expelled can gain the respect of peers who are delinquent. The student discussants are also aware that repeat offending by their peers is possible after disciplining ("...a whole

month... home from school and they come back and do the same thing,”
Dianne, age 15, female, Chesterville High).

Importantly, the revised Salmi (2000) framework encourages critical reflection on preventative actions that can be initiated at the individual, as well as the institutional level (see Table 3.2, Fields 7 and 8). Consequently, based on the rationale that “everybody need[s] to come together to help everybody else” (Fabienne, age 15, female, Claremont Secondary), the students have called for multi-stakeholder collaboration to address emergent school violence. As their key recommendation, they advise that all implicated persons should play an active role in supporting effective preventative actions. The students specifically identify four core elements that are requisite for this process: i) collaboration; ii) palliative action; iii) key actor involvement; and iv) preventative intervention (see Figure 7.1).

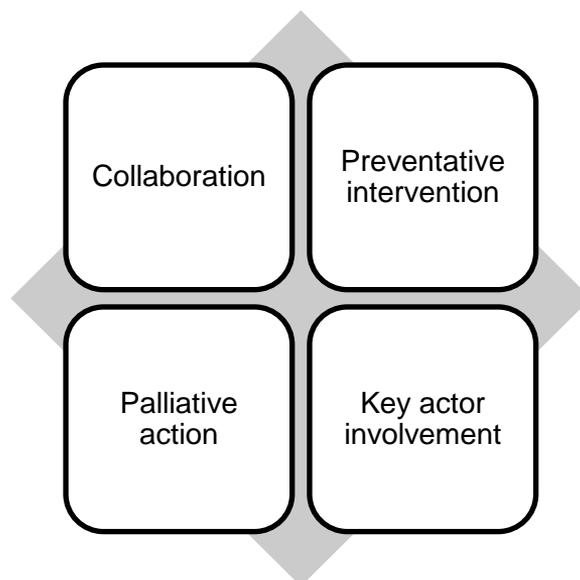


Figure 7.1 Core elements of violence reduction and prevention interventions, student recommendations

Of further importance, the students envision a role for themselves in preventative efforts, as change-makers with responsibility for student advisory; conflict resolution; and student representation (see Table 7.1) While they identify the need for collaboration across sectors, they acknowledge that they are accountable for their actions, including behavioural change, and have the capacity to influence improved interpersonal relations among their peers.

Type of intervention: Preventative and Palliative
Lead implementer: Students, with support from school management
<p>...[L]et we [us] be the bigger ones... and show them [violent students] how they could change their life around... then we could see more changes in school</p> <p>We as youths, we have to learn to manage ourselves/We... need to have some self-control</p> <p>Have a group with students in the school... that have potential and plans and... will motivate us... maybe have a questionnaire... try to get all of the things... children say they don't like... and do that [address them]... and make them feel good</p> <p>Pray more</p> <p>Walk away/Take talk... when they tell you something, ignore it</p> <p>Stop talking about people mother /Stop getting on dumb [Stop being silly] /Stop picking on people and taking out... stress from home on people</p> <p>Talk to the guidance counsellor/Talk to somebody, like yuh [your] Form teacher</p> <p>Try and resolve the matter for yourself</p> <p>Stop what yuh doing [Stop your actions]... show... yuh could be the... example [become a role model]</p> <p>Since we are the bigger ones and we have... more experience... they [junior students] could come to us</p> <p>Peer mediation... to resolve [stop] them from fighting</p>

Students could talk to other students about they [their] problems... and they will represent it in front of [take it to] the principal
--

Approach a friend

Table 7.1 Student recommendations for school violence interventions

Essentially, the students have demonstrated a willingness to take ownership of the school violence problematic, as their contribution towards preventative interventions involving multi-stakeholder collaboration. They anticipate contributing to a school environment that is conducive for constructive interpersonal exchange, by influencing changed behaviours among their peers through mentorship (“...be...the example”); by providing support through peer guidance and mediation (“...we have ...more experience ...they could come to us”); and by facilitating student voice (“...students ...will represent it in front of the principal”). Importantly, human input through individual commitment; motivation; and problem ownership, is a critical success factor for effective interventions, including results sustainability (Cooke-Davies, 2002; Ozer, Ritterman and Wanis, 2010). What is more, the discourse on school violence aligns with the recommendations that have been made by the students. In the sections that follow, therefore, I outline three of the approaches to violence resolution and prevention that are cited in the literature, i) peer mediation; ii) restorative justice; and iii) the iPEACE model, given their similarity to the students’ views.

7.3.1 Peer mediation

Peer mediation is an alternative form of dispute resolution that is administered through peer support (Cremin, 2007). Within the school context, the success of this intervention is dependent on two elements. Firstly, students must receive training to enable them to intervene effectively during conflicts among their peers. Secondly, student mediators must be supported by a dedicated in-school staff team. Upon training completion, the students are to use their new mediation skillset to facilitate socially acceptable resolutions to peer conflict (Cremin, 2007; Schellenberg, Parks-Savage and Rehfuss, 2007).

Interestingly, in envisioning a role for themselves in stemming school violence, the students indicated their willingness to function as peer mediators in their respective schools (“For certain students, that peer mediator will be a good example...,” Ruth, age 14, female, Ryedale Secondary). School-based peer mediation was also included among the recommendations of the national-level enquiry into school violence in Trinidad and Tobago (JSC-SSPA, 2016). Further, a peer mediation programme was launched by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts in 2016, to facilitate training, implementation and follow-up support at the school level. While this programme is freely available to schools, each school must extend an invitation to the Peer Mediation Division of the ministry, to allow divisional staff to first conduct an

institutional assessment to determine school-eligibility.²¹ At the time of writing, however, no such invitation had been extended by the research schools.

Cremin (2007) observes that successful peer mediation programming is significantly challenged by schools with a highly authoritarian culture because of limited opportunities for student voice. As my research has centred on the students' views, I have not explored the perspectives of school personnel on the management culture in each research school. I note though, that the students' interest in peer mediation programming is based on their perception about its potential effectiveness ("...students will feel more comfortable talking to another student ...about something that ...they could carry to the teacher ...than them personally going," Aisha, age 15, female). Importantly, the success of peer mediation programming is dependent, in part, on a whole-school approach to support long-term implementation and results sustainability. As the programme would be systematically incorporated into the school's management infrastructure and learning environment (UNESCO, 2020), school violence would be addressed as a collective challenge by school communities (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007). In line with this approach, in the next section I outline the concept of restorative justice, which also presents as a systematic

²¹ Information received during telephone discussion with the Peer Mediation Division Information Desk (September 2019) to supplement programme overview available at <http://www.cdca.gov.tt/>.

and collaborative process for resolving conflict and preventing violence, including at the school level.

7.3.2 Restorative justice

Restorative justice is the end result of the mutual acknowledgement of harms inflicted and experienced, by all individuals who are implicated by an identifiable offence (Zehr, 2003). The aim is to facilitate a process of healing for the victims and understanding by the perpetrators of the harms inflicted, to prevent reoccurrence (Zehr and Mika, 1998; Zehr, 2003; Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Cremin, Sellman and McCluskey, 2012; Kline, 2016; Brown, 2018). Brown (2018) notes that as restorative justice is a process, it requires establishing a safe space to process trauma and address individual needs, to enable victims and perpetrators to be at ease to 'speak and be heard' (Brown, 2018, p.62). Some students indicated, however, that they felt as though they were not being heard at school, including not being allowed to relate their 'side of the story' following incidents of violence. In Excerpt 30, for example, the reason for Sonia's disappointment is not only her suspension, but the lack of a thorough investigation by school management before enabling the zero-tolerance policy .

Excerpt 30, Burlington High:

Researcher: ...[S]o, somebody attacked you... what happened?...

Sonia (age 16, female): ...[M]eh [my] cousin that [who] attend[s] this school, ...somebody attacked her and... I went to... separate them.... we got suspension

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-
- Researcher: Even you?
- Sonia: Yeah... Because they said... it didn't look like I was parting...
- Researcher: ...[I]t was fair that you got suspended?
- Sonia: Miss, no ...they should have asked the other students that was looking on... if I intentionally participated in the fight...

As the notion of restorative justice is applicable to situations in which harms have been inflicted, I argue that it applies to the above scenario, to restore Sonia's confidence in school management. In effect, restorative justice is used to foster 'the desired school culture' (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.4) through a school's relational ecology (Brown, 2018), identified as the format and quality of interpersonal relations in the school setting. As schools will function as implementing agencies during this process, they will each be responsible for tailoring the restorative approach to their contextual environments to take ownership of the process of facilitating restorative justice (Zehr and Mika, 1998). As a result of human resource limitations, however, the Ministry of Education has had limited capacity to train teachers in the restorative approach for implementation by schools (JSS-SSPA, 2019). Restorative justice is, therefore, integrated into the work of the ministry's Learning Enhancement Centres, to support the rehabilitation of student referrals (JSC-SSPA, 2019).

Arguably though, both the peer mediation and restorative justice approaches are reactive interventions that are used to facilitate peace in the aftermath of violence. Moreover, neither approach constitutes a solution to school violence,

which is contingent on several factors, particularly, the receptiveness of the school context to each approach (Cremin, 2007; McCluskey et al, 2008; Standing, Fearon and Dee, 2011). Interestingly therefore, while the iPEACE model (Cremin and Bevington, 2017) is also designed to address emergent conflict and violence within schools, it advocates a longer-term perspective, involving a systematic approach to sustaining peace through collective collaboration (see sub-Section 7.3.3).

7.3.3 The iPEACE model

The iPEACE model (iPEACE) is ‘grounded in the theory of positive peace’ (Cremin and Bevington, 2017, p.1). It draws on the foundational work of Galtung (1969; 1981) in peace studies, which distinguishes between negative peace, arising from the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, as achieved through social justice by eliminating direct and indirect forms of violence. Based on this reasoning, iPEACE comprises responsive and proactive components (See Table 7.2), for specific application to the school environment. The model’s responsive component advocates peacekeeping and peace-making, to eliminate direct violence and foster negative peace. Relatedly, the proactive component promotes peacebuilding to eliminate indirect violence and create positive peace.

Category of Peace	Description	Component	Aim
Peacekeeping	Responds to the question: How do we keep school	Responsive	Negative peace/Absence of direct violence

	members safe from harm?		
Peace-making	Responds to the question: How do we deal with conflict in our school?	Responsive	Negative peace/Absence of direct violence
Peacebuilding	Responds to the question: How do we equip students and staff to embody and sustain peace?	Proactive	Positive peace/Absence of direct and indirect violence

Table 7.2 Core components of the iPEACE model

Significantly, all students expressed an interest in negative and positive peace in their schools, including at the classroom level (“...it’s a situation that needs to be dealt with ...students ...[are] fighting for no reason,” Dianne, age 15, female, Chesterville High; “...they have to change that teacher ...cause when she teaching ...we not going to do good [perform well],” Clarkie, age 14, male, Vermont Secondary). Moreover, hidden structural violence within the research schools does not reflect the image of violence that has been portrayed by the media, which focuses on physical student-initiated violence. As the students are “fed up of all this thing that going on [everything that’s happening],” (Julia, age 16, female, Burlington High), namely, incidents of physical violence, it is unsurprising that some of them have called for harsh punitive measures to be

enabled. In essence, the students' views suggest that they consider school violence to be an out-of-control issue.

As schools need support to understand and transform the situation of violence in their specific settings (Cremin and Bevington, 2017), iPEACE is a generic construct that can be tailored to address the contextual dynamics of individual schools. Importantly, the model addresses the need for palliative and preventative interventions within schools through its peacekeeping and peace-making elements. Further, by embedding the implementation process into school management infrastructure and enabling it through a whole-school approach, the model also addresses the need for results sustainability.

The logic of negative and positive peace that underscores iPEACE is not, however, ideal for user-friendly application. From a non-specialist's perspective, there is likely to be confusion around the classification of peace as negative, given the presumption that all things negative are to be shunned. Further, in the Trinidad and Tobago context, the Ministry of Education's Peace Promotion Programme (circa 2003–2011) was renamed as the Student Leadership Programme, based on the rationale that reference to peace implied that schools were war zones (Williams, 2012). In light of this reality, as well as the need to develop a conducive and sustainable context for school violence prevention, in the next section, I seek to develop a workable model to address the challenges of school violence. My recommendation is informed by the students' views, as presented throughout my discourse, as well as the approaches to violence resolution that have been explored in Section 7.3.

7.4 Adequate social justice through the iPLACE anti-violence framework

In my effort to develop a workable approach to reducing and preventing school violence, I advance the iPLACE Anti-violence Framework (iPLACE), as a generic adaption of iPEACE, for implementation by individual schools. This approach seeks to build on the responsive and proactive components of iPEACE (Cremin and Bevington, 2017), and align with the notion of adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007). Further, as the revised Salmi (2000) model does not articulate a process to guide violence prevention programming within schools, iPLACE serves to fill this procedural gap. Notably, the revised Salmi (2000) framework enhances the data generation capacities of the original framework, but is still lacking in established guidelines for school-place implementation and integration.

Relatedly, as indicated in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4), social justice becomes adequate when it considers who will be engaged in its pursuit; what resources and/or opportunities will be made available to them; and how their claims will be represented (Fraser, 2007). Importantly therefore, iPLACE, provides schools with the flexibility to contextualise their institutional approach to school violence prevention, for example, by incorporating elements of peer mediation; restorative justice; and/or iPEACE, all of which have been supported by the students' views. Based on the discourse on school violence and the students' perceptions, I rationalise, here, that no single preventative intervention is transferrable from one context to another. Instead, preventative efforts need to be informed by situational school contexts (Astor and Meyer, 2001; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005). Consequently, iPLACE positions each school at

the centre of its anti-violence efforts, taking contextual school differences into consideration.

As schools remain accountable to the Ministry of Education (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2015), they are each responsible for institutional oversight and classroom learning. The successful application of iPLACE, therefore, requires localised ownership by schools, in alignment with school commitments and resources. Further, results sustainability would be highly dependent on the ownership of the interventions by the key actors who will be responsible for implementation. These actors include school management and administration; Ministry of Education staff (in particular, school supervisors); students and auxiliary personnel; and external actors who are identified by schools with ministry approval (e.g. parents/guardians; law enforcement; non-governmental organisations; private sector professionals; etc.). In this respect, iPLACE is to be implemented through a whole-school approach, giving each school the autonomy to decide on the format of its interventions, in collaboration with relevant key actors.

In advocating a collaborative approach to address school violence, the students, themselves, advise that there is need to involve external actors in violence prevention efforts (“...get a motivational speaker... to come every... other week... get the parents involve[d]... get the Ministry... or the Police involved...” (Katherine, age 16, female, Burlington High). As indicated, they have also expressed interest in contributing towards anti-violence interventions and demonstrate the potential to do so. Yet, as the school- and ministry-level responses to school violence continue to identify the students as the main

perpetrators, the students' voices remain underrepresented in the dialogue on next steps. If the students are being prepared to function in a democratic capitalist society, of necessity, they require sustainable skills for informed decision-making, alongside classroom-acquired education for specialised employment. In this respect, iPLACE supports full student engagement, as distinct from tokenism (Hart, 1992), and the provision of opportunities for coaching, empowerment and leadership for students of all abilities. As the intention is to facilitate sustainable interventions and results, iPLACE can (and should) be used to enhance the continuation or establishment of the student council/prefect system at the school level²². As an enhancement of existing systems, however, the capacities of students of all abilities should be built to meet the Ministry of Education-recommended selection criteria. By so doing, all students would be provided with increased opportunities for developing skills for responsible leadership; constructive behaviours; positive peer influence; etc., to support their contribution towards conducive school environments and effective citizenry. Significantly, this approach aligns with the students' recommendation that they be engaged to help their peers develop constructive behaviours "...[W]e will be like, 'we don't really have time in this day [nowadays] to fight...' ...yuh have to... put it in them head so them could know [talk to them so that they understand]," (Debbie, age 12, female, Ryedale Secondary).

²² School management and students in a few research schools indicated that there was no school council/prefect system in place (Fieldnotes, April–September 2018).

While there is need to ‘give voice’ to students of all abilities in the school setting, iPLACE advocates a whole-school approach that engages all relevant key actors within individual school communities (including external actors). Importantly, this approach does not negate the significance of Ministry of Education interventions that have been used to address emergent violence and prevent future incidents. To illustrate, the Ministry has led special needs assessments of students upon referral by schools, to identify individual student abilities and requirements, and provide specialist follow-up, including with the support of external agencies, as required (Ministry of Education, 2018). Yet, as students with special needs do not represent entire school populations or all the student perpetrators of violence, there continues to be a critical need for interventions that:

- I. Address incidents of school violence that are not initiated by students with special needs or other psycho-social challenges; and
- II. Entail whole-school approaches that are owned and implemented by individual school communities, with the support of the Ministry of Education, in the interest of longevity and results sustainability beyond the school environment.

I further argue that anti-violence programming must address the multiple marginalities that students face, to build their capacities for informed and responsible decision-making, in collaboration with key actors within their schools and the wider society. It is also critical for all school personnel (school management; the teaching faculty and auxiliary staff) to be given access to capacity-building opportunities, to enhance their performance within the school

environment, with emphasis on student engagement. Indeed, the need to build the capacities of school personnel responds directly to the students' retaliation against what they consider as unbecoming behaviours by this category of key actors (“...sometimes the teacher... does pelt duster at yuh [throws the chalkboard eraser at students]... like if she ketch we [catches us] talking and ...she vex [she becomes angry]... Well... I going and pelt it back [throw it back at her]” Clarkie, age 14, male, Vermont Secondary).

7.4.1 Operationalising iPLACE

As illustrated in Figure 7.2, iPLACE comprises six stages of interconnected implementation activities, and provides examples of questions that can be used to guide discussions among key actors. In general, iPLACE is premised on the need to build and sustain a violence prevention culture within schools, to foster a conducive context for learning and development, including building student potential to become ‘fully functioning ...and contributing members of society’ (Cremin and Bevington, 2017, p.31). The expectations that underscore each implementation stage are:

- **Level 1, Identify:** Schools identify the nature and extent of violence in their contextual setting, as well as all categories of implicated key actors. Further, each school, under the leadership of school management, takes responsibility for establishing a core intervention management team to hold preliminary discussions on contextual institutional goals; team responsibilities; and next steps. The team members would, of necessity, derive from school management and the teaching faculty;

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-
- **Level 2, Plan:** As a follow-up to Level 1, schools lead the mobilisation of representatives from the student body, auxiliary school staff and the wider society, to further support the efforts of the core intervention management team. Consequently, the extended team would be responsible for mobilising relevant external actors for initial planning discussions on: perceptions of the school violence issue; measures for reduction and preventions; the way forward; etc.;

The incorporation of Fields 1-6 of the revised Salmi (2000) framework (see Chapter 3, Table 3.2) is particularly applicable to Levels 1 and 2, to enable schools to identify the nature of violence in their contextual settings. In accordance with a whole-school approach, the contributions of key actors from across individual school communities should be acquired.

- **Level 3, Listen:** In addition to creating a forum for all relevant actors to share their views, schools are to give due consideration to all contributions, which will be debated among the forum participants. The final decision-making on the recommendations that are to be taken forward will, however, rest with the core intervention management team, to align with available school resources and Ministry of Education directives;
- **Level 4, Attack the Problem:** At Level 4, the core team will take steps to attack the identified problem, by developing a draft strategy for school-level intervention. To minimise adversity, schools should ensure that the strategy centres on school violence and does not target any one

individual. As such, the strategy should address the underlying causes of school violence, based on key actor dialogues and follow-up assessments. Importantly, the strategy should include measures to build the capacity of key actors to support the implementation of the intervention and sustain results achievement;

- **Level 5, Create and implement an Action Plan:** In support of the draft intervention strategy, Level 5 will entail developing an action plan to facilitate implementation. To align with institutional planning processes and resources, this action plan can be incorporated into existing school management or discipline plans. The action plan is to be submitted for Ministry of Education approval, including recommendations for enhancement and finalisation. Once approval has been received, implementation should begin;
- **Level 6, Evaluate and Evolve:** Level 6 is to be launched alongside Level 1, to support the monitoring of all iPLACE activities, based on key indicators for measuring progress towards agreed results. Schools will have the flexibility to determine the format of results monitoring, e.g. if the intervention includes a series of extracurricular activities for students or professional development workshops for staff, monitoring could involve completing a register of attendance. Importantly, formal evaluations should be scheduled at periodic intervals, for example, at the end of the term or school year, to determine what has worked well; which aspects of the intervention require enhancement; and whether there has been visible change in the situation of violence within schools.

By default, the evaluation results should be used to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of each intervention.

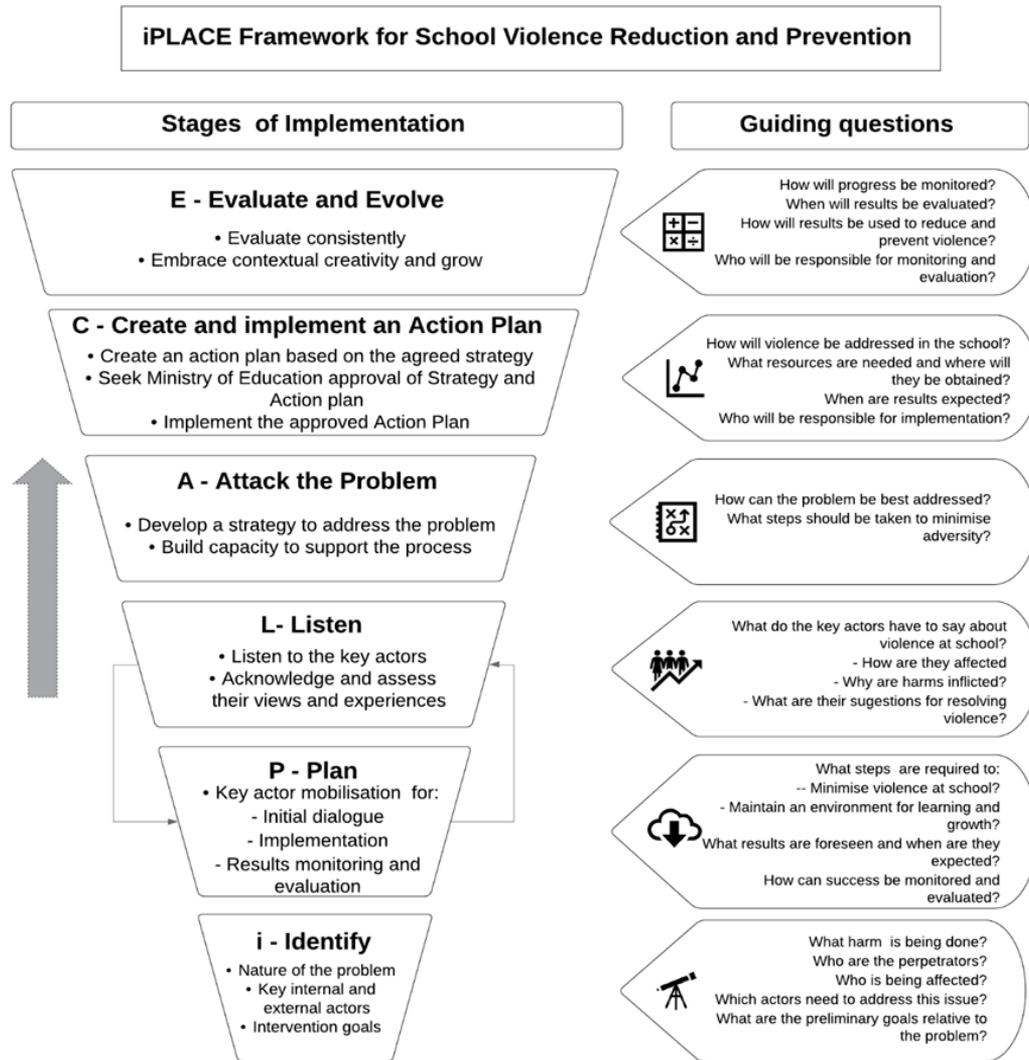


Figure 7.2 The iPLACE Anti-violence Framework

7.4.2 Key considerations for design and implementation

As the implementation of iPLACE is not a linear process, but requires some back-and-forth between implementation stages, anticipated results will be

achieved gradually and not in rapid succession. Nevertheless, the process remains iterative and generic for flexible school-specific adaptation, to allow violence-free school settings to be established by and for the relevant key actors. The successful implementation of iPLACE is highly dependent, however, on endorsement by the Ministry of Education and collaborative ownership by school communities. To facilitate this process, there are three key considerations that should inform the design and implementation of the iPLACE framework.

First, the results of this study have shown that the implementation of iPLACE needs to be informed by the dynamics of structural violence (Galtung, 1969) at the school level. Essentially, by instituting authoritarianism and punitive disciplinary policy (see Section 7.2), schools indirectly create a conducive context for emergent violence (Jackson and Sundaram, 2020), including hidden structural violence (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2). Although the students do not classify incidents of structural violence as violence per se, they are aware that certain behaviours by school personnel and other students need to be refined to enhance the educational setting. By default, the implementation of iPLACE should facilitate the identification of hidden structural violence at the school level, to support effective and sustainable preventative interventions .

Second, the incorporation of a gendered and intersectional lens (Sundaram, 2014) is critical for the effective implementation of the iPLACE framework. Indeed, although my research has revealed that there are similarities between acts of violence that are committed by boys and those that are initiated by girls, it has also highlighted some key differences. As gender is not homogenous,

further differences are likely across each group of school-place actors. Notably, boys who aspire towards the hegemonic ideal have been observed to engage in physical violence with other boys on a one-on-one basis, as a show of their masculine prowess. Conversely, girls who demonstrate alternative femininities while conforming to the assumptions of emphasised femininity (whether intentionally or not), have tended to engage in physical and/or non-physical violence with other girls based on peer rivalry; sentiments of friendship loyalty; and in response to misunderstood social media communications. In rebelling against the presumption of female subordination to the hegemonic male, some girls have also engaged in contentious relations with boys, for example, by taunting them (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1). Critically, iPLACE should be informed by these differences, to ensure that violence prevention efforts are tailored towards gendered behaviours. As the performance of gender responds, in part, to the interplay of intersectional factors that contribute to the students' social identities (by ascription or uptake), these intersectionalities can also influence student-initiated violence (see Chapter 6, Section 6.5). In taking account of gender, therefore, iPLACE should be informed by the effects of these intersectional factors on the students' behaviours.

Relatedly, to the extent that iPLACE facilitates the institutionalisation of social justice at the school level, this process becomes critical for violence prevention since it informs (influences) and accounts for the role of intersectionalities in the school setting in relation to school violence. To illustrate, as microcosms of the macro-society, inadvertently, schools reflect the socio-economic and cultural factors that drive societal stratification and related interpersonal exchanges (Jackson and Sundaram, 2020). By seeking to institutionalise social justice to

stem emergent school violence, this study has acknowledged that effective preventative interventions should address causal factors and enabling conditions that extend beyond student behaviours. Consequently, the facilitation of institutionalised social justice through iPLACE takes into account the combined effect of the intersectionalities of gender; race; and social class on school-place violence. Specifically, as a complementary element of iPLACE, the revised Salmi (2000) framework has been designed to generate data on contextual violence within the school setting, including the hidden structural violence that integrates into educational infrastructure. The implementation of the iPLACE framework follows, based on the collated data, as a logical approach to preventative intervention. Importantly, iPLACE targets and seeks to inform the intersectionalities that contribute towards emergent school violence. In effect, the institutionalisation of social justice at the school level supports the re-theorisation of school violence, by facilitating the assessment (and understanding) of its manifestations from an intersectional perspective.

Third, in order to minimise the emergent tensions that can emerge from efforts towards student empowerment within an authoritarian setting, mitigation measures should be incorporated into school anti-violence programming. Importantly, this study has highlighted the limited engagement of secondary school students in the school violence debate in Trinidad and Tobago, including the search for an effective approach to violence reduction and prevention. The student discussants have, however, demonstrated their willingness and capacity to contribute towards national and school-specific discussions on preventative interventions. In alignment with the discourse on school violence,

they have been especially interested in whole-school collaborations that would allow them to function as peer mentors and advisors, as well as student representatives (see Section 7.3). Of note though, institutionalised education is anchored in an authoritarian school system that provides limited opportunities for student voice, while advocating punitive disciplinary policies and a banking approach to education (see Chapter 2, sub-Section 2.4.2). As this environment is not wholly conducive for violence prevention through student empowerment, it poses a challenge to the facilitation of student voice.

With certainty, iPLACE can be contextualised to address the violence prevention needs of each school. There is a question though, of whether the implementation of iPLACE, in conjunction with the revised Salmi (2000) framework, is sufficient for effective violence prevention given the challenges of the authoritarian school setting. Indeed, this is an issue that requires discussion during the planning stages of framework implementation, as the top-down approach to violence prevention is noted as being ineffective (see Chapter 2, sub-Section 2.4.2), as too are efforts to develop peer mediation initiatives within an authoritarian environment (see sub-Section 7.3.1). To preempt the foreseen tensions, therefore, it would be worthwhile for school communities to develop (and implement) a mitigation plan (e.g. by establishing guidelines for initiatives that are generated through iPLACE) to facilitate the students' contribution to related discussions and initiatives. Of necessity, the choice of mitigation measures should be informed by individual school contexts and available resources, and should be finalised based on collaboration between school management and the Ministry of Education.

Overall, effective school violence interventions should not be limited to initiatives that target juvenile delinquency and student indiscipline. The intention, here, is not to invalidate the need for interventions that respond to the diagnosed psycho-social or special needs of some students. Significantly, however, inadequate consideration of violence-enabling factors that are deeply entrenched within educational infrastructure and/or societal mores, will continue to sweep major impediments to constructive, violence-free, school settings under the proverbial carpet.

7.5 Summary

My focus in this chapter has been on the students' recommendations for resolving contextual violence in their schools. From a social justice perspective, the students have called for a movement from palliative interventions to more preventative approaches that are implemented through key actor collaborations. Importantly, they are prepared to play an active role during this process by providing mentorship and mediation support to their peers. It is concerning, however, that some students identify physical punishment as the solution to peer-initiated violence. Yet, the bigger question pertains to whether authoritarian school cultures, combined with or distinct from life experiences outside the school walls, have led them to believe that violence resolves violence. Alternatively, it is worth considering whether the students are so overwhelmed by school violence that they see the need for extreme intervention.

Indeed, the results of my research have unearthed examples of structural violence within schools that are masked as school discipline and have fuelled a conducive context for violence by influencing the students' perceptions and reactions. All the same, this chapter reinforces the need for localised anti-violence interventions, which should build on the resources that are available to schools. In combination with the revised Salmi (2000) framework, therefore, iPLACE advocates school violence interventions that are built on effective ownership and programming to yield sustainable far-reaching results.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

“...This is the first time in the school year... someone actually come in and [came to] talk about violence... no one would come and ask us about school violence... so I was relieved when Miss... told me... I said, well, that’s a great start, cause everybody knows how violence does be [the situation of violence is] in the school...”

(Chantal, age 16, female, Claremont Secondary).

8.1 Research purpose and significance

The purpose of my research was to explore the perspectives of secondary school students, in Trinidad and Tobago, about the causes and consequences of school violence and their recommendations for its reduction and prevention. In order to achieve this objective, my research methodology was informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and was supported by inclusive participatory methods and a safe space environment (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Nind, 2014). My intention was to engage the subjective views of the students, in line with the interpretivist paradigm in which my research was located, and ensure the integrity of the study by facilitating a systematic data-driven process. I would argue, therefore, that my research had a latent secondary purpose, namely, to underscore the importance of data-driven research for facilitating a deeper understanding of young persons’ views about school violence. Indeed, the conceptual research framework was grounded in the research data, as it emerged during an inductive process involving iterative data generation, triangulation and analysis. Yet, my efforts to justify the data-

driven approach (see Chapter 3) only emerged during preliminary data analysis.

In light of this context, my research is significant on three levels. First, it has given voice to an underrepresented but critical category of actors in the school violence debate, by engaging students/young persons in Trinidad and Tobago in the discourse on this issue. Moreover, the research sample included 'voiceless' students; defined as students with limited access to opportunities to share their views about topical issues within the school setting, including contextual school violence.

Second, this study has highlighted the students' capacity to reflect critically on an issue of school-specific and national concern that implicates their lived experiences. Notably, they demonstrated a willingness to be engaged during data generation and preliminary analysis. Further, the students had substantial interest in contributing to positive relational ecologies (Brown, 2018) within their schools, to create a conducive context (Kelly, 2016; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020) for institutionalised learning and development.

Third, the study has demonstrated that contextual school violence can be researched effectively using a data-driven approach. The students' enthusiasm during research implementation, combined with their openness during our discussions, points to the strength of the inclusive participatory approach. Indeed, I chose to engage the students using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The important factor, however, was the opportunity afforded the students to share their views within the security of the safe spaces. To

illustrate, in spite of visible phenotypical differences between some students and myself, they felt at ease to independently raise sensitive issues about the situation of violence in their schools, e.g. their perceptions about racial contentions.

Commensurate with its purpose and significance, therefore, my research has contributed to practice and academic knowledge, with emphasis on global and country-specific relevance. Specifically, it has addressed a gap in understanding about contextual school violence, and promotes a user-friendly approach to analysis and intervention, as discussed in the section that follows.

8.2 Contribution to knowledge

This study has contributed to knowledge in two ways: it has contributed to practice; and to academic knowledge.

In terms of its contribution to practice, my research has provided a cogent example of how a data-driven approach can be effectively used to address the gap in understanding on young persons' perspectives about school-based violence. Through the use of an inclusive participatory approach to student engagement (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Nind, 2014), this study has advocated data generation that is student-centred and entails facilitating small focus group discussions and in-depth interviews within a safe space environment. Further, as a complement to student engagement, the study has produced two data generation tools, the revised Salmi (2000) framework and the iPLACE framework for school violence reduction and prevention, for use during research and anti-violence programming at the school level. The revised

Salmi (2000) framework emerged from the study as a user-friendly data generation tool, to enable school communities to better understand the nature of contextual violence in their respective settings. Similarly, the iPLACE framework was developed as a guide to assist school communities in systematising their violence prevention efforts. iPLACE articulates practical steps for violence prevention programming based on a whole-school approach (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007), and has been enhanced through the integration of the revised Salmi (2000) framework into this process, to support effective programme implementation.

From an academic knowledge standpoint, this study has responded to the paucity of information on young people's views about violence (Sundaram, 2016), by re-theorising the understanding of school violence at the global and country-specific levels. On the one hand, my research has shown that while the students equate school violence with physical and verbal altercations in the country of focus, as propagated by the mass media, they are aware of manifestations of hidden structural violence (Galtung, 1969; 1981;1990) within their respective schools. Yet, as structural violence is built into each school's institutional infrastructure and is thereby not easily recognisable (Galtung, 1969), the students do not define related incidents as violence. They maintain, however, that manifestations of structural violence contradict the education experience by not fostering a conducive context for learning and development. On the other hand, this study has highlighted the multiple forms of subordination that are embedded in the students' lived realities, leading to complex inequalities and, in effect, a state of being multiply-marginalised (McCall, 2005;

Choo and Ferree, 2010; Ferree, 2010; Few-Demo, 2014). Specifically, the interplay of social identifiers, at the intersectionalities of gender; race and social class, in particular, has created complex inequalities that determine the students' social positioning within the school setting (see sub-Section 8.3.1). The responsiveness of the students to these complex inequalities, including the social expectations that ascribe certain behaviours to students attending the research schools, informs their school-place interactions, including emergent acts of violence between student-peers.

In line with its contribution to practice and academic knowledge, my research has endorsed the analysis of and intervention into contextual school-based violence based on the principles of adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007). Essentially, this study has underscored the need for analysing school violence at the individual school level, using a whole-school approach that engages all categories of key actors within each school community (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007). To determine the nature and extent of contextual school violence, therefore, the analysis must be designed to identify physical violence, as well as its non-physical manifestation, the latter of which includes hidden structural violence. Significantly, the analysis should further incorporate a gendered and intersectional lens to take account of intersectional factors and, by extension, the multiply-marginalisations (Ferree, 2010) that contribute towards enabling conditions for emergent school violence. In the interest of effective anti-violence programming that generates sustainable results, my research has shown that the school violence debate and its follow-on interventions should be informed by the 'who; what; and how' considerations of adequate social justice (Fraser,

2007). Specifically, collaborative discussions on school violence at the school level, combined with the implementation of anti-violence programming, would be most effective if they are institutionalised based on parity of participation (Fraser, 2007), entailing the engagement of entire school communities in both processes. The intention, here, would be to facilitate adequate social justice by establishing 'who' is entitled to redress (social justice); 'what' resources and/or opportunities need to be redistributed; and 'how' access to social justice will be instituted.

To elucidate the specific results of my research, in Section 8.3, I present the responses to the main research questions, namely, the causes of school violence (sub-Section 8.3.1); its consequences (sub-Section 8.3.2); and recommendations for violence reduction and prevention (sub-Section 8.3.3). This discussion is preceded by an overview of the students' conceptual understanding of school violence within their respective school settings.

8.3 Student perspectives on school-based violence

From the students' perspectives, school violence signifies interpersonal altercations that involve physical and/or verbal exchanges among their peers. While these exchanges are likely to occur on the school compound, they can equally take place in its external vicinity, during which external actors, such as students' family members/relatives, and/or friends from other schools or their communities, might also become involved. Indeed, the students' understanding of school violence mirrors its portrayal by the mass media in Trinidad and Tobago. Interestingly though, while they identify manifestations of structural

violence (Galtung, 1969; 1981; 1990) within their schools, the students do not classify these incidents as violence, but as inappropriate conduct.

In light of its inherent visibility and the general perception that it leads to greater damage than its non-physical forms, it is hardly surprising that the students and the media equate school violence with physical student-initiated incidents. Similarly, as structural violence is usually integrated into normative institutionalised practices, it is to be expected that its violent overtones remained hidden and unrecognisable (Galtung, 1969) during the students' reflections. What is significant though, is the students' recognition that, whether overt or hidden, school violence is counterproductive to the education experience.

8.3.1 Causes

While the students opined that school violence results from an individual's decision to inflict harms, they also reasoned that enabling conditions at the school and societal levels facilitate conducive contexts (Kelly, 2016; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020) for violence. Significantly, however, their understanding of what causes school violence is not limited to a perception of peer delinquency or psychosocial needs, as advanced by much of the school violence discourse (Akiba et al, 2002). Although they acknowledged that the perpetrators of violence are accountable for their actions, the students inferred that school violence emerges in response to factors within the school setting and the wider society.

On the one hand, they suggested that some of their peers use violence as an outlet for the frustrations they experience at home. Further, as their schools are often discredited by the general public, the students also argued that some other students respond to this criticism by adopting a defeatist attitude that includes displays of violence. Notably, the violence enabling factors/ conditions that were identified (challenging domestic environment and negative school stereotyping), are social identifiers that contribute towards the students' social marginalisation whether they engage in violence or not. Consequently, the students who attend schools that are most at-risk for violence are more likely to be multiply-marginalised (Ferree, 2010) in and by the wider society, because of the complex social inequalities they face (McCall, 2005; Choo and Ferree, 2010; Few-Demo, 2014). As such, the propensity for the students to engage in violence is especially high when they continue to be marginalised within the school system or are unable to envision the prospective value of their education (Phillips, 2010).

On the other hand, the students observed that their schools' relational ecologies (Brown, 2018) had significant influence on emergent violence. To illustrate, while the students did not classify manifestations of structural violence (Galtung, 1969) as violence, they expressed their concerns about these incidents. They alluded, in particular, to the power inequalities that contribute towards authoritarian and punitive cultures in their schools, which are upheld as disciplinary policies and practices. Indeed, the need for discipline within the institutionalised school setting is ingrained in capitalist economies to generate future workforces that comply with workplace rules and hierarchy (Bowles and

Gintis, 1976; 2002). Nevertheless, there are questions about the efficacy of discipline based on authoritarian and punitive school cultures, especially when it is excessive relative to the associated infractions (see sub-Section 8.3.2).

The students further intimated that gendered performances by their peers significantly affect emergent violence, such that there are clear differences between the factors that influence violence by boys and by girls. As gender is not homogenous, I consider the students' observations to be generalised perceptions that are not attributable to all boys and girls. In general, therefore, the students noted that violence by boys was influenced by their aspirations towards hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Since hegemonic masculinity is synonymous with male power and authority, and female subordination (Kenway and FitzClarence, 1997; Mills 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), the boys were seen to engage in displays of maleness, to avoid appearing 'girlie'. In the school setting, examples of these manly behaviours include one-on-one physical violence among boys; the abuse of drugs and alcohol; gambling; and claims to gang affiliation.

Conversely, the students observed that the basis for contention among girls was rivalry arising from: i) scholastic competition and the performance of femininity; ii) friendship ties; and iii) social media dynamics. Scholastic competition among the girls connotes their aspirations to be the best performing student. As this goal contrasts sharply with the principles of hegemonic masculinity, boys do not necessarily engage in this type of competition, hence the ongoing discourse about the underachievement of boys in Caribbean nations (Jha and Kelleher, 2006; Cobbett and Younger, 2012). Further, in

performing gender, the girls seek to establish their own standards of femininity, which often involve informal support for displays of hegemonic masculinity by boys, and their own efforts to establish their school-place presence based on popularity and physical appearance. Moreover, as girls generally form small close-knit friendship networks with other girls, they develop a sense of loyalty that leads to their automated involvement in altercations that implicate their female friends (Piehler and Dishion, 2007). While violence by girls usually takes the form of group fights, therefore, boys who aspire to the hegemonic ideal tend to engage in one-on-one physical confrontations to demonstrate individual prowess. Violence among girls has further stemmed from individual reactions to social media exchanges, reportedly based on misinterpreted postings.

The discourse on intersectionalities has shown that gendered performances are informed by an interplay of social identifiers (intersectional identities), which shape an individual's beliefs and experiences relative to gender (Crenshaw, 1991; 1989; Shields, 2008). Conceivably, therefore, the students' gendered performances are influenced by the social identifiers that align with the multiply-marginalisations they face. As gender is also relational, the students' performances further respond to their social interactions, and existing socio-cultural expectations about gender. Unsurprisingly, therefore, most boys are often reluctant to engage in altercations with girls because of the social perception that it is not manly. Relatedly, while they do not seek to change their position in the gender hierarchy relative to hegemonic masculinity, some girls subtly challenge its principles by exercising agency (Sen, 1985; Bhana, 2008; Cin, 2017), through their taunts to the boys about the general assumption of

female weakness. Interestingly though, the girls who display violent behaviours are judged harshly by other girls, seemingly because they act contrary to social expectations of femininity. By extension, girls whose performance of femininity challenges the school-place identities of other girls receive similar criticisms, with overtones of possible violence. Of note, however, girls exercise agency when they engage in violence, based on their freedom to pursue their valued goals, whether related to scholastic aptitude; friendship ties; etc. Arguably, therefore, the issue to be addressed is not whether girls should be faulted for pursuing these goals, but how they can be supported to channel their aspirations towards more positive manifestations.

Importantly, the students are aware that society has limited expectations of them based on the stereotypes that are attached to their schools. Inadvertently, the authoritarian school setting can reproduce these stereotypes and societal norms that contribute towards student-marginalisation. Combined with the banking approach to education (Freire, 2010), this environment can create a conducive context for school violence, and stagnate the students' capacities for critical thinking and transformational growth, as outlined below.

8.3.2 Consequences

The students were generally cognisant of the punitive consequences for involvement in school violence, namely, out-of-school-suspension or expulsion. Students in the higher Forms were especially aware that both types of punishment implicated their future education and employment prospects. They

also noted that student-initiated structural violence, in the form of classroom disruptions, negatively affected their educational goals.

Based on their experiences with their schools' zero-tolerance policies, which are informed by Ministry of Education directives (Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, 2015), the students believed that student perpetrators and victims of violence would both receive out-of-school-suspensions. They further rationalised that the power differentials within their schools exclude school personnel and favoured students from being disciplined. Consequently, the students harbour a general reluctance to report violence to school management and also fear retaliation by their peers.

There are questions, therefore, about the effectiveness of the authoritarian school setting and the punitive school culture. These management approaches not only contribute to the students' mistrust of school personnel, but can also lead to a worsening of student behaviours and scholastic performance (Cameron and Sheppard, 2006; Goodman, 2006; Osher et al, 2010; Sharkey and Fenning, 2012; Kline, 2016; Bell, 2019). Zero-tolerance policies, in particular, are noted to be often in excess of the associated infractions (Skiba and Petersen, 1999; Goodman, 2006; Fox and Fridel, 2018; Lester and Evans, 2018). Further to their views on the consequences of school violence, therefore, the students offered several recommendations to stem contextual school violence (see sub-Section 8.3.3).

8.3.3 Reduction and prevention

From the students' perspectives, effective violence reduction and prevention is achievable through collective collaboration among entire school communities. They recommend the engagement of key actors at the school level, and relevant external parties, in a whole-school approach to intervention (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007). Significantly, the students have envisioned a role for themselves during violence prevention efforts, as potential change-makers with responsibilities for peer mediation and student representation. Moreover, they have acknowledged that the creation of a non-violent school environment is dependent on a reactive component, to address emergent violence, and a proactive component, to forestall future occurrence. Their recommendations for violence reduction and prevention are, therefore, structured around four themes: i) collaboration; ii) preventative intervention; iii) palliative action; and iv) student involvement.

It is concerning, however, that a small number of students, and mainly girls, recommended physical punishment as an effective solution for school violence. This raises several questions about the students' frustration with the situation of violence in their schools; their exposure to wider societal violence; and their immersion in an authoritarian and punitive school environment. The pressing issue is the students' perception that violence solves violence, and is acceptable in specific situations. By default, the need for anti-violence programming within schools becomes even more critical, to establish socially acceptable violence prevention and conflict resolution schemes, as well as

minimise the future involvement of students in wider societal violence, as perpetrators or victims.

In line with the students' recommendations and existing school management systems, therefore, iPLACE (see Chapter 7) presents as a supporting management tool to guide contextual approaches to violence reduction and prevention by individual schools. Its design takes schools' autonomy into account, by providing each school with the flexibility to develop interventions that are contextually appropriate, and align with Ministry of Education accountability procedures. By integrating the revised Salmi (2000) framework into iPLACE, the latter is further designed to support data generation on all forms of contextual school violence based on a whole-school approach. Moreover, data generation using the revised Salmi (2000) framework addresses the need to consider less recognised, albeit significant elements of the school violence debate, to inform subsequent interventions. These elements include the existence of hidden structural violence (Galtung, 1969) within the school setting, and the contribution of social identifiers to emergent school violence, at the intersectionalities of gender; race; and social class. The framework further supports data generation for instituting adequate social justice (Fraser, 2007) in response to school-place violence, whereby anti-violence programming goes beyond the redistribution of resources and opportunities, and the recognition/identification of eligible recipients. Essentially, the revised Salmi (2000) framework will allow school communities to consider how eligible recipients will be provided with increased access to social justice. Significantly, therefore, the combination of iPLACE and the

revised Salmi (2000) framework is geared towards anti-violence programming that fosters a conducive context (Kelly, 2016; Jackson and Sundaram, 2020) for learning and development in the school setting.

8.4 Research limitations

Research implementation has not been without challenges, as the study faced two limitations: i) sample size; and ii) student selection by schools (see sub-Sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.2, respectively).

8.4.1 Sample size

As research implementation engaged a small sample of schools and students, the views shared during data generation are not generalisable. They do not reflect the perceptions and experiences of all secondary students in the country or the student populations of the research schools. The results of the study can be used, however, to guide further research and discussions on school violence to inform policy and programming, as they provide key insights into students' views on a prioritised national issue.

8.4.2 Student selection

In order to respect the autonomy of the research schools, each school was asked to select a sample of students using pre-determined research criteria. The final sample could have benefitted, however, from a greater mix of students by sex and phenotype. Specifically, there was low representation by boys and East Indian students, who represented 31 and 10 per cent of the final sample of students, respectively. As the timeframe for data generation coincided with

school examinations, however, it could not be extended to allow for further student recruitment. This is an issue that should be addressed in future research (see Section 8.5).

8.5 Considerations for future research, policy and programming

Given the small size of the research samples, there is potential for future investigations of a larger-scale on students' perceptions about school violence. Notably, it would be worthwhile for future research to engage larger samples of schools and students, and/or a wider and more diverse cross-section of discussants. Of equal merit, further research on school violence can explore the operationalisation of the iPLACE model, including the revised Salmi (2000) framework, and can be school-led, to enhance school-specific violence prevention efforts for managing sustainable contextual transformations.

From a policy perspective, it would be useful for the Ministry of Education to endorse the iPLACE model and the revised Salmi (2000) framework as management tools for use by schools to support their violence prevention interventions. This level of endorsement would allow for quality control by the ministry. Further, there will be low demand on the ministry's resources, as iPLACE is designed to enhance and not add to the accountability requirements of schools.

At the intervention level, it would be beneficial for schools to operationalise the iPLACE model and the Salmi (2000) framework, with the ministry's endorsement, to enhance their efforts to address contextual violence in their respective settings. Operationalisation will allow violence prevention efforts to

be guided by a whole-school approach, involving the collective collaboration of all categories of implicated key actors. It will further support built capacities at the individual school level, for anti-violence programming that fosters a conducive context for learning and development.

8.6 Concluding Reflections

Indeed, the situation of violence at the school level is bigger than the relational ecologies of each school, as it extends to wider societal attitudes on violence and the social divisions that are created by intersectional labels. Yet, the results of this study have challenged the authoritarian and punitive school cultures that facilitate structural violence and stagnate built capacities among students to support sustainable change. The results of my research have further challenged the reproduction of external strata within schools, given their contribution towards the multiply-marginalisation of students.

Significantly, the openness of the students to an external enquiry into a sensitive school-place issue reflected their willingness to be engaged in a process of localised change. The strength of the research methodology is further supported by the students' candidness in sharing their views with an external researcher. This study facilitated a data-driven process that built on the creation of safe spaces, within which the students appreciated the opportunity to voice their concerns, in the hope that they would make a difference. What is more, the research engaged students with varying capacities and ideas, and allowed all students to share their views in the manner that was most comfortable to them.

I argue, therefore, that the results of this study affirm that each student has something to say, and can contribute towards positive transformations in their schools, communities and nation, if given the starting opportunity at school. With certainty, 'schools are well-positioned to be a partner in violence prevention' (Sundaram, 2014, p.86); a role that can be enhanced if schools are encouraged and supported to lead localised interventions that are informed by their specific contexts.

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Appendix One: Overview of Research Sample

Schools		Activity	Students	Age	Sex	Phenotype
1.	Burlington High	Focus group #1, n=4 Focus group #2, n=3 In-depth interviews, n=6	Justine	17	F	A
			Tiffany	18	F	MR
			Katherine	16	F	A
			Ingrid	16	F	A
			Julia	16	F	E
			Sonia	16	F	MR
			Bethany	17	F	A
2.	Chesterville High	Focus group #1, n=4 In-depth interviews, n=2	Courtney	15	M	A
			Bernard	14	M	A
			Ava	15	F	A
			Dianne	15	F	A
3.	Claremont Secondary	Focus group #1, n=4 In-depth interviews, n=2	Fabienne	15	F	A
			Chantal	16	F	A
			Beverly	15	F	MR
			Eric	12	F	A
4.	Richmond Secondary	Focus group #1, n=5 Focus group #2, n=5 In-depth interviews, n=6	Stacy	16	F	A
			Amber	17	F	A
			Mitch	16	M	A
			Angelo	16	M	A
			Charlotte	16	F	MR
			Dave	16	M	A
			Lisa	16	F	A
			Marcia	16	F	A
			Malcolm	16	M	MR
Aisha	15	F	E			
5.	Vermont Secondary	Focus group #1, n=5 Focus group #2, n=4 In-depth interviews, n=7	Jamel	14	M	E
			Robert	13	M	A
			Gemma	13	F	MR
			Susan	14	F	A
			Trevor	12	M	A
			Leanne	15	F	A
			Ramon	15	M	A
			Cindy	15	F	MR

			Clarkie	14	M	MR
6.	Ryedale Secondary	Focus group #1, n=5 In-depth interviews, n=2	Nina	13	F	A
			Gail	13	F	A
			Ruth	14	F	A
			Debbie	12	F	MR
			Karen	13	F	MR
Total # of students sampled			Focus group discussions: 39 (28 girls; 11 boys) In-depth interviews: 25 (16 girls; 9 boys)			

Legend:

M: male	A: African descent
F: female	E: East Indian
n: total number	MR: Mixed race