

**“Giving a voice to Scarborough’s Black Community:
An analysis of gun violence and its effects on individuals,
families and Scarborough’s Black Community”**

by

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partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
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Abstract

Gun violence is a serious problem in Scarborough that disproportionately affects the Black community, as Black individuals are most likely to be the victims and perpetrators of gun crimes. The purpose of this thesis was to gain an understanding of the impacts of gun violence on the Black community in Scarborough. Moreover, the causes of gun violence and the solutions to gun violence were explored from the perspective of seven participants. The thesis findings revealed that systemic issues are likely the main cause of gun violence as larger community problems can influence the behaviour of individuals or families. This research concluded that an Afrocentric and anti-oppressive approach could be most successful in reducing gun violence in Scarborough's Black community as these approaches address the root causes of gun violence.

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I can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me. Phil. 3:14

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Giving a voice to Scarborough's Black Community: An analysis of gun violence and its effects on individuals, families and Scarborough's Black Community

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Issue

Although violent crime has been decreasing throughout Canada, incidences of violence amongst youth have been increasing annually in Toronto and in other major cities around the world (Metro, 2005). Toronto, which experienced a record number of homicides in 2005, has been rocked by a fury of violent crimes. Most troubling, 52 of the 78 murders in Toronto were the result of gun violence (CTV, 2005a). This was nearly double the amount of gun-related deaths in comparison to 2004 (CTV, 2005a). Moreover, the Toronto subsection of Scarborough experienced many gun related crimes in 2005. Many have blamed gangs for the recent uprising of gun crimes; however, only half of the gun-related crimes have been characterized as being gang related. The victims and perpetrators of gun crimes have predominately been youths in their twenties (CTV, 2005a). Although the police have not kept statistics based on race, it has become evident that gun violence is a serious concern in the Black community, as most of the offenders and victims of gun violence have been Black, middle or lower class males (CTV, 2005a). There have been obvious systemic issues surrounding class, race and gender that warrant attention.

The intent of this thesis was to explore these systemic issues while ensuring that the community's concerns and opinions were heard. This was accomplished through qualitative interviews with Youth Black leaders and members of the Black community in Scarborough. Due to the large and spatially separated Black community in Toronto, this study focused on Blacks in the Scarborough area with the intent to gain a better understanding of gun violence from the perspective of this community. Future research may be required to draw parallels to the larger Toronto area. A qualitative approach was used in capturing the voice of the Black community. The following questions were examined:

What are the impacts of Gun violence on the Black community in Scarborough?

Why is gun violence a problem in Scarborough and how can it be resolved?

Theoretical Context

Key Concepts.

In order to have a better understanding of the issue discussed, it is important to first clarify and define some of the key concepts of this paper, and to introduce the theoretical framework that was used. There were many vital concepts discussed in the following pages; however, the terms Black and gun violence were particularly important.

According to Blackburn (2000), throughout the nineteenth century in North America, terms have been used to categorize people based on the colour of their skin, such as “Black”, “White” or “Mixed” (mixed being a combination of Black and White). In the 1940’s the United States of America adopted the “one-drop” rule where one was considered Black if they had any evident African heritage (Blackburn, 2000). For the purposes of this paper, a Black person included anyone of African heritage, Caribbean heritage, or anyone who identified themselves as being Black. In this study, labels were not imposed on community members; rather they were given the opportunity to self-identify as they saw fit.

Lee (1999) illustrates that there are three definitions/types of communities. First, there are geographic communities, which consist of a group of people (individuals and/or families) that live in the same physical area. Herein, geographic communities will be called neighbourhoods. Lee (1999) also suggests that there are interest communities. These communities have a function and usually have a strong common interest such as joining to lobby the government or fight a cause. The final type of community according

to Lee (1999) is a function or attributes community. These people share a common essential factor such as gender, race, religion or socioeconomic status. The later definition was used to describe Black people who live in the Scarborough area (the Black community).

In this paper, many terms were used interchangeably to describe gun violence. These include, gun crimes, gun fatalities, or gun homicides. All of these terms were used to define the illegal possession and or use of firearms. Gun violence may or may not have resulted in the loss of life. Regardless of the outcome, the use or possession of a gun without the appropriate legal documentation can have a serious impact on others and is thus referred to as gun violence.

Theoretical Underpinning.

The following research was based on the theoretical underpinning of anti-oppression theory and Afrocentric theory. Anti-oppression theory was rooted in the anti-racism struggles of the 1960s and is currently informed by modern anti-racism actions (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Dominelli 1998; Fook 2002; Seebaran 2003). It is intended to address structural inequalities and social divisions within society and it is based on the idea that society functions with a set of interlocking systems of oppression. In order to understand anti-oppression theory one must first understand the concepts of oppression and privilege. Mullaly (1997, p.139) contends, "If an individual is oppressed, it is by virtue of being a member of a group or category of people that is systemically reduced, molded, immobilized". Moreover, Mullaly (1997) reports that there are certain groups who are more likely to be oppressed (non-whites, non-heterosexuals, and females).

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that oppression is not accidental, rather, oppression exist in order to benefit the dominant or mainstream group in that they can maintain preferential access to jobs, education, social institutions and to other aspects of society (Mullaly, 1997). Oppression has been thought to be dehumanizing as it affects both the oppressor and the oppressed (Dominelli, 1998; Seebaran, 2003; Freire, 1971). Moreover, anti-oppression theory acknowledges that the personal is political. Whereas, individual concerns are linked to larger societal problems (Carniol, 2000; Mullaly, 1997).

Anti-oppression theory reflects the standpoint that the community members are the experts on their own oppression and privilege. The goal of this research was to listen to the community and understand oppression through the eyes of the community. This research project was guided and directed by the experiences of the community members.

Furthermore, this research was guided by Afrocentric theory. According to Schiele (2000), Afrocentric theory arises from the sociocultural and philosophical concepts, traditions, and experiences of Blacks. Not only does Afrocentric theory attempt to describe the hardship and oppression that Blacks have faced, but it also is intended to prevent and solve problems that Blacks encounter (Asante, 1980; Mazama, 2001; Schiele, 2000). Working within an Afrocentric framework, this research examined the impacts that gun violence has had on Blacks in an attempt to determine solutions for this problem.

Moreover, it is intended to encourage Black togetherness and pride, while deflecting the crippling effects of racism (Asante, 1980; Mazama, 2001). Afrocentrism contends that the main problem of Black people is that they adopt Western worldview and perspectives. In other words, Mazama (2001, p.387) claims, “we do not exist on our own terms but on borrowed European ones”. In other words, Black people are dislocated

from their cultural identity and historic background. A key tenet of Afrocentric theory is that it recognizes the importance of relocating Blacks within their own cultural, spiritual and historic African identity (Asante, 1980; Mazama, 2001.) It has been thought that the absence of grounding within one's cultural context leads to low self esteem and numerous problems within the Black community (Asante, 1980; Mazama, 2001)

Furthermore, Afrocentric theory often reaches beyond the scope of Black people and addresses the issues of all people. Schiele (2000) revealed that Afrocentricity is both a particularistic and universalistic framework because it "endeavors to address the distinctive liberation needs of people of African descent and to foster the spiritual and moral development of the world" (Schiele, 2000, p. 11). For example, oppression is something that Blacks encounter; however, it does not apply exclusively to Black people. In fact, most people have encountered oppression in some form at least once in their lives. In the case of gun violence, there has been a distinct need to address this issue in Scarborough's Black community; but it is also important issue to address in many other communities all over the world.

Schiele (2000) proposed that there are three major objectives to Afrocentric theory. First, it attempts to promote an alternative paradigm that is more reflective of the cultural realities of Blacks. It also seeks to eliminate negative images of Black people. Finally, it is intended to promote a worldview that can be shared by people of all ethnic and cultural groups, which will facilitate a movement towards a more spiritual, moral, and humanistic end (Schiele, 2000).

Afrocentric theory and Anti-Oppression theory both illustrate the need to understand the history and cultural reality of Blacks in order to understand the oppression

that Blacks face. Afrocentric theory directs us to see the positives in the Black community and the similarities between Blacks and other cultural groups. As well, Afrocentric theory suggests that we should work to eliminate negative images of Blacks and that Blacks should relocate within their own cultural context. Anti-Oppression theory suggests that we should attempt to understand the hardships in the Black community in order to work with the community through the empowerment and solution stage.

However, like all theories there are limitations to both of these approaches. Afrocentric theory has come under criticism by some academics for what is said to be its “essentialist” nature. Whereas, all Blacks, based on physical appearance are said to share a similar culture and heritage. This view of culture is criticized for not recognizing the dynamic nature of African culture and culture in general. Warner (2006) suggests that Afrocentric theory employs culture as “outdated, over-integrated, static, deterministic conceptualizations of culture and worldview”. This holistic view of culture is strongly critiqued, as it tends to “homogenize communities, create false boundaries between them and obscure intra-group differences, in both power and perspective” (Warner, 2006). The latter point is of particular importance as power and class can not be neglected in any discussion about gun violence. Others have commented on the lack of consideration of Black woman and GLBT communities in Afrocentric discussions. Furthermore, some have suggested that Afrocentric theory focuses on the discourses of African-American's and does not speak to African's elsewhere. Anti-Black racism is a similar fields of study, which is believed to address the special life conditions and history of Blacks in Canada.

Rooted in slavery and colonialism, anti-Black racism identifies the racism in historic and current aspect of Canadian society. This form of racism is often not blatant and does not involve historically racist actions such as prohibiting Blacks from going certain places or yelling racial slurs. In contrast, anti-Black racism, describes the subtle and underlying racism in Canada directed at Blacks. According to the African Legal Clinic (2001), anti-Black racism is “deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, so much so that systemic racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to dominate white society.”. In other words, Blacks face structural boundaries that are not recognized by White Canadians. This form of racism still effects spatial segregation, economic disadvantage and social division. Moreover, it is present in multiple systems in Canada, including, the immigration, the criminal justice, and education.

Anti-oppression theory also has been criticized by various theorist and academics. It is believed that the limitation of anti-oppression theory lies in its attempts to deal with multiple oppressions under one umbrella. It is thus believed that the uniqueness of each individual oppression will be neglected or lost under a large paradigm such as anti-oppression theory (Campbell, 2003). Therefore, some theorists align with more one-dimensional theories such as feminism or anti-Black racism, which focus more on one form of oppression. Others criticize Anti-oppression theory for not focusing on a particular oppression. This research acknowledges the need to focus on the unique oppression of Blacks, while understanding that racism interacts with other forms of oppression and discrimination.

While all theories have limitations we can credit Afrocentric theory for contributing to our understanding of Black people, their spirituality and morality which has added to this study because in order to work with a community to promote change we need to first understand the community and the individuals which form the community. Anti-oppression theory has also contributed to this study because it informs us of the structural issues, and systemic concerns of communities, which can all be contributing factors with respect to the disproportionate presence of gun violence in Scarborough.

Chapter 2: A Literature Review of Crime and Gun Violence

The History of Gun Violence in Toronto

Guns have been a part of our lives since gunpowder was first used in 1247 (Spangler and Wade, 2002). The creation of automatic pistols in 1903 marked the beginning of the illegal use of guns and subsequent gun violence (Spangler and Wade, 2002).

The Toronto Police Services first identified gun violence as a concern in Toronto during the early 1990s. They assembled a special intelligence squad in 1991 in response to the 28 Gun related fatalities in the city that year (Personal communication with one of the officers in charge of the program, Feb. 27th 2006). These murders took place mostly at nightclubs and it was believed that they were linked to drugs and drug distribution. The intelligence gathered by the special intelligence squad revealed that this problem was serious and widespread, involving approximately 300-500 individuals. At the time, the individuals involved with this criminal element were affiliated with posses, which would now be referred to as gangs (Personal communication with one of the officers in charge of the program, Feb. 27th 2006). The special intelligence squad successfully worked with nightclub promoters to reduce the incidence of gun crimes in Toronto (mostly in the downtown core). In addition, partnerships with neighbouring police forces were established because while many of the shootings were occurring in Toronto, the shooters were residents of surrounding cities. They established an information-sharing program

with the United States, Jamaica and the UK so that when known criminals entered the Greater Toronto Area, they were identified by police. Gun fatalities ranged between 13 and 26 deaths a year during the period that the special intelligence squad was functioning. The squad was disbanded in 1999 (Personal communication with one of the officers in charge of the program, Feb. 27th 2006).

Gun fatalities in Toronto continued to drop in the late 1990s when they reached a pivotal low of 13 and 19 respectively in 1998 and 1999 (Personal communication with one of the officers in charge of the program, Feb. 27th 2006; Toronto Police Service 2006). However, after the dismantling of the special task force in 1999, gun fatalities began to rise in the early part of 2000 (Toronto Police Service, 2006). Toronto reached a high of 52 gun related fatalities in 2005 (Toronto Police Service, 2006).

The Impacts of Gun Violence

Little has been documented surrounding the direct impact that gun violence has had on Blacks in Scarborough or Toronto. There is significant variation in how different cultures, communities and individuals deal with violence, death and loss (Kastenbaum, 2004). However, it is known that regardless of ethnic background, culture, religion or race, violence and death can have serious effects on individuals, families and communities (Buka et. al, 2001; Kastenbaum, 2004).

Individuals experience a range of emotional and psychosocial responses to violence and the loss of a loved one due to violence. Buka et al (2001), suggest that after experiencing violent encounters many people have psychological, social, and biological reactions. Individuals report having psychological difficulties such as post-traumatic

stress disorder and other depressive symptoms. Some experience insomnia, memory loss and a decrease in ability to concentrate (Kastenbaum, 2004). Others respond to violent acts and the loss of loved ones by socially isolating themselves or feeling lonely, angry or indifferent (Kastenbaum, 2004). As well, many individuals who experience or witness violence repeatedly in their neighborhoods may become desensitized to violence and are thus at risk for engaging in violent acts themselves (Buka et al. 2003). In addition, experiencing violence can have effects on the body, including symptoms of stress such as increased heart rates, decreased cortisol levels and chronic sleep disturbance (Buka et. al, 2001).

Children are also affected by violence and death and they can respond differently than adults (Osofsky, 1995). Children often react to acts of violence by experiencing irritability, extreme fear of being left alone and sleep disturbances (Osofsky 1995). Similar to adults, children and youth can often experience post-traumatic stress disorder (Osofsky, 1995). Some children may regress in development in particular areas such as toilet training or language (Osofsky, 1995). Like adults, children respond differently to violence and their reactions may be more difficult to identify due to their lack of development and communication skills (Osofsky, 1995).

When violence infiltrates a family system, it can have significant impacts on the family unit (Kastenbaum, 2004). For example, there could be a change in who communicates to whom and in what way within the family (Kastenbaum, 2004). Some family members may either cease to communicate with other family members, or increase/decrease communication with particular family member. In addition, the way family members communicate may change. For example, previously calm

communication patterns may develop into volatile or negative communication. Sexual intimacy is particularly at risk between parents who have lost a child or a close loved one (Kastenbaum, 2004). Other relationships in families are at risk for change, as sometimes families reconnect in the face of grief and on occasion, certain family members are cut out of the family (Kastenbaum, 2004). Parents in neighborhoods who have experienced violence, out of fear can become overprotective and discouraging of their child's autonomy (Kastenbaum, 2004; Osofsky, 1995). This could be damaging to a child's development and growth (Osofsky, 1995). In addition, tragically, families can become isolated from friends and other support networks (Kastenbaum, 2004).

Victims of gun violence in Toronto have overwhelmingly been young people. The loss of a child is particularly difficult for parents (Kastenbaum, 2004). They often do not want to relinquish the pain and grief that they feel because they are afraid that their child will be forgotten if they let go of their pain. This can mean that parents suffer emotionally, psychologically and physically for extended periods. Their worldview and belief systems can also be affected by the loss of a child as they often lose faith and believe that the world no longer makes sense (Kastenbaum, 2004). Beliefs in Gods or higher powers can be questioned, and parents can feel that they can not count on other family or community members (Kastenbaum, 2004).

At the community level, it also becomes evident that violence can have a significant impact. While violence can cause social isolation and cripple communities with fear, one can also see positive reactions to violence at the community level. Violence in communities can lead to action and advocacy of community members (Kastenbaum, 2004). Community members may use violence as a common concern to unite around and

they may band together and demonstrate their resilience (Kastenbaum, 2004). The United Mother's Opposing Violence Everywhere (UMOVE) is an example of a grassroots organization of people coming together to advocate against violence (Metro, 2005). UMOVE is made up of a group of mothers in Toronto who are fed up with the violence, which is plaguing their communities (Metro, 2005). The group is led by Audette Sheppard who tragically lost her son, Justin Sheppard to gun violence in 2001 (Metro, 2005). Audette and the mothers are evidence of the resilience of victims of gun violence as they have allowed their hurt, sadness and anger to motivate them to make a difference.

The Causes of Gun Violence (crime theories)

It is evident that violent crime and delinquency have plagued our communities throughout time. Gun violence is an increasing phenomenon that disproportionately affects the Black community. In order for one to develop solutions to this serious problem it is first necessary to explain the root causes of violence and criminality. There are various theories explaining gun violence. However, it is important to note that crime and violence may not be explained solely by one theory and may in fact be caused by a combination of factors seen in multiple theories. The following will highlight what the literature does reveal about the causes of crime with respect to concerns at the individual, family and community levels. These theories will be critically discussed in the discussions and conclusions chapter.

Individual causes.

Regardless of the motivation to commit crime, there are many theories about crime that center on individual responsibility for criminal behaviour such as gun violence. Among these theories are rational choice theory, social control theory and labeling theory.

Rational choice theory involves the premise that criminal behavior is carried out only after there is a rational assessment of the cost and benefits of committing the act (Liska and Messner, 1999). In other words, the probability of an individual committing a crime depends on whether or not the rewards outweigh the punishment and emotional pain. Therefore, rational choice theory suggests that the risk of shooting another individual must outweigh the consequence of committing the crime. There is an assumption that shooting someone is a rational act and that the shooter does not put value in the consequences of committing a gun related crime.

Furthermore, there is an underlying assumption that there is some sort of reward for those who abstain from involvement in gun-related crimes. Therefore, rational choice theory indicates that those who commit gun violence may not view the negative consequences of their crime (such as, incarceration) as any worse than their current situation. Rational choice theory contributes to our understanding of criminality by explaining why some individuals abstain from violence and others choose to commit gun-related crimes.

In addition, to rational choice theory, social control theory can further one's understanding of gun violence. According to Hirschi (1961 as cited by Bell 1999; Keel, 2002) individuals will engage in delinquent behaviour unless something prevents them

from doing otherwise. This is attributed to the premise that individuals are ‘naturally’ unrestrained. According to Hirschi there are four types of social control, which contribute to preventing delinquency— involvement, commitment, attachment and belief.

‘Involvement’ utilizes the time factor as a preventative measure for crime. It is believed that when one is heavily involved in conventional activities there is no time to engage in delinquent or criminal acts. Similarly, ‘commitment’ indicates that individuals are less likely to commit a crime if they have stake in their society or something to lose. Partaking in social activities is thought to tie people to the moral and ethical code of society thus making criminal or delinquent acts less probable. ‘Attachment’ is also considered a factor in preventing crime: when individuals, in particular youth, have positive role models (someone they wouldn’t want to let down) they will be less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour. Youth can be attached to peers, parents, schools, teachers, social workers, community center employees or any other significant adult in their lives. The final factor of ‘belief’ entails respect for laws, and the people and institutions, which enforce the laws. If individuals believe in the importance of upholding the law, they will be less likely to break laws (Hirschi 1961 as cited by, Bell, 1999; Keel, 2002). As well, there must be a belief that perpetrators will be caught and the punishment will be significant. In some communities, especially when there is a presence of gang life, some individuals and groups may be involved in a culture, which does not respect the laws or order of society. In fact, there may be a disdain for the criminal process along with those who enforce the laws (police officers). Therefore, affiliation and belonging to a group may not always be a preventive factor for crime, if that group has antisocial beliefs.

Labeling theory is also useful in comprehending the behaviour of gun violence perpetrators. According to labeling theorist Lemert (1951 as cited in Hickey, 1997), delinquent behaviour is the result of an individual graduating from primary to secondary deviance. Primary deviance involves the committing of any act, which is viewed as delinquent or abnormal to society. By committing a deviant act, the offender is then labeled in society as a deviant, which will invoke subsequent anger and or resentment in the offender. The offenders usually succumb to their feelings of inadequacy and because of their low-self esteem attributed with the label society imposed on them, they revert to secondary deviance. Secondary deviance involves the commission of any delinquent acts in response to a label or stigma associated with an initial deviant act. Therefore, if individuals feel worthless or are told they are 'bad' or 'criminal' they will subsequently internalize those feelings and it may lead to them acting criminal and becoming involved in gun violence. In the case of Black youth, their primary act of deviance may not actually be a crime that they have committed— it may simply be the colour of their skin. When, Black youth are labeled as deviant because they are Black, they subsequently internalize this criminal label and act out in a criminal fashion (i.e. owning and/or using a gun). This cycle of criminalization involves perceived delinquency, leading to internalization, followed by criminal behaviour, which reinforces the label of inherent criminality. When Black youth commit crimes, thus reinforcing perceived inherent criminal behaviour, society feels justified in imposing negative labels and Black youth and the cycle is continued. Rational choice theory, social control theories and labeling theory may be useful in explaining why individuals commit gun violence.

Families and gun violence.

While many may emphasize the individual's responsibility in committing crimes, others have illustrated how families can also play a stake in youth becoming involved in crimes such as gun violence. The ecological theory of human development along with social control theories explains the role of families in influencing the behaviour of youth.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development explains an individual's motivation for becoming involved with gun violence as a reaction to their environment. Bronfenbrenner outlines three main points in the ecological theory of human development (in Durlack, 1997). Firstly, the theory indicates that there are many social and organizational influences on behaviour and each individual behaviour should be considered within its own context (Durlack, 1997). Secondly, the theory stresses the importance of examining the person-environmental interactions and acknowledges that some individuals will do better in one type of setting over another (Durlack, 1997). In other words, individuals cope differently in similar environments. Finally, the ecological theory of human development incorporates and examines bi-directional and transactional processes. Bi-directional processes acknowledge that the behaviour of an individual can have a significant impact on that of another just as the other's behaviour can influence the individual's behaviour (Durlack, 1997). Extending from this idea, transactional processes indicate that bi-directional effects can produce a new evolving interactive sequence of interpersonal behaviors over time. These behaviors can be both positive and negative (Durlack, 1997).

The ecological theory of human development illustrates the importance of family. It is evident through occurring bidirectional and transactional processes that the factors in

understanding gun violence extend beyond the perpetrator. Family concerns are key components to the causes of gun crime because as indicated through the ecological theory of human development, other people can influence an individual's behavior. Therefore, a youth raised in a criminal family may also become criminal because of their environment and how their family influences them. This theory may reveal that gun violence is not just an individual concern but also a family issue.

Similarly, as aforementioned, social control theory indicates a lack of positive role modeling may lead to an individual becoming involved in criminal behavior. In a family without positive role modeling or an adult reinforcing positive behaviour a youth has no one to look up to or to fear disappointing and thus according to social control theory be more likely to engage in violent behaviour. Therefore, the likelihood of criminal activity including gun violence can be reduced with the presence of positive role models in the lives of youth. Although social control theory is an individualistic theory, it illustrates how families can contribute to preventing or creating criminal behaviour in youth.

Community concerns.

Along with the aforementioned theories that explain criminal behaviour by placing responsibility with individuals or families, other theorist have suggested that problems in communities could lead to criminality, in particular, gun violence. Social disorganization theory has been used to explain how the lack of organization in a community might lead to crime such as gun violence.

According to Shaw and McKay, (1941 as cited by Bell, 1999; Keel, 2002) social disorganization is a key contributor to crime. Social disorganization theory involves the belief that cities are divided into three main areas. The city center or business district where most people work, the suburbs including working class, residential and commuter areas generally inhabited by middle to upper class families and the transition zone that lies between the city center and suburbs which is the home to lower class groups and new immigrants. It is believed that the transition zone is the problem area where crime and delinquency are most common. The transition zone is considered to be an area of social disorganization because controls, which prevent delinquency are absent, and the community often approves of delinquency and the opportunities to commit crime are numerous while the opportunities for employment are few (Bell, 1999; Keel, 2002). Relating this theory to Toronto, Downtown would be considered the city center and the transition zone would include the area surrounding downtown and bordering the boundaries of Toronto. This area would include the former cities of Scarborough, Etobicoke, East York and York. The suburbs are comprised of cities in the GTA including Peel, York, and Durham.

There is little written on how anti-oppressive and Afrocentric theories can further our understanding of gun violence. It is the intent of the following research to fill this gap in literature by gaining insight into the causes of gun violence in Scarborough, as it is understood by members of Scarborough's Black community

Solutions to Gun Violence

Various criminologists, sociologists and other social scientists have put forth various theories in terms of preventing gun violence and crime in general. Similar to the above discussion on the causes of crimes, it is important to note that it is unlikely that there is only one solution to gun violence. Ending gun violence requires a deeper look into the causes of crime, and most likely the collective and collaborative use of various strategies. The follow will report various strategies, which have been suggested in theory, or tested in cities.

Theoretically, if we address the root causes of crime viable solutions to gun violence should become evident. Rational choice theory suggests that crime is carried out after a rational assessment of the costs and benefits of the crime (Liska and Messner, 1999). Considering this, gun violence prevention programs must include activities that will assist participants in building rational assessment skills. Furthermore, there must be rewards available for those who abstain from all forms of delinquent behavior and punishment for those who do not. This theory would thus lead us to believe that the way to eliminate gun violence is to provide individual with pro-social opportunities including employment, school, and affordable housing so that they feel there is a benefit to living a crime free life. In addition, this theory would suggest that harsher punishments to increase the cost of committing gun crimes should be implemented. Of course, the former suggestion would only be valid if those using guns believed that they would be caught and/or viewed the punishment of gun crimes as worse than their current situations. However, for many, jail may be easier than their lives on the street, as they receive food, shelter, and arguably a relatively safer place to stay. Evidence leads us to believe that

harsher punishments do not deter criminal or violent acts (CBC, 2006). This is because research reported by the CBC (2006) and the Canadian Safety Counsel (2004) illustrated that harsh punishments are not a significant deterrent to criminals. It appears that it may be more beneficial to increase the benefit to living crime free as opposed to making the cost of committing crimes harsher.

Rational choice theory could benefit from the incorporation of anti-oppressive and Afrocentric ideals. For one, understanding the oppression that Black individuals in society face and how those hardships may lead to criminality is not considered in this theory. In order to address the cost and benefits of committing crime we must first understand the needs of the community and the barriers, which the community faces.

Prevention programs according to the ecological theory of human development because of bidirectional and transactional processes must extend beyond the target individual (Durlack, 1997). Family counseling and parental counseling are suggested components especially with youth prevention programs because as indicated through the ecological theory of development, adult behaviour can influence children's behavior. In addition, other individuals including friends, family, teachers, and mentors influence a youth's life. It is important for the entire community to come together in a healing and growing process in order to eliminate senseless gun crimes.

According to labeling theory, we can attribute criminal acts such as gun violence to a process of internalized labels leading to acts of deviance. Labeling theory would thus offer that we must instill values of self-worth while eliminating any self-esteem issues that may develop within a particular individual. By doing this, prevention programs may be able to reduce the amount of secondary violence in society (Lemert

1951 as cited by Hickey, 1997). Labeling theory suggests that as a community we must work together to erase negative stereotypes. According to labeling theory, there is a chance that these stereotypes may be internalized by certain individuals and lead to criminal acts. In addition, those who are in positions of authority such as teachers, employers, social workers, and police officers should be especially careful to use appropriate language and to avoid imposing labels on people. For example calling someone “bad”, “delinquent”, “inmates”, or “convicts” may lead to the internalization and the subsequent fulfilling of such negative labels.

Social control theories suggest that involvement, commitment, attachment and belief are essential to preventing criminal behaviour. ‘Involvement’ suggests the need for individuals to occupy their time with pro-social activities. The assumption is that if someone is busy doing legal activities they have less time to be involved in illegal activities. Therefore, in order to prevent gun violence and other crimes it would seem necessary to establish programs especially for youth to give them something positive to do. This may entail creating employment programs to assist people in finding jobs, offering courses and/or recreation programs and getting people involved in their communities.

With respect to ‘commitment’ it is important to involve individuals in creating ties to the moral and ethical fabric of their communities. Thus, it is important to develop positive community morale through community building practices. Individuals need to become involved in their community through work, volunteering, or even activism so that they can develop stronger community ties.

Having positive ‘attachments’ is also believed to be essential for individuals especially the youth to have positive role models in society. Attachment can be created through mentoring programs for at risk youth, and parenting programs so that parents can learn to have a positive influence on their children’s lives. As well, it is important to develop positive community/police relations and increase the funding for social and community programs. This would involve adding more youth workers, social workers and other positive role models in communities.

Finally, we can obtain potential solutions to crime by creating a greater sense of ‘belief’ in conventional norms. A first step may be to ensure that laws are equitable, fair, and not used disproportionately against certain groups.

Social disorganization theory can also contribute to our understanding of crime prevention and solutions to Scarborough’s gun violence problem. Being able to identify areas of social disorganization and ensure that adequate prevention programs are available for the people in these communities may assist in reducing crime. Community centers and various other prevention facilities in areas of social disorganization can act as control factors in mediating delinquency and crime. In addition, it may be important to begin to “organize” these transition areas, through the increase of job opportunities and community controls.

As well as consulting causes of the crime, it is necessary to examine strategies used by other cities in North America as potential solutions to the gun violence problem in Toronto. The following will discuss two such strategies— the ‘Boston Miracle’ and the Broken Windows strategy, which was made famous in New York.

The 'Boston Miracle'.

The Boston project was motivated by a stabbing that took place in a church at the funeral of a gang member (Johnson, 2001; Winship, 2002). The 'Boston Miracle' gained worldwide attention in the 1990s when the city's murder rate experienced a significant drop. In fact, the murder rate experienced an 80% decrease from 152 homicides in 1990 to only 31 in 1999. Most significant was the decrease in homicides committed by youth under the age of 24. The city took much pride in the fact that no homicides were committed by teenagers in 1998 (Winship, 2002).

The 'Boston Miracle' was initiated by a coalition, which was a partnership between inner city Black ministers and the police department (Winship, 2002). The coalition was lead by three prominent Black ministers the Reverends Jeffery Brown, Raymond Hammond, and Eugene Rivers. This strategy involved the use of community-based policing, improved police/community relations and the reduction of racial tension in a highly volatile area (Winship, 2002). Part of the 'Miracle' was that the police and the community could work together. In fact, they often held gang forums as a strategy to reduce youth violence (Winship, 2002). Gang members would be present at these gang forums, which represented a source of tough love. They were informed that the police would do everything they could to put them in jail if they continued to be members and engage in illegal activities. However, they were promised social support including assistance with schools, jobs and family concerns if they refrained from gang activities (Winship, 2002). The combination of ministers, police, and social service agency personnel present at the meeting proved successful in conveying this point to gang members. Dr. Rivers underlines his support for this community effort by suggesting, "We

have been greatly educated by the law enforcement community, and most of the thoughtful members of the police department would agree that the faith community has played a constructive role in encouraging them to look at the importance of employment, jobs, and recreational and cultural enrichment.” (Johnson, 2001).

Other notable programs in the ‘Boston Miracle’ were Operation Night Light and Operation Cease Fire (Johnson, 2001). Operation Night light involves police and probation officers going to the home of probationers to ensure that probation terms are being met (Johnson, 2001). Operation Cease Fire involves the efficient apprehension and conviction of gang members using firearms. Other youth initiatives include: The Boston Gun Project, The Boston Jobs Project, START (school attendance), The Boston Private Industry Project, Brighter Horizons, Fatherhood Project, Community based juvenile justice project, G.R.E.A.T (gang resistance), Youth Violence Strike Force and Summer Opportunities (Johnson, 2001). In addition, the Boston Miracle involved placing full time social workers in police precincts to assist recently arrested youths and their families.

While the Boston strategy has received national and international praise and has been dubbed a “Miracle’, some question the actual difference all of these efforts have made. While there was a significant decrease in crime and homicides in Boston in the 1990s, some believe that this decrease can not be directly attributed to the strategies used because there were also significant decreases in homicide rates and crime in other major U.S cities during the 1990s where these strategies (or other strategies) were not used (Winship, 2002). In addition, other cities such as New York and San Diego used very different policing strategies and experienced a decrease in crime rates (Johnson, 2001;

Winship, 2002). This causes individuals to question what impact the Boston strategies actually had on the reduction of homicides.

However, Braga et al (2001) demonstrate that while crime rates decreased elsewhere in the U.S, youth homicide rates and gun related crimes generally increased. Youth homicide increased rapidly all over the U.S in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Braga, et al., 2001). In Boston, there was an average of 44 youth homicides a year between 1991 and 1995 (Braga, 2001). After the 1996 intervention (which was the only intervention being used at the time in Boston) there was a 63% reduction of youth homicides in Boston. Through statistical testing, Braga et al. (2001) established that there was no national trend of decreasing youth homicides across the United States. Therefore, they concluded that the Operation Cease Fire Intervention was successful in reducing youth homicides in Boston.

The 'Boston Miracle' involves a combination of strategies to influence crime rates. They were able to target the most at risk populations— young Black males and gang members. This model seems to incorporate a rational choice perspective where youth are offered alternatives to crime (rewards) and the consequences of committing crimes are harsh. In addition, there are similarities with the other theories such as the use of mentoring, community healing and increased youth involvement in pro-social activities, which are similar to suggestions put forth in social control theories and the ecological theory of human development. The success of the program may lie in its ability to incorporate anti-oppression and Afrocentricity to its strategies. Evidence of this lies in the fact that the community was consulted and considered experts on their own problems. In addition, they involved spirituality and understanding of individuals in accordance

with Afrocentric theory. Black community leaders worked with authorities in all stages of the project to ensure the needs of the community were met and that the Black experience was understood and reflected in the programs offered.

Broken Windows.

Broken Windows is a crime prevention strategy created by Wilson and Kelling in 1982 (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006). It gained the international attention of supporters and critics when it was enforced in New York in the 1990s.

Wilson and Kelling (1982) suggest that “if a window in a building is broken *and is left unrepaired*, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is as true in nice neighborhoods as in run-down ones. Window-breaking does not necessarily occur on a large scale because some areas are inhabited by determined window-breakers whereas others are populated by window-lovers; rather, one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing...one broken window can become many” (p.9). In other words, Wilson and Kelling have put forth the notion that unresolved behaviour leads to the breakdown of community controls (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). They believe that street crime is able to flourish because disorderly behaviour goes unchecked by parents, community members and especially the police (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). It is their belief that decriminalizing unruly behaviour like vagrancy and drunkenness because it “doesn’t hurt anyone” is comparable to ignoring one broken window, which will inevitably become many broken windows.

According to the broken windows strategy, police should crack down on minor infractions so that they do not grow into major criminal acts like homicides. This policy was adopted in New York with the election of Mayor Rudolph Guiliani in 1993 (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006). Guiliani took a harsh stance against crime by imposing zero-tolerance policies (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006). He hired many additional police officers and cleared previous unserved criminal warrants. As well, Guiliani ensured that police officers enforced the law against “subway fare evasion, and stopped public drinkers, urinators, and the "squeegee men" who had been wiping windshields of stopped cars and demanding payment” (Wikipedia, 2006).

Guiliani and many supporters of the broken windows strategy believe that the decrease of crime in New York in the 1990s can be directly related to the implementation of broken windows. However, critics of the theory believe that there is no evidence to establish a correlation between decreasing crime rates in New York and the broken windows strategy. They cite two major reasons why we can not be confident on the success of broken windows. First, other cities in the U.S also experienced lower crime rates in the 1990s (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006). Most notably was San Francisco, which has been called the antithesis to broken windows in New York (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006). San Francisco adopted less harsh policing practices, reduced arrest, prosecution and incarceration rates and managed to decrease crime even more so than the reduction of crime in New York (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006).

The Broken Windows strategy has also been questioned because it is possible that other factors may have led to the reduction of crime in New York in the 1990s. At the same time Broken Windows was adopted at least two other major strategies were concurrently running. These programs included the establishment of many new jobs which moved over 500,000 people off of welfare and into jobs. As well in the 1990's there was a program which provided housing vouchers to poor Black families enabling them to move into better neighbourhoods. (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002)

The Broken Windows policy is very similar to rational choice and social disorganization theories. Whereas the harsh punishments and enforcement of consequences for criminal behavior would contribute to making the cost of crime more realistic and unattractive for potential criminals. According to rational choice theory this would make a prosocial lifestyle more desirable. Similar to social disorganization theory, there is a belief in Broken Windows that there are areas of "urban decay", which are run down areas where crime is allowed to fester. Crime is acceptable in these areas because of the lack of order and controls. The belief in both of these theories is that if we can clean up and organize these areas we can reduce the incidence of crime.

The problem with Broken Windows is that it is very top down and it does not involve anti-oppressive or Afrocentric measures. The politicians decide what is best for the community (harsher punishment) and they enforce this on the community. If those with power could listen to the community and understand their hardship they would better be able to address the systemic oppressions the community continues to face. Broken Windows collaboratively implemented with culturally appropriate programs

which attempt to solve the problems that Blacks face in society may prove to be more effective in reducing crime and violence in communities.

Summary.

Social scientists have developed many theories over the years in an attempt to address crime in societies. Some theories regard crime as an individualistic problem while others focus on the environment, communities and neighbourhoods. There are many workable solutions which can be derived from the various theories of criminality that could be applied to the situation in Toronto. What is lacking from all of these theories is attention paid to structural factors and the ability to look at the problem of gun violence through the lens of those inflicted—the Black community in Scarborough.

From anti-oppressive theory we understand that the community members are experts in their own situations. As well, anti-oppression theory addresses structural inequalities and systemic divisions within society and contends that individuals face multiple and intersecting oppressions. In order to construct a workable strategy to combat gun violence we must begin to understand the community that it is in. It is important as described in Afrocentric theory, to begin to understand the hardship and oppression that Blacks face and to create culturally appropriate solutions. If gun violence is ever going to end, we must first listen to the community and allow their active participation in the solution. Assisting in the facilitation of this empowerment process for the Black community might contribute to the elimination of negative images of the Black community in Scarborough. According to Afrocentric theory, breaking down barriers and erasing negative images is fundamental to the growth and progress of the Black

community. There is little written on addressing gun violence in Scarborough through the use of anti-oppressive and Afrocentric theories and the following research will attempt to address this significant gap in literature.

Chapter 3: The Methodology

Purpose

This research project intended to elicit participant's accounts of the impacts and causes of gun violence and their opinions with respect to the solutions to gun violence.

More specifically, the study aimed to address the following two questions:

What are the impacts of Gun violence on the Black community in Scarborough?

Why is gun violence a problem in Scarborough and how can it be resolved?

Research Design

Given that little is know about this topic, a qualitative approach to research was employed during this study. Qualitative research methods are useful when attempting to gather detailed information focusing on the underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. In addition, this method involves research by induction; therefore, it examines the particulars of a phenomenon in order to develop generalizations. In other words, inductive reasoning involves finding patterns in separate phenomenon. In order to focus on the issues at hand, a very general qualitative approach was used throughout this research project. Patton (1990) describes this as the pragmatic approach to qualitative research, whereas practical questions can be addressed without emphasizing one particular theoretical orientation. Patton (1990) argues, "One need not even be concerned about theory" (p. 89). Instead, he reveals that there is a very practical side to qualitative

research, which involves asking open-ended questions in order to solve problems. Patton (1990) also suggests that “the methods of qualitative inquiry now stand on their own as reasonable ways to find out what is happening in...human settings” (p.90). This was accomplished during the interview phase of this research project, where open-ended questions yielded participants opinions about gun violence. The pragmatic orientation is extremely valuable as the emphasis is placed on solving problems as opposed to following a strict methodological approach. .

The issue of trustworthiness of the research and strategies used by the researcher to enhance it need to be briefly discussed here. The issue of trustworthiness or “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the finding of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?”(Lincoln & Guba,1985:290). In conventional research, the trustworthiness of the results are measured by four standards: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. However, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) have argued these measures do not apply to the qualitative research. Thus, they recommend four alternative trustworthiness criteria - “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and confirmability” - and recommend a number of technique for the establishment of trustworthiness. The researcher will discuss some of the measured she used to address these criteria within the time and financial limitations of a Master thesis.

With respect to the Credibility criteria, Lincoln and Guba, recommended five major techniques: “activities that make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced (prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation); and activity that provides an external check on the inquiry process (peer

debriefing), and activity aimed at defining working hypotheses as more and more information becomes available (negative case analysis); and activity that makes possible checking preliminary findings and interpretations against archived “raw data” (referential adequacy); and an activity providing of the direct test of findings and interpretations with the human sources from which they have come - the constructors of the multiple realities being studied (member checking)”(1985:301).

Prolonged engagement refers to the investment of time sufficient to learn about the culture and the people that one is studying and to gain the trust of the study participants. The researcher herself is from the community studied in this research and does have significant insight into the community. Trust building is often very difficult, in particular with the Black community in Scarborough that has been labeled by the media and other authorities as difficult and untrusting for not speaking out about violence in their community (reporting it, standing up against it, etc.). This could be partially due to a lack of trust that community members have for the media, police, other authorities and/or individuals outside of the community. With the intent of building trust with the participants, the researcher introduced herself to participants by disclosing information about herself, such as the fact that she has been living in the Scarborough neighbourhood for over 20 years and is herself a black woman who was concerned with the rise of gun violence in the community. In addition, she explained the purpose of the study and its benefits for the Black community as well as the larger community and she reiterated her commitment towards empowerment and change from within the Black community.

Moreover, the researcher explained anonymity and confidentiality in order to ensure participants that their names would not appear anywhere, and would not be

attached to any of their statements. As well, they were informed that no one else except for the researcher and the thesis supervisor would have access to the information. Furthermore, they were informed that all transcripts would be kept in a locked file cabinet that would also be inaccessible to anyone except for the researcher. Participants were thus informed that they were allowed to speak freely without fear of identification. Finally, the use of the snowball method in recruitment of participants and the assistance of key informants who yielded three participants also encouraged the participants' to trust the researcher as they were connected to her through the trusted third party.

Peer debriefing was another method used in this research to establish credibility. This technique refers to the process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer who plays the devil's advocate by asking challenging questions about the research design, process and findings. This helps the researcher to discover aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within his/her mind and to have a clear picture of the study.

This thesis was debriefed and reviewed at every stage, including planning, development, analysis, writing and compiling of the final product. It was reviewed by the thesis supervisor and another member of the thesis committee. This process assisted the researcher in making sound judgment.

Another credibility technique recommended by Lincoln and Guba is "member checks" which involve consulting or checking the collected information, interpretations, and conclusions with the study participants. This was not carried out due to time constraints. However, the researcher made every attempt to accurately quote each individual, and this was made possible through the audio recording of every interview,

which was transcribed and rechecked for accuracy. [Moreover, the researcher informed the interviewees that an electronic version of the thesis would be available upon their request.]

With respect to the transferability criterion, Lincoln and Guba write that the role of the researcher is to provide a tick description of the context of his/her study. It is the responsibility of inquirers who want to apply the study elsewhere to see whether that is transferable or not. This was accomplished in this research by reporting information about the participants and the context of the study as well as with providing numerous quotes throughout the findings.

Dependability.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability can be demonstrated by having the research repeated or audited. Considering that master theses are done by one person and with no financial support the researcher was unable to replicate or audit its results.

Confirmability.

Similar to the dependability, the confirmability of the research can be tested by using an external audit. Again, due to resource limitations the confirmability audit was not used in this research. However, a paper trail was maintained throughout the research. However, the researcher did maintain case notes, and has recordings of all interviews, which could be reviewed to demonstrate confirmability.

Ethical Consideration

This thesis project was cleared by Carleton University's ethics committee. The researcher identified the risk to participants and the safeguarding of research material. There was a risk that some of the information discussed during the interviews would cause the participants emotional distress, for example, speaking about the loss of a loved one or recalling a time when they witnessed or experienced gun violence, could be particularly difficult. This was mitigated by the researcher who provided each participant with an opportunity to debrief after his or her interview. In addition, qualified professionals were made available free of cost through Victim Services Toronto at 416-808-7066. Victim services Toronto agreed to provide a free service to any participant in the study who were experiencing difficulty. They offered short-term counseling and referrals to other agency if necessary. None of the participants revealed any emotional distress following the interviews.

Another risk, which was considered, was that an interviewee might have divulged information that would have put them at risk. For example, indicating previous criminal behaviour, which according to the ethical guidelines that bind social workers, would have resulted in the police being contacted. As well, implicating others in a crime may have serious consequences such as retaliation by the implicated individual. In order to mitigate this risk, the participant were warned verbally at the beginning of the interview and in the consent form that the release of such information could result in the researcher contacting the proper authorities. In addition, participants were not asked anything about their criminal history, previous illegal uses of guns, and were not asked to disclose the names of any other persons who may be involved in gangs or other criminal activities.

In addition, attempts to protect the anonymity of the participants were taken. Names were not used or mentioned anywhere within the final written report. Access to participant information was limited to the researcher and thesis supervisor. All personal information was safeguarded in a locked filing cabinet and only the researcher had the key to the cabinet.

All interviews were recorded in order to preserve the quality of the information received. Audio recordings of each interview were stored digitally on CDs and secured in a locked cabinet. Participants were assigned a number and each interview was transcribed and numbered on both the CD and on the written transcripts. A record of the participant's numbers was kept in the secure locked filing cabinet in order to protect the identity of all participants. The researcher was the only one who had access to the key for the filing compartment. Only the researcher and the thesis advisor had access to the interview materials. Identities remained confidential for the purpose of this thesis; thus, names were removed from all documents and do not appear in this thesis.

Participant Selection

The sampling strategies used to obtain participants for this study were, snowball sampling and criterion sampling. Both of these methods are a form of purposive sampling, whereas the researcher is able to intentionally select desirable participants. These methods are common in qualitative research as they can contribute to the richness and quality of information. Criterion sampling involves selecting participants with certain desirable traits. In this case, participants were sought that fit the following criteria: between the ages of 18-30, have lived in the Scarborough area for at least one year and

they must self-identify as being a member of the Black community in Scarborough. Snowball sampling involves identifying some members in the community who then connect the researcher with further participants. The limitation to this method is that anonymity may be challenged because some participants will know each other and thus may be able to connect statements to an individual.

In order to identify initial participants, ads were posted in local community centers and churches with the permission from the appropriate authorities, in hopes of attracting a wide range of Black individuals that fit the criteria (**See Appendix A for the recruitment ad**). This process yielded two participants who contacted the researcher via email to indicate their interest in being a part of the study. Additionally, one other participant snowballed from one of the original participants, this candidate was asked to phone the researcher to schedule a meeting. As well, two participants were obtained through community references; they also contacted the researcher and established an interview time. The final two participants were considered youth community leaders in the Black community and were obtained through referrals from the community. They not only fit the general selection criteria but also are visible leaders among Black youth in Scarborough. One of the leaders is a hip-hop artist who is known for his real and socially conscious lyrics, and the other youth leader is a member of many youth organizations including but not limited to, the Toronto Youth Cabinet and the Black Youth Coalition against Violence.

In total, seven participants agreed to participate in the study and were interviewed. Three of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 21, two between the ages of 22 and 26 and the remaining two were between 27 and 30 years old. Four of

the participants were male and three were female, and all of them indicated their marital status as 'single'. None of the participants reported having any children and all were Canadian citizens. When asked about their highest level of education, two participants revealed that they had finished high school, one was attending college, another participants revealed that he had some college and some university education, and the remaining three respondents indicated that they had obtained a university undergraduate degree. Five of the seven participants reported that their background was 'Caribbean' and two identified as 'African'. When asked about their religious or spiritual afflictions, 3 participants said that they were Christians, one participant followed the Hindu faith, another participant indicated that she was Muslim and two participants did not ascribe to any particular faith.

Data Collection

In this study all interviews were conducted in person. Face to face interviews facilitates the interpretation of symbols, including language, expressions and body language. For example, when participants became emotional or angered during the interview, the researcher could identify this through their words, body language and the expression on their face.

An interview guide was used for data collection. This semi-structured guide contained open-ended questions about the participants opinions regarding the impact and causes of gun violence and the solutions to it. Open-ended questions allow respondents to reply in their own words and allows the interviewer to follow up on issues raised by participants.

The researcher explained the purpose of the study and the criteria for participation along with anonymity and confidentiality issues with participants. Those who showed interest in the study and met the selection requirements were given an information letter and consent form to sign (See Appendix B and C).

Data Analysis

The initial stages of data analysis began with the careful reading and examination of participant's responses to the open-ended research questions. The transcripts of each interview were read several times in order to identify patterns of experiences and to develop themes pertinent to the objectives of the research. Once themes were identified, the transcripts were re-read for the purpose of indexing the data by highlighting and labeling passages according to each theme. These labels signify themes, categories, or topics of experience addressed by the excerpts. The process of indexing provided for the re-reading of data within categories, which assisted in the synthesis, and interpretation of emerging patterns. Patterns were examined in light of literature to establish a meaningful discussion on the issues.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows: There were a limited number of participants interviewed as a part of this study and thus one must be cautious in generalizing this study's findings and to assume that the participants' opinions reflect that of the whole Black community in Scarborough. More in-depth work would be needed to

gain a more comprehensive view of the Black community in Scarborough. In addition, the interviews were interpreted by a sole researcher and it is important to mention that others may have interpreted the data rather differently.

Chapter 4: How Gun Violence Impacts Scarborough's Black Community

The participants in this study had multiple and different experiences with gun violence. Consistent with Kastenbaum (2004), it was found that while many interviewees shared experiences with how gun violence impacted them, there was also significant variation in the way that gun violence affected them and their families. Likewise, the ways which individuals interpreted the effects of gun violence on their neighborhoods and communities also showed similarities and differences. The participants were impacted by gun violence in many different ways. The qualitative interviews revealed that gun violence did have a significant impact on the lives of the interviewees. The examination of the participants accounts reveals the presence of three levels in gun violence effects: individual, family and community.

The Impact of Gun Violence on Individuals in Scarborough

Personal experiences of the seven participants.

The interviewees in Scarborough told many shocking stories of their experiences with gun violence. Three of the seven respondents had personally been in situations where they themselves had been shot or had someone attempt to shoot them. One interviewee revealed that she had “been to many social events that ended up in gun shots”. Another indicated that he was a victim of gun violence because of his involvement with it. He stated, “Well I actually had shots fired at me...just once when I

was younger, but I know about guns, and I had access to one [a gun] and therefore other people had access to me”.

Although less than half of the interviewees indicated personal involvement with gun violence, they all revealed that they personally knew somebody who had been shot. All but one of the interviewees had a friend who lost their life to gun violence. One respondent shared his emotional experience, “I’ve ah seen people get shot and my close friend Justin Sheppard got shot, this year it’s going to be five years on June 25th it’s going to be his memorial, five years since his passing. Another one of my friends ah... Quincy passed away at the fifty cent concert due to a rough case of some gun violence in Toronto.” Another interviewee revealed, “I lost a close friend to gun violence, which was quite sad, cause he had a bright future but he got mixed up in the wrong crowd and unfortunately that is not a retraceable”. One of the interviewees spoke of his late friend and said, “He was a victim, he actually died, he actually got shot outside Woodside mall there, I knew him from Macklin”. One of the respondents who recently lost a close friend to gun violence in Scarborough, recounted:

The person that I knew that was a victim of gun violence, actually this year, I believe it was March. It was an incident that happened in Scarborough, where someone got murdered, so it was a negative cause first of all, I knew the person, I knew the person, since I was like, I knew the person for like over 20 years. Second of all I knew his cousin, I knew four of his cousins, one of them, one of his cousins I’ve known since I, since I was like 6 years old... it was all horrible and especially knowing that it’s Black on Black.

In addition to the aforementioned personal experiences, or experiences of their friends and families, many of the interviewees also spoke about incidents of gun violence in their communities. One of the respondents conveyed this by saying:

There was a couple of times over in Goldhawk there where the bullet went right through the houses of somebody else, or in Alton Towers, there was a stray bullet but the person who was in the shower or whatever may not have done anything but they're a victim to it.

Emotional impact of gun violence.

When asked about the impacts of gun violence on their lives, the interviewees were able to express both negative and positive emotional and lifestyle changes that they have endured as a result of gun violence in Scarborough. All of the respondents indicated that their lifestyles had been altered because of fear. Some have felt violated, while most felt that they became desensitized to gun violence. Moreover, there were others who had negative experiences with the law, which they believed resulted from increasing gun violence in our communities.

Gun violence and fear.

Fear was discussed by all respondents with respect to gun violence in Scarborough. With the exception of one interviewee, it became clear that individuals have changed where they go, who they associate with, and how late they stay out because of experiences with gun violence. In addition, almost half have indicated that they no longer feel safe because of gun violence. Most of the interviewees claimed that gun

violence influenced where they went within Scarborough or the larger GTA. One respondent explained “I don't usually go to areas that I'm not really comfortable with, or go out late at night...I'm conscious of it yes, I do, I look out for it to make sure I'm not in the wrong place at the wrong time”. Another participant said “You have to be careful where you are and who you're with”. One of the participants claimed that he was particularly reluctant to go to clubs now because there have been many violent episodes in Toronto nightclubs. He revealed:

I can say that I don't really go to downtown clubs anymore. I used to go, not really too often maybe like when I was in high school, 18/19 [years old], I probably go maybe once every two weeks, every three weeks and umm, I pretty much don't really do that anymore. I go maybe like 5 times a year, on like special occasions, my birthday and friends' birthdays. Too much stupidity, too many people want to fight over stepping on shoes, over nothing, they get drunk and then, I don't really have patience for that, not to say that nothing can happen over here, but I think that I can lower my percentage if I can just stay out of it, if I don't have to be there.

Similarly, another respondent suggested that while she may feel comfortable in Scarborough, she has many friends and family members who do not have the same comfort level. She indicated that:

I don't go out worrying about it [gun violence], like I know some people do, I have a cousin who grew up in a small town, and one of his first times coming up to Scarborough to visit, he was just like wind up the windows, we're in Scarborough. Like [he was] just very scared and um, not me I do

not, I don't know, do I not go places? I go out... I'm not going to avoid going to the Eaton Center on Boxing Day cause I don't want to get shot. Do you know what I mean like? I've been downtown a couple time when there have been shootings around the areas that I've been in and it's not going to deter me from going back to the places I want to go to.

This particular interviewee referred to the Jane Creba stabbing on Boxing Day and revealed that despite the fact that this made many people scared to go on Yonge Street where Creba was shot; she did not feel the need to have incidents like this change her lifestyle. Likewise, she has encountered gun violence at nightclubs, but chose not to let those negative experiences ruin her life.

One participant articulated that she felt that there is nothing to fear in Scarborough. She is comfortable walking around in Scarborough, even late a night. She explains:

Like, no, like, I don't understand how Scarborough is this bad, people think we've turned into like some kind of ghetto where everyone gets shot and that's not the deal, you know?... I'd never be afraid of walking in and out of anywhere in Scarborough. I would never let that impact me, I personally know that the dangers are out there, but I know that I wouldn't ... let that deter me from doing my day to day life

Toronto is not that bad of a place and Scarborough is not bad of a place, when I can walk around, like when I can be at Markham and Lawrence and walk down the street at 3am while I'm waiting for a bus, and nobody bothered me, that says a big deal you know. Cause if it was as

bad as people say that it is, then I wouldn't be able to do that, I wouldn't be able to just have my door open all the time, my parents wouldn't be able to have 2 restaurants and not have a shooting, you know what I mean, especially West Indian/Caribbean restaurants, one of them is in Malvern. Like if it was as bad as it was my parents wouldn't be where they are right now.

Some interviewees felt the need to restrict their movements and others refused to let gun violence dictate where they went or at what time. It seemed that all of the interviewees recognized that there are dangers in the world, but they responded differently. What was not anticipated was that the female participants were the ones who felt most strongly about not changing where or when they traveled in Toronto/Scarborough. In contrast, the male participants indicated that they no longer went to certain places or were more cautious.

While female participants did not feel that they should be restricted because of gun violence, they seemed to be angrier than the males about the existence of gun violence in Scarborough and they expressed their sense of violation if an incident of gun violence occurred in their neighbourhood or at an event, they were attending. One of the females described feeling violated after gun shots were fired at a social event:

I mean, I've been at many social events that have ended up in, in gun shots....it does make you feel violated in the sense that all of a sudden you're in a state of panic and now you're in the...fight or flight kind of response and of course it's the flight, and now you're in this panic and trying to get away

Another female expressed her anger and resentment this point by saying:

I feel like it's just not fair. I should be able to do what I want, when I want and not have to worry about any stupid people shooting the place up. It's not fair to me, it should be the people with guns that stay home. I won't stay home because of them. They are violating my rights to be free and have fun. Like at Caribana, one stupid person could ruin the fun of many. As well, when it happens, you feel so, you feel so mad, even if they didn't shoot you, or shoot at you, they still hurt you. You are hurt because now you have to be afraid, now you have to look over your shoulder. They shot away your right to have worry-free fun.

Desensitization.

Many of the interviewees felt that they had become desensitized by gun violence as a result of being constantly bombarded by either first or second hand, gun related experiences. One explained how she reacted after her most recent encounter with gun violence in comparison to her earlier experiences:

I actually didn't see the gun, I heard the shots, and I'm familiar with gun shots cause unfortunately I've heard them before so actually it was almost sad because we didn't even react in a (exhale)...we didn't run. We just kinda looked at each other rolled our eyes and said...(exhale) not this, like kinda like not this behaviour again like you know what mean...and we were like....annoyed like ahhh...these people are so dumb, let's get out of here...you know, that kind of reaction as oppose to when I first heard

gunshots. The first time, it was utter panic and it was just like a stampede to the closest door...I'd go to parties after that and sometimes if the record would skip it would make that kind of popping noise and there was a period of time that it would make me kinda jump or look around like- was that a gunshot....or was that....you know what I mean? Or like...it puts you on edge a little bit until you get [used] use to it, and I think it's kinda sad that there is a point that we got use to it, like that shouldn't even be the case, I don't know....I think the presence of it [gun violence] has made me more accepting of it, and in a like, I don't wanna say that I approve of it, but I can turn the other cheek to it... I guess I was kinda introduced to that kind of violence a little bit throughout high school and stuff so I've been a little bit, desensitized to it.

This participant demonstrated how her comfort level with guns increased proportionately with her experiences with gun violence. She also conveys her disappointment with herself and others who are desensitized to violence because she believes that when someone gets hurt, or there is a potential for someone to get hurt as a result of violence, we as a community should care, be empathetic and react to the incidence. Another participant found that because he was desensitized or “hardened” by gun violence, he was better able to deal with future occurrences and would be able to react appropriately without panic. He elaborated:

It's just that I've seen a lot of things, actually you know what, it could be that I'm hardened. With my environment, the way I grew up, not the way I grew up, but the environment I grew up in and what I've seen, so it

could be that I'm hardened, which could be bad or could be good. So certain things will happen that someone else may not be able to deal with or they are a bit stressed out, that I may be able to deal with more appropriately just because of what I've seen in the past.

While some participants revealed feeling desensitized towards gun violence, they still seemed to care about the impact of gun violence and were aware of its existence in their community.

Over policing as a result of gun violence.

More than half of the participants interviewed recounted that they or someone close to them had experiences with the criminal justice system, as a result of incidents of gun violence in their community. One participant revealed, "I've had friends go to jail for being wrongly accused". Another participant reported that not only was his friend impacted by gun violence because he had to go to jail, but he also lost the ability to have a successful and normal future upon his release.

For most of the respondents, the adverse effects of the criminal justice system was a concern to them, and they felt over policing was an intrusive and unfair outcome of gun violence. Most have had negative experiences with police officers, and one respondent expressed her concern by recounting a situation that her friends had recently experienced:

You know and then what actually upset me more about the situation was friends of mine were pulled over accused of being the culprits ... and the police had guns pointed at their heads. ... There were a couple of cops behind their car doors for shields, holding guns pointed at them as

well...and so I felt like that's a violation ...The guy asked, why? Like what's going on, like, why did you pull us over and he's [the police officer] like don't ask me questions because I'm the one with the gun to your head. It was used as a source of intimidation ...They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time and didn't do anything... There's another friend of mine, and him and his girlfriend actually, ended up spending the night in jail, but had the same thing, she was faced down in the cement with a gun to her head and as was he, and they were both taken to jail...Everybody who had that encounter with the police, are just shaken up.... They haven't done anything, and they're getting victimized, or treated like a criminal.

Most of the other interviewees felt that since the perceived increase in gun violence, they have subsequently been followed, questioned, detained, and generally harassed more and more by police. One of the participants explained this phenomenon by suggesting:

Like honestly, if I'm walking down the street and I've said this before, if I see a cop I get more scared than I am to see a group of Black youth, that's how it is. I am honestly, I am more, cause I've been arrested to the point where they arrested me for no reason, and when they realized that I am a City employee that I work for Toronto Youth Cabinet and that I am a member of the Toronto Police services, like the Youth advisory council to the police chief, that's when they let me go and said, oh I'm sorry ma'am, have a nice day. But because I'm a coloured youth and I was occupying

space that I wasn't suppose to occupy that's when they decided to put cuffs on me and put me in the back of their car, you know what I mean. And it's like, what am I more afraid, off, and I think that's a big deal, that's a huge deal, that's a huge deal because it's a system that's a hierarchy up there and they control it all

Most of the participants in this study recounted similar stories of being harassed by police. They perceived the actions of police to be unjustified, and they felt that they themselves had been questioned, arrested, or stopped, simply because they were Black; being Black in the eyes of the police means that you are likely to be in possession of a firearm. Most of the participants were more animated and bothered by the actions of the police than by the actions of the perpetrators of gun violence.

Positive effects of gun violence.

Kastenbaum (2004) indicated that community members may use violence as a common concern to unite around and they may band together and demonstrate their resilience. The accounts of study participants also indicated that gun violence had a positive impact on some interviewees. One interviewee's experiences with gun violence led her to become more politically active, while gun violence led others to make better choices of friends, avoid guns, or turn to religion as an alternative.

Still in her teenage years, one of the interviewees demonstrated this resilience to violence. She conveyed that witnessing and hearing about gun violence compelled her to be more politically active. She was able to unite with other young activists in various community groups, in an attempt to make a difference in the lives of young people. She

even competed for the title of “Scarborough Idol” which was a competition that attempted to involve community members in City Council by providing them with the financial backing to run a campaign in the upcoming election. When asked to explain how gun violence had affected her life, she responded:

It's impacted me in a sense that I did join Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC), to try to make change in that way. Being on the Toronto Youth Cabinet I do see how hard it is to make that change...to have seen all of the barriers that have come forth to people who've tried to do that in the past, and umm, and just it's impacted me to see, you know, it's there and we have to deal with it and it's a serious issue. I think I see things, I think I see things on a wider scale now, like I don't see it as a Scarborough issue, I see it as a Toronto issue....I think it's changed my lifestyle, just because I've been more involved to the fact that I've never used to be involved before and then when I kept seeing things, happening, happening, happening, [gun violence], I realized that you know, things have to change and I am involved with a lot of, like I'm way, like I'm an activist now because of things that have happened. I work with a lot of Black youth and a lot of Black organizations, I've worked for BYCAP and BYTA, which are Black organizations fighting against violence of course. BYCAP stand for Black Youth Coalition Against Violence and BYTA is Black Youth Taking Action, so...I'm very well involved in this kind of movement.

One can see how something which is traditionally traumatic/negative has had a positive effect on the life of this young woman. She became involved in her community and she empowered herself to work towards change in her community.

As well as becoming politically active, respondents have suggested that they have made other positive changes in their lives, or have seen others around them make positive changes as a result of gun violence in their community. One interviewee has witnessed positive changes in acquaintances as a result of gun violence:

there's a few of my friends or acquaintances who have changed, I guess they have taken that life or thug life or however you want to justify it and are starting to do positive things, I guess trying to stay out of that and you know just keep it on the straight and narrow and are a lot more religious, those people, those people who have made the change are a lot more religious, even more than me I would say.

Other interviewees also expressed this sentiment of choosing to walk away from a “thuggish lifestyle” and do more positive things with their lives. One respondent claimed that he was becoming involved in gun violence but after witnessing some of his friends go to jail or lose their life because of guns, he decided to go to school. He expresses how going to school saved him from gun violence when he said “honestly, I'd be, I'd be a bad guy, (laughs), I'd be a bad guy to be honest. That's where I was heading, in that direction, a lot things were going on right before I left to go to school”. In this particular instance, the interviewee was able to avoid becoming involved with or become a victim of gun violence, and was able to go to university and get a degree. Similarly, another interviewee who had been involved with gun violence, was shot at, and had lost close

friends to gun violence, experienced positive change. He also was able to learn from those experiences and walk down a more positive path. He revealed “I don't promote gun violence like I used to, I don't, I don't talk to the same people that I used to, I have different friends, ummm, even moved away from the area that I was in ...that had a lot of gun violence kind of issues”. Another participant echoed this statement by indicating that he too wants to move away from negative peers and gun violence:

I used to do a lot of bad things, but now, I've seen too many things happen to other people, so it's time for me to do something positive. It's time for me to move on to better things. Gun violence has impacted me because after witnessing so much of it, I realize that there is so much other stuff that I can do.

Similar to the previous interviewee, many of the respondents indicated that because they lost someone as a result of gun violence, they were able to see the world in a different light. Many of them made comments about discovering how precious life is; thus, they are now determined to enjoy life more. For example, one respondent explains his new outlook, which he learned as a result of having experienced personal tragedies:

It kinda shows you that you're not invincible...It is, what it is, take it, everything happens for a reason...you just go through it, try not to let it happen to you or anyone else that you know... you go on a way, staying away from people that are involved you know...did it change my life in any other way? I don't really think so. Just changes my outlook on life, life is short, so enjoy it while you can.

Others have indicated that they learned how to move on with life after a tragedy and they gained the skills to cope with difficult situations. One respondent explained how he learned to cope with difficult situations after his friend died as a result of gun violence:

You just gotta realize that sometimes, some situations are going to come about, that you just have to deal with ... obviously it's a horrible experience [losing someone to gun violence], no one likes it, but you gotta somehow deal with it and continue with your life... it brings everything back to perspective... I wish it [losing a friend to gun violence] never happened but if I could take something positive from it, life is short...so how are you going to cope with it. Cause a lot people never ever are the same person or their whole life is in shambles [After they lose someone close to them]. They can't go to work, but at the end of the day, unfortunately, not to sound blunt but life does go on regardless, you have to learn coping skills, coping mechanisms, continue your life...there's nothing specific that I do, it's just like internal, it's like an internal mechanism... so it's not like, I don't like close my eyes and count to ten, it's just internal.

These comments are quite to the contrary of the theories presented by Kastenbaum (2004) , which would have one believe that most people become socially isolated, depressed, and almost want to stop living after experiencing loss. Although some may react this way, some members of the Black community are much more resilient, as indicated by the previous interviewee. They are able to learn and grow from

negative experiences, and they can identify how negative situations can lead to positive changes.

Therefore, when discussing the impacts of gun violence, it is important to note that some interviewees were affected by the loss of someone close to them, while others were victims themselves or knew about incidents of violence in their communities. Although the experiences of the respondents were varying with respect to gun violence, two things became clear: 1) every interviewee to some extent had experienced gun violence; and 2) gun violence in some way had a significant impact on the lives of the interviewees.

The Impact of Gun Violence on Families

Kastenbaum (2004) also discussed the impact that violence can have on the family system. He suggested that communication patterns within a family may change, intimacy can be affected, and families can either reconnect or disconnect because of grief. In addition, parents in neighborhoods who have experienced violence, can become overprotective and discouraging of their child's autonomy, because of sheer fear for their well-being (Kastenbaum, 2004; Osofsky, 1995).

One of the participants suggested that his family changed as a result of gun violence by becoming more protective of him:

in a protective sense, yes, they're like ... ok lets be more careful when you go, what time are you going out, do you really have to go at this time, or you know, be careful where you go, that's usually coming from family members and really close friends.

Similarly, another interviewee indicated “ I am still a young adult and I'm living with my parents and umm, they prefer me not to go certain places at certain times of night just because of the violence”. In these cases, because of violence in their neighbourhood, the participants families, and parents in particular, became protective.

None of the participants themselves had experienced the loss of a family member due to gun violence. However, they were able to speak about close friends who were shot and subsequently died. They were also able to convey the grief that these families felt. In all of the families discussed, grief led to the strengthening of family bonds and the reconnecting of family members. One of the participants stated, “When my friend died, his family came from all over the country and from the West Indies and the States to pay tribute to him and like support each other”.

Another participant claimed that after a few of his friends died as a result of gun violence, their families were greatly impacted. When one of his friends died, he revealed that the young man's family became a lot closer. They held annual memorials, established scholarships, and did other things, which not only paid tribute to their lost family member, but also united their family. The participant revealed that these events “helped keep the family together, they were something for them to look forward too”. This is a functional example of families reconnecting and uniting after a period of grief.

The Effects of Gun Violence on Neighbourhoods in Scarborough

Along with the impact violence had on individuals and families, the participants were also able to share their views on the effects of gun violence on their entire neighbourhood and, more specifically, the Black community in Scarborough. Various

changes within Scarborough neighborhoods were noted, including: a more prominent police presence, an increase in safety precautions, the community becoming desensitized, and people relocating to other areas.

Increased police presence.

More than half of the participants interviewed concluded that they witnessed an increase in police presence within their neighbourhood. According to the interviewees, the increase in police presence was thought to be more harmful than it was helpful. One participant revealed:

Right down the street, they built this huge, huge police facility, it's the new 43 division actually, it's huge and they had this big open house. Now I see cops all the time, they're in my face, like they're all over the place you know and its right beside the Valia [A street/area in Scarborough], which is considered the east end's little ghetto area, where they have the community... Valia was just always the place for like everyone, they want weed they go there, or if they want anything to do with that kind of thing, they go to Valia you know, and Valia is just like any other neighbourhood, it just is a little down, it's not funded properly, but yet there's a huge police station now that's built beside it, I don't know if that has some ulterior motive.

Other participants revealed that there is “more police presence” and another suggested that there is “a little bit more police presence ... I've lived various places in Scarborough and I would say a couple of the older neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods I use

to live in, I see a little bit more police". These participants as well appeared to feel either neutral or negative about the increase of police presence in their neighbourhood.

Potentially this negative feeling about the increased police presence can be attributed to the fact that most of the participants have had negative experiences with police officers.

Safety concerns within neighbourhoods.

Along with a more prominent police presence, it was noted that many community members were feeling less safe in their neighbourhood. One of the participants provided an example of this when he said:

[people] get a little bit more I guess scared, I wouldn't say scared, worried and you're just a little bit more cautious about what's going on, because a couple of years ago it would be more safe to you know, leave your door open... I definitely say there's more caution, probably people have more alarm systems, people are more worried to make sure everything is locked when they go to bed and stuff like that.

It is evident that some people have become less trusting of others and feel more insecure about their safety; hence, they are locking their doors and taking extra precautions to remain safe. Another participant made a similar observation:

I do notice a lot of less people taking walks at night and stuff like that, and I do think it's attributed to that cause I know I've overheard my parents saying, with all of the shootings going on, I don't want to be walking at this time of night, they're telling me not to go for walks, when it gets dark

because the shootings, and ummm, ummm, I think that you know that goes across the community.

From this last quote, it becomes clear that some people are afraid to be outside and enjoy their neighbourhoods as they once did. However, not every participant agreed that gun violence contributed to negative changes or feeling of insecurity within Scarborough neighbourhoods. One participant discussed change in his neighbourhood by saying “my neighbourhood, nothing surprisingly [changed], nothing really too, too different. People still come outside and play basketball in the co-op and we still walk around late at night and people still do normally what they do”.

Once again, it is evident that the participants have varying opinions on how gun violence affects people in their community. Some participants feel that their neighbourhoods are less safe, while other still feel that despite an increase in gun violence, their neighbourhoods are safe.

Desensitization in neighbourhoods.

Respondents have indicated that they believe their communities have become complacent due to desensitization. One participant expressed this when he said:

A man, he got shot right outside of Malvern Mall. Right there on the street and the car drove off, the car with the shooters that is. Once the car was out of sight, people just stared, or kept walking into the mall. People were going to Zellers like if a man didn't just get shot. It wasn't interesting, it wasn't sad, it wasn't even scary to a lot of people. It was like

everybody was just watching a movie and then they got up left and went on with their business. When did all of this become normal?

One of the other participants claims that the desensitization was initiated with a bombardment of images of violence and guns on TV. Now, he says, it has gotten to the point where people in these neighbourhoods no longer react to incidences of senseless violence. He suggested:

It's even worse now when I saw it on TV and was like whatever, that already is just saying that we're used to seeing that, ...there's something wrong when we could see a shot gun on TV or somebody got shot and it's like oh yes oh yes, it's not like oh my gosh, it's the reaction

Individuals relocating to new neighbourhoods.

Finally, participants revealed that many members of their community have tried to avoid gun violence by relocating to another area. This type of response was mentioned by all respondents. One of them explained that this response involved processes of class and racialization :

I've had a lot of friends that moved out, especially a lot of my white friends have moved out to tell you the truth. A lot of my Caucasian friends have you know like dipped out to Markham or Pickering, but then it's like a lot of my Black friends as well have moved to Pickering and Markham. I guess you can say it comes to a class level as well in the races where it's like, you know the upper class Black people are moving out cause they feel that they don't want to be connected with this ghetto Scarborough

ideal. But then again it's like the Caucasian people are seeing it as Scarborough is being overturned by colour people we need to get the hell out of here, so they moved to even further places in the north and the East, like Whitby and whatever else is North, Stouffville, Unionville or whatever....a lot of my friends and families want to move out of here cause they just don't want to associate themselves with that, with that stereotype of being from Scarborough.

It is the belief of the interviewees that some of the people in their neighbourhoods are moving out of Scarborough, at least if they can afford to, in order to avoid gun violence and obtain peace of mind in a quieter neighbourhood.

The Impact of Gun Violence on the Black Community

It is evident from the qualitative interviews that not only were there changes in individual neighbourhoods as a result of gun violence, there was also an impact on the entire Black community. Some of the interviewees suggested that the Black community had become united because of gun violence to advocate and be more political. In contrast, others thought that gun violence was dividing the Black community. There was however, a consensus that increasing gun violence has affected the way the Black community is received by others in Scarborough.

The Black community uniting through advocacy.

As mentioned earlier, violence in communities can lead to action and advocacy of community members. After violence infiltrates a community, it is not uncommon for its

members to begin to unite and demonstrate resilience. An example of this was given in an earlier chapter were the group UMOVE (United Mother's Opposing Violence Everywhere) was discussed (Metro, 2005). This is a group of mothers who have lost children to violence and are strong advocates against gun violence. One of the participants revealed "One of my friend's moms, now she's on the UMOVE, after she lost Jeffrey she became big on that and is always trying to involve others in the community".

Most of the participants revealed that they knew of or were a part of some community group that advocates against gun violence. Some revealed that they have attended rallies, marches or other events intended to unite the Black community in order to eliminate gun violence. Another participant suggested that people have now become more politically active because there was a lack of politicians actively trying to help the Black community. She indicated:

I think we let it [gun violence] just slide for a while and now it's happening more and more and people are just realizing hey you know what, this is something we have to have some kind of impact on, cause obviously the people in city hall aren't doing shit...cause the people in city hall are obviously not there, they don't know what the hell is going on and that's a problem, okay...the impact on the people is basically that they're seeing a reason to more involve themselves in what's happening.

According to some of the participants, the Black community has a lack of political support. Thus, there have been positive repercussions to gun violence such as the fact that it has brought the community together, it has empowered individuals, and it has created Black leaders and facilitated the creation of a "Black political voice".

Gun violence dividing the Black community.

In contrast to the opinion that the Black community is becoming united around issues of gun violence, some of the interviewees believed that gun violence was destroying and dividing the Black community. When asked about how gun violence is affecting the Black community, one participant simply responded, “I think its dividing people to tell you the truth”. This sentiment was echoed by another participant:

I think that it's [gun violence] caused infighting within the Black community like, I think the majority of Black people are angry at those who are guilty and perpetrating gun violence because they're bringing up a bad, ... like image of, the whole, community as a whole.... kinda the blame game, like some Blacks are angry how others view Blacks as a whole now because of the violence and then try to pack the blame. Like it's not us, it's them and those that live in this neighbourhood or it's the ones that... do this or the ones that listen to that kind of music, and it's causing fighting within the community as well because you know people are trying to salvage the image of the community, and the desperation so they're pointing fingers a lot. You know, rather than coming to discover the real causes of it...they're trying to point fingers and say, it's not us it's them...you know?

It is evident from the last comment that some are of the opinion that Blacks are shifting the blame of the gun violence problem onto other Blacks, in an attempt to separate themselves from stereotypes. Comedian Chris Rock in his stand up routine

Bring the Pain, divided the Black community into two categories “Black People” and “Niggers” whereas Black people are hardworking decent individuals and “Niggers” are lazy, criminals and on welfare. He states that hardworking Black people “can't stand Niggers” and that he is afraid of “Niggers”. Similarly, it seems that some Blacks in Scarborough rather than uniting around the issue to find a solution to prevent gun violence are pointing fingers at each other trying to divert attention away from race and class, gender, geographic area, to some other factor.

Gun Violence influences how the Black community is perceived.

Moreover, all of the participants have conveyed that gun violence affects the way that other people see the Black community as a whole. One participant suggests, “Other communities look negatively at the Black community”. Another participant revealed that it is not just other races that look negatively on the Black community in Scarborough, but Black people from other areas are even reluctant to travel to Scarborough. She illustrated her point by saying:

My friends from downtown or even from the west side like from Regent Park... I'd like ask them, guys come to my house, we can chill or whatever? [They would respond] Where do you live? [I would say] Scarborough. [Then they would say] Forget it!

At least half of the participants referred to the movie “Crash” to explain how Black communities are treated. One participant indicated:

Like there should not be a fear towards a certain group of people, you know and that's what it is generally creating, creating a fear of....like have

you seen “Crash”...in “Crash” like it has a very good example of when like when like the Caucasian actress would hold onto her husband when she saw two Black guys walking down the street.... even Ludicrous...he understood like that he pointed that out that it was like that.

The movie “Crash” (2004) was generally seen as a good example of how Blacks are perceived and subsequently treated. Events such as people crossing the street when they see a Black person walking towards them, or a woman clutching her purse when they see a Black person were common events, which were brought forth in the interviews. Many of the interviewees believed that other people’s reactions to Blacks were based on negative images of the Black community perpetuated by the media. One participant revealed:

It affects them [the Black community] in the way that other cultures see Black people, and it's always, it's on the media a lot and just seems that on the media it's always Black people, although we all know that it's more than Black people that get into gun violence, but it's always, you know, as soon as something happens it's a Black person that gets shown. We're seen as gang related, basically like a war zone, always trying to kill ourselves, rude, and ignorant...

Another participant agreed that the media perpetuates a negative image of Blackness, which leads to Blacks not getting opportunities in life. He furthered this point by suggesting:

Sometimes they [the media] embellish it [gun violence and the image of Blacks].... When anything bad happens it's a Black guy or if

there was a group of three white people and a group of three Black people who would they think to do something wrong first, it's probably a Black guy. Like have you seen "Crash"? So that would be a pretty good example, and I think that's true, like I've seen that happen a couple of times [avoiding Blacks out of fear]...it's upsetting just to know, cause you're classified... under a group of people, it's not necessarily you, you could be the biggest angel in the world you can have whatever ...but you can never get the opportunity because they think you're going to do this.

The topic of racism and discrimination was very emotional for most of the participants because as members of the Black community they have endured years of discrimination and racism. Another participant indicated:

The Black male is the most crucified...individual, if you're like basing it on characteristic, young Black males is the most, like crucified individual in the world ... so like, stares, looks, and stuff, so I like, I grew up with it, it happens not as much now, I'm a little bit older, but it's nothing new, surprisingly, nothing new... so, from the younger Black males, Blacks males in there teens, and in their early twenties, I know for a fact they definitely experience it...they're getting the stares, the looks, clutching of the purses etc.

The constant suspicion and stereotyping was considered demoralizing by one of the participants who suggests that it's a cycle that affects the whole Black community when he commented:

It's demoralizing, I would say it has a huge impact on young Black males. Especially people not involved in anything because it stigmatizes the whole. People on TV may dress a certain way or look a certain way, so if you dress a certain way or look that certain way as well, you're going to be clumped into that, that stigmatization. Which is wrong, but that's what the media does, they want to sell records, so, you can have two people, one person with a university degree who's like going to med school and another person who carries a gun, and has fired his gun and they could dress the exact same way. But a white male, a white female sees them walk down the street, they're going to be afraid of both of them the same way. So stigmatization is always there for young Black males unfortunately but now it's even more heightened.

The same participant continues by expressing how the stigmatization of Black youth not only affects youth, but it also has a significant impact on the rest of the Black community.

Then for the older generation, adults, ummm, forty, fifty, sixty years old, they, I wouldn't, I wouldn't use the word shame, but, they go to work, they have their colleagues and then, they open up their papers and there's a Black male, it doesn't look good on them as well, you know. They're going to work everyday, they have kids who are not in trouble, but it looks bad on the Black community as a whole, so then they have to go to work with their colleagues and they'd be the only Black person in the office and they feel that stigmatization as well, which could be a fifty year old Black,

maybe a sixty year old Black man who's working everyday, so, it affects the whole Black community as a whole. The elders, the young ones as well, it's, it's like a cycle. Then you can have a Black female who's, a young Black female who's boyfriend or, husband is involved in that stuff, or maybe, not involved and maybe being stigmatized as well and it could affect their whole life as well, so it's like this whole vicious cycle that affects the whole Black community. Old, young, male, female, all ages, so it's definitely not good at all.

In addition to how others races in Scarborough view the Black community, when asked how the Black community is impacted by gun violence, most respondents indicated that the community as a whole is being over policed. In particular, many of participants were especially angered over the intense media coverage that accompanied the Boxing Day shooting of a young White woman on Yonge Street. One participant spoke in particularly powerful terms:

Black people are shooting Black people, and they are dying, they are dying, just dying. And nobody care, nobody. No politicians, no police officers, no one cares. We die in Malvern, we die in Galloway, We die in Orton Park, We die at Markham and Ellesmere, we die everywhere in Scarborough. No one pays attention. But the minute a white girl gets shot all of a sudden there is a national crisis. 51 people died as a result of a gun shots before her...many of them Black...no body cared. But now they say she got shot on 'Toronto's street'. Fuck that. My friend died on Neilson...why aren't we having a police manhunt for his Killers. Cause

nobody cares when it's a Black...but the police are out in full force now, and they are going to torture every Black person because one of their own died. Who care...I have no tears left for Jane Creba, I cried all of my tears for the 51 people who died before her. Why don't the police leave us alone? They are tormenting the entire community...and for what?

Another participant spoke in similar terms about the Boxing Day shooting:

With Jane Creba's death, they just arrested a whole bunch of youth, you know, like I don't understand where they're getting off with just...and they're charging them with attempted murder which is, which is a huge charge, when you're charging with that kind of charge, it's over...with this death because one white girl got shot now all of these Blacks guys are implicated in this. We see a whole police force trying to, they forget everything else and they say we need to find out who did this to Jane Creba, to this Riverdale high school student who was blossoming, who was doing amazing in her school. So not only is there no justice for the Black victims, but then, when there is a white victim our entire community is victimized and the police are all over us. Why?

Therefore, according to the participants in this study, the reactions to gun violence coming from individuals outside the Black community are demoralizing and stereotypical because Blacks have been lumped into one category. Moreover, this stereotypical image is perpetuated in the media; subsequently resulting in over policing of Black communities, and a feeling of victimization within the community.

In sum, all of the seven participants had varying experiences with gun violence that had a significant impact on them. In most cases either themselves, or someone they knew were shot at, or they lost someone close to them due to gun violence. They each highlighted positive and negative changes, which they observed within the Black community in Scarborough. Most notably, some of them identified the creation of activists and the strengthening of community bonds as a positive side affect of gun violence. Fears, feeling unsafe, grief, destroying community bonds, over policing and stereotyping, were among some of the identified negative impacts of gun violence. Participants often had conflicting views concerning gun violence and its impact on themselves and their community. However, they all agreed that gun violence was a problem in Scarborough; it affected their lives to some extent and is something that we as a society should work towards eliminating so that we can improve the quality of life for Blacks as well as all residence of Scarborough.

Chapter 5: Causes of Gun Violence

The interviewees in this study provided numerous and varying explanations about the causes of gun violence in Scarborough. These explanations are not mutually exclusive as they often interact. The participants laid the responsibility of gun violence on individuals, families and larger community systems.

Gun Violence: An individual concern

When asked about the causes of crime, all of the participants believed that crime was at least in part caused by deviancy at the level of the individual. In other words, they suggested that individuals commit crimes for their own personal reasons. Some of these reasons included getting revenge on others or living up to a sensationalized image of Blackness and masculinity. Others conveyed a belief that gun violence was the result of individuals making rational decisions. In addition, some participants believed that crimes were the result of individuals not being socially bonded or having negative labels imposed on them.

Retaliation/Revenge.

Some participants viewed most gun crimes as the result of people taking revenge on other people. It was suggested that something (usually minor) initiates an argument, which usually develops into a situation where one person (or group of people) end up shooting at another person. For example, one interviewee indicated that:

Gun violence is usually the result of something stupid. Like one person does something stupid to another person; like talks to their girl or something, next thing you know the other person is pulling out a gun. And once a gun is pulled out and someone is shot at, then the victims have to go out and shoot back. Most people probably can't even remember how the fight started, they just keep shooting back and shooting back and that's how we get a gun problem.

Another participant suggested, "so it starts out with a fist fight right, and then one person has to up the other person so they get a knife right, and then the other person has to up him and so he gets a gun. They have to keep coming back at each other, get revenge, cause you don't want to look like a punk"

Blackness and the masculine image.

Gun violence is also seen to be rooted in stereotypes and socially created representations of masculinity and Blackness. Interviewees indicated that gun violence was often the case of someone wanting to look "cool" or "tough" in front of their peers. One participant recounted a conversation that she overheard on the TTC between two young men. One was bragging about pulling a gun on another person. She revealed how disturbed she was that the young man who was listening to his friend's story was so amazed at how tough his friend was, and wanted to join him the next time he did something so "cool". Some participants blamed the creation of this image on the media; others believed that these representations have been socially constructed. There was a common theme throughout the interviews that gun violence in Scarborough was a result

of Black men feeling the need to live up to a sensationalized view of Blackness and masculinity, which involves carrying and using guns.

As well as simply wanting the image of being tough, the participants also expressed the view that Black men also want to have the image of owning expensive cars and jewelry (often referred to as 'bling'), carrying guns, acting violently and in misogynistic ways. Many believed that this lifestyle of chasing 'bling' is what leads people down a path towards gun violence. One respondent suggested “television basically promotes, you know, the fast lane, which is getting all of that money and in if you’re a kid without, you know, money and you’re struggling, the easiest way to get money is to buy drugs, which then leads to gangs and then drugs and then guns”. Another participant agreed and when asked why Black men specifically become involved in gun violence, he suggested:

You're [Black men] suppose to be the breadwinner, you're suppose to have certain things, so if you don't have those certain things then you're not considered successful...and that leads to violence becoming involved... So if you're in your late twenties and you don't have a car, you're not looked at as successful, so you do certain things to get that car, and those certain things can lead to other things, jail, violence, guns, etc. So, I think it's the North American system that if you don't have certain things then you're considered nobody ...and it always escalates...so then you want more and more and it never really stops...and then you just get caught up, once you get started with something and especially if it's easy ... and then

somewhere along that long there's going to be a problem with someone and then the guns are going to come out.

The participants indicated that living up to a specific image of Blackness or masculinity can cause people to get involved with gun crimes for three different reasons. Firstly, as previously discussed, some of the interviewees believe that people become involved in gun violence to live up to a specific image of toughness which was been linked to Blackness. Secondly, it was indicated that Black men sell drugs and rob people in order to get money to buy certain things. The third reason as seen in the following discussion is the negative label imposed on individuals

According to Lemert (as cited in Hickey, 1997), an individual can experience a lowering of self-esteem when they have a negative label attached to them. As a response to this label and subsequent stigma, which was internalized, the individual may as a result, become involved in acts of crime. In the case of Blacks in Scarborough, the negative image is one created by society to convey the message that Blacks are criminals. Lemert (as cited in Hickey, 1997) suggests that once this image is internalized, the individual may consequently begin to act criminal (i.e. become involved in gun violence). Many of the participants held views that were consistent with Lemert and others, suggesting that they thought this might be the case with Blacks in Scarborough, who initially commit crime because they feel that is what is expected of them. Once they internalize this idea, they act on it and actually become a criminal. Once they go to jail, or are arrested, this image becomes reality and results in more crimes being committed because now they consider themselves to be criminals. One participant suggested:

If you see a young Black man on TV and they're going to jail and it's constantly what you're seeing on TV; or they're getting in trouble and they're bad, then you'll have a self-fulfilling prophecy. You're going to start acting like that, just because you see it, or you hear it, it's all over the media and so you believe that you're suppose to act that way, you get in trouble once you're caught in the system and once you get in the system you're going to learn more crime by being in jail and it gets, it's like a revolving door.

Escape from poverty.

Not only does the previous quote highlight how the desire for 'bling' can lead to gun violence, but it also reveals another influencing factor that was consistent with many of the participants. They suggested that gun violence was often a choice made by individuals not just to obtain a certain image or status but also to simply get things that they wanted or needed. Multiple participants claimed that gun violence was often tied to drug trafficking and robberies, linking the selling of guns, drugs and stealing to the financial situation of the offender. In other words, they believed that gun violence was a choice people made because they felt it was a better alternative to being poor or they simply felt that obtaining money through illegal means could be more lucrative than working at a low paying job. One participant expressed this point:

Poverty has a serious impact on the people that you know have to make money, they have to make money, they have to... I've honestly had friends sell guns for a lot of money, you can get 2gs off of a really good gun right,

and that's money that you can make. If you steal someone's gun and you sell it, that's good money because... You can make a lot of money, you know selling weed is huge, especially like at Cedarbrae, I remember, the people that sold drugs at Cedarbrae, they were ballers, like they made the money, they made the cake, they didn't need to work, they didn't need to do anything, they came to school and that's where they, that's where their biggest sell was... and for you to go to Walmart and make eight dollars per hour it's not cutting it.

Another interviewee suggested, “Some people would rather go to jail than work at a low paying job, and some people just can't get a job. When you have nothing to lose anyway why not take the easy way out and just rob someone, you'll make more money than if you went to work for 40hrs a week”. This participant is conveying that there is some sort of rational assessment that an individual makes before getting involved with gun violence. They assess the situation and believe that the benefits to gun violence (i.e. the money or the status, which was previously discussed) are greater than the potential consequences. These examples are consistent with rational choice theory. Some participants believe that individuals choose to get involved with gun violence because they have nothing else to lose. One participant expressed this point by saying, “Obviously they have nothing else to look to, so what the hell, what do you expect them to do, you know like, what else do you expect them to look towards”. In other words these participants are saying that when one has nothing to look forward to in their life, as is the case with many Blacks in Scarborough, it does not make any sense to them to go work at Walmart for \$8/hour, when they can sell drugs and rob people and make a lot

more money. When the consequences (jail or death) are not perceived to be worse than reality, or when they are highly unlikely to occur it means that individuals may choose a life of guns and crime.

Lack of programs.

More than half of the interviewees identified a lack of involvement by the youth, or a lack of opportunity to be involved in activities as a key reason for gun violence in Scarborough. When asked about the reasons behind gun violence in Scarborough, one interviewee said, "I'd have to say it has a lot to do with kids having too much free time. Therefore it's more easy to get into trouble". Another participant believes that there is a correlation between increasing gun violence and decreasing opportunities for youth to be involved in extra curricular activities. She suggests:

The lack of social activities after school like the after school program, oh my gosh, like, when we were kids, it was like I was in swimming, and gymnastics, and brownies and guides, and piano lessons and soccer and tee-ball and I was like in every single sport. I didn't have time to be bad, and now ... programs aren't as prevalent anymore and they're not in schools anymore...or the prices have gone up and parents ...who are lower income can't afford to sign their kids up for baseball team or a rep soccer team. I think that's causing trouble as well, cause it's not giving kids anything else to do. I mean like, even if you look at schools, like I know my high school had cut Senior boys basketball before I got there, and it was like what else do the boys now have to do,

nothing...that's when you turn to do stuff to break boredom. That's when a kid is going to join a gang or pick up a gun...what else are they suppose to do?

This participant's response is consistent with social control theory as she is suggesting that kids become involved in gun violence or "bad things" because options for more productive activities do not exist.

A few of the participants raised the point that Blacks in Scarborough are often made to feel like second class citizens and do not necessarily have the opportunity to be actively involved within their community. One interviewee said that Blacks in Scarborough were "forever just being completely, just being second best basically". This statement is consistent with the social control theory: when individuals do not feel they are valued as members of their community, they will not feel a sense of 'commitment' to that community, and are thus more likely to participate in illegal activities.

Gun Violence: A Family concern

Along with the factors highlighted above, the interviewees stressed that families can also contribute to gun violence in Scarborough. More specifically, participants indicated that gun violence could be a result of families not providing adequate support to youth, family members setting bad examples to young people and poor parenting and single parent homes.

A lack of role models.

As previously mentioned, numerous participants revealed that youth were often

missing 'attachment' in their lives. 'attachment' is usually a sense of belonging or respect that a youth feels for a positive role model in their life. We know from control theory that the absence of 'attachment' or the desire to not let down someone else, can lead to delinquency such as gun violence (Hirschi 1961 as cited by Bell, 1999; Keel, 2002).

Some of the participants in this study suggested that many parents in Scarborough fail to act as positive role models for youth; a strong concern to the participants because they believed that without someone to look up to, youth are likely to go down the wrong path.

One participant commented:

The problem in Scarborough and I guess Toronto is that parents aren't stepping up to be a role model for their kids. I know young people that smoke weed and drink with their so-called parents. If they see the parents doing this, then what's going to stop them from doing something wrong? When Dad is in jail, what makes you want to stay in school and do well? Why would you care if you got in trouble if your parents didn't care? You know, when I was in school, I stayed down the right path because my parents would be so disappointed in me if I didn't. I didn't want them to be disappointed, and I certainly didn't want to get spanked when I got home either.

Another participant concurred with the above, saying:

I think for Black men, I'm not to sure if I'm correct in this statement, but a lot of my Black guy friends don't have dads. They don't have male figures to look up to, right, and I can honestly say that, for my friends. I can't say that for everybody but I mean like, that's a lot of the reasons why they

found themselves in a bad position [in jail] because they haven't had that male figure saying, you know this is not right, and even if they have a male figure in their life, they're not much to look up to anyway.

More than half of the participants identified the absence of a positive figure in the lives of many youth in Scarborough as a key reason behind gun violence. They have suggested that the absence of a strong male role model to act as an authority in the lives of young people can lead to violence and delinquency. They were particularly concerned when parents were present but engaging in illegal activity themselves. They felt that if children were in such an environment they would be more likely to grow up and become involved in similar activities themselves. This belief is consistent with the ecological theory of human development.

Parenting.

Parenting was an issue that was brought forth by each of the participants. Whether it was in relation to a single parent home or simply inadequate parenting, parents were given a great deal of blame with respect to gun violence in Scarborough. One participant, when asked about the causes of gun violence, gave primacy to poor parenting, equated with single parent homes, indicating “first and foremost I would say [the causes of gun violence are] broken homes, single parent homes, whether it's a single mother, single father, well, it's usually a single mother.” Another participant felt that we shouldn't necessarily blame parents but that we need to examine the current context of parenting, the participant had this to say about the difficult challenges of parenting in Scarborough:

I think parenting has gone down, and I think the standard of parenting has gone down. I don't think it's necessarily parents fault but I think there's a lot of times when parents are having kids too young and they don't know any better, or they haven't been provided with the proper skills. Maybe it's just because of the demands of today's society...you have parents trying to work two or three jobs and they're not there to support their children or be in their children's lives enough and their children are not being parented properly.

Another participant when asked about gun violence, revealed that with “some decent parenting a lot of that can be avoided”. There seemed to be a consensus that somehow parents were responsible for delinquent youth that become involved in gun violence. Some participants blamed systemic issues, which did not allow parents to actively parent and teach their children. Others recognized that barriers exist that make parenting more difficult (i.e. single parent homes, low-income homes where parents have to work multiple jobs to make ends meet). However, they still held parents responsible for ensuring that their children are raised to be positive contributing members to society. One participant revealed his thoughts regarding parenting responsibilities in single parent homes:

Moving on to single parent homes, again, [they] can't say it's an excuse, 'cause you're not with the mother, or because the mother is not with the father, doesn't mean you can't still look after your child. It's still your responsibility to make sure that they're straight and not messing up. That doesn't change because of your martial status.

Another participant contributed this thought:

My mom raised me by herself. She made sure I had everything, and she was on top of me all the time. You have to work is not an excuse to not watch your kids. I've seen people out in clubs when their babies are at home by themselves...then people wonder why their kids grow up and go to jail. Some people have two parents and they still don't have it together. If parents loved and respected their kids, they'd put the time into raising them. They would raise them right. They'd teach them, teach them right from wrong. If your parents do that then you won't need to shoot somebody. Well you might still get involved for whatever reason, but the more broughtupsy (manners) you have the less likely you will be to go out and shoot someone or rob them or do something stupid.

The participants believe that poor parenting is a contributing factor to gun violence in Scarborough. As mentioned, they have identified many reasons why parents have a difficult time raising kids. Many participants believe that systemic factors (racism, classism and other systemic pressures) could be a burden on parents. The following section will highlight many systemic issues discussed during the interviews.

Gun Violence: A Systemic Problem

A common theme throughout the seven interviews was the systemic barriers that Blacks face. Participants described the multiple and interlocking oppressions encountered by Blacks and the systems that work against Blacks as key factors of gun violence in the Black community. One participant expressed this point by saying:

I think it's a systemic thingI've learned a lot about like the struggle and the background towards why people, like why people are in certain are as in their life that they are. A lot of this [gun violence] is obviously systemic, from being like in the different systems that we have, which whether it be, school, legal, the education system...and to be honestly a coloured youth or even immigrants coming to Canada trying to get through that system, is a very, very hard thing to do.

Specifically, the interviewees discussed the discrimination Black youths faced in the educational system, legal system and the job market as especially problematic.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees felt that the discrimination Blacks encountered was internalized, thus leading to self-hatred, and subsequently Black on Black crimes.

Educational System.

Ontario's education system was a hot topic for many of the participants. Many of the participants indicated a strong belief that systems such as the schocabol system are failing young people, especially Black youth. Discrimination and barriers faced by Black youth within the school system were seen to be leading to serious problems within the Black community. This has commonly been referred to as the “educational crisis” within the Black community (Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning, 1994). The participants identified three major concerns with the education system, which may lead to gun violence: The Safe Schools Act, the streaming of youth and the lack of Afrocentric course work.

First, some of the participants believe that the Safe Schools Act disproportionately affects Black youth. The Safe Schools Act was passed into law in 2000 (Ministry of Education, 2006). According to the Ministry of Education (2006), the aim of the Safe Schools Act is to increase safety, respect and responsibility in schools in Ontario. The legislation is often referred to as a policy of 'zero tolerance' because it imposes mandatory consequences: teachers can suspend students for a day, principals have the authority to suspend students for up to 20 days or enforce a limited expulsion, and school boards can impose full expulsions after a hearing (Ministry of Education, 2006). Many of the participants expressed concern about this legislation because they believe that it is disproportionately used on Black students. One of the participants stated:

It's basically, honestly like, the Safe School Act was designed to keep and to, and to filter out Black youth, you know, and that's what it comes down to. And when you look at it, when you see all the drop out rates, or the kids that are being suspended and expelled from school, you'll see a significant amount of Black youth being expelled, being suspended.

Although there are no statistics by race kept on school discipline, this participant's views are supported by research findings that suggest that Black students and students with disabilities are disproportionately suspended and expelled from schools. Wortley and Ruck (2002) have extensively studied the issue of racial profiling in Toronto. In their study in 2002, they investigated the perception of discrimination in Toronto high schools and determined that minority students, in particular Black students, were more likely than white students to perceive discrimination with respect to teacher treatment, suspensions and use of police by school authorities. Kathleen Wynne (Pieters, 2003), a Toronto area

school trustee who sits on the expulsion hearing board, suggests that their perceptions may be reality, as she observes a disproportionate amount of expulsion hearings for Blacks (particularly males). Research by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) (2005), found that 80% of students at expulsion hearings were Black students. Furthermore, Yuen (2005) has established that in Toronto, seven of the nine schools with the highest documented suspension rates for 2002-2003 were schools with large Black student populations.

Many of the participants indicated that a direct result of the fact that Black students disproportionately face suspensions and expulsions was that they would also be disproportionately involved in gun violence because they would be unsupervised during school hours. In addition, it was stated that many of them would not graduate from high school so they would have less opportunities. One participant revealed her disgust with the Safe Schools Act by stating:

I feel like that this whole zero tolerance thing that came into play, I think it negatively impacted the situation [Black youth and gun violence] cause, there are a lot of kids that have problems or, you know, it could be learning deficiency, or it just have gone through things and they're like they need help. They need to be counseled through it and instead of taking these kids in and trying to find out what's the problem is we're expelling them and suspending them and throwing them outside of school and putting them on the street and they have nothing else to do. Like, what are you going to do if you're a 15 year old kid and you're not allowed to go to school, you know what I mean? Like what are you going to do?

You're obviously going to start running with the wrong crowd because those are the only other people that are not in school. That's when you're going to pick up a gun and get in trouble.

It has been proven that punitive strategies are not necessarily beneficial to young people, especially youth at risk. As the previous participant indicated, some of these at risk youths need counseling or other means of support. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, a report from Harvard University, "Opportunities Suspended: The Devastating Consequences of Zero Tolerance and School Discipline Policies" provides evidence that zero tolerance policies have not reduced violence in schools. The report suggests "it [The Safe Schools Act] conflicts with the healthy developmental needs of children, particularly students at-risk; there are long-term detrimental consequences for the child" (cited in OHRC, 2005).

Pieters (2000) reveals some of the reasons that these types of policies may be so harmful: "Overt reliance on punitive disciplinary techniques may in fact have a disproportionate negative impact on the students they are designed to help. Such policies may make the school climate ridden with fear, unsafe, intimidating, alienating and impersonal and might also have the effect of pushing students out of school or fostering school drop outs". As indicated above by some of the participants, they feel that when kids are pushed out of school they are more likely to become involved with gun violence, and the evidence illustrates that policies such as the Safe Schools Act may contribute to pushing kids out of school. It became evident after listening to the interviewees that they believe the school system is racist and oppressive and it is a system, which is "pushing kids towards violence".

Streaming.

In addition, some of the participants believed that the streaming of Black youth into general programs might be a contributing factor to gun violence in Scarborough. Streaming is a phenomenon which places students into non-academic level courses/programs such as general, basic or vocational (African Legal Clinic, 2002). The African Legal Clinic proposes, "The practice [of streaming] is highly racialized as stereotypes about students' abilities influences the streams into which students are placed" (2002). One of the participants discussed the effects of streaming:

I can probably give you names of at least 10 people who have been told by teachers, like if they weren't strong minded they wouldn't be where they were because teachers have told them you know, don't take this class, take this class, don't take advance in high school, take general. You know they'll give you there reason and make it sound like it's a good move for them, you're in grade 9, you're 14, you take a general course and then when you're in grade 11, you wanna go to University, you realize that you can't go, cause you don't have the advance classes for that. Of course if they wanna go to University they may need extra help for those classes, but teachers persuade them to take general but not tell them that if they take general this is going to affect your whole life.

As revealed by the previous participant, the consequence of being streamed out of advanced level courses is likely to make it very difficult for a student to be able to attend a recognized university. The literature indicates that those without a university degree work in lower paying and lower status jobs (African Legal Clinic, 2002). Many of the

participants made the connection between not attending universities, receiving lower paying jobs and consequently becoming involved in gun violence. One participant suggested:

All of my friends that didn't go to school, they either dropped out of high school or never went to college. Those people, they can't get a good job. When you can't get a good job, what would you rather do...get involved with a gang and bad things, or work at McDonalds. Obviously that's when they get involved with guns and stuff. But, if they had the chance to stay in school, if they could have finished or could have got help, they'd be in a more successful or a more, a more, productive job. These teachers think they're doing good when they take away our opportunities, but they are making everything worse.

Lack of Afrocentric course material.

Finally, some participants identified the lack of Afrocentric course material as a concern, which may lead to criminal activity including gun violence. One participant quoted the legendary Marcus Garvey by saying "If you don't know where you're coming from, you won't know where you're going". Afrocentric theory supports the importance of Black history and a current understanding of the Black community (Schiele, 2000). Without this understanding, it is believed that we cannot prevent or solve problems such as gun violence (Schiele, 2000). More than half of the participants suggested that gun violence was a result of Black youth not understanding the struggles of their predecessors

and they agreed that this was mostly, if not totally due to a lack of Black History and Afrocentric education in mainstream schools. One participant illustrated this by stating:

We don't learn about, what really, what the Black community has really been through. Like people don't know there was slavery in Canada, they think Canada was this big like, oh yeah, oh all the slaves came here and they were free, they were set free, people don't about Africville back in Nova Scotia. They don't know about, they don't even know the real deal, they don't even know that at one point in time, like back in the day, African like Black people ruled the world, and they don't know these things, cause we're not taught, and it's kept in these little vaults, like the teachers lounge, cause people don't want the books to be out.

Similar to this participant, other interviewees wondered if there was a conspiracy to keep knowledge about Black history away from the Black community. Another participant expressed his frustration with mainstream curriculum:

I remember grade 9 history, they had like half a page, it was called "Blacks in Canada", (laughing), and then we had everything about Americans, American history they're teaching us in Canadian history. Just like 2 pages on the natives, I feel sorry for them as well 'cause it's their country as well. We learned everything about what happened in England and France, all of those guys, like Jacques Cartier. Which is fine to learn and everything, but I'm a Black man, you're reading history as a young Black male and you don't see yourself then automatically you're thinking that Black people aren't in history. It's not good, it's not a good

feeling...it's demoralizing. And usually in Scarborough classes are majority white, or when I was growing up they were majority white, so you're sitting in class full of white people and you're reading about white people and you're not hearing nothing about Black people. I know there were Black people here from time in Windsor and Nova Scotia when slavery was over. So you're reading history, you don't see no Black people in history books, teachers aren't paying no attention and they're trying to push you into these classes, basically what happens when you're 14, 15, 16 is going to determine your adulthood, but most people don't know that, they don't see that far.

Another participant agreed that there is a lack of Black history and Afrocentric curriculum in schools. She feels that the educational system is failing Black youth and that gun violence is directly linked to Black youth not understanding their history. She suggested:

All we learn about, if you think about history in school, all we learn about is like the Romans, and we learn about like and medieval times and we learn about the dark ages, the dark ages where, like everything just perpetuated to like, to not include Black people. So like meanwhile, while all of these things were happening in Europe and all of these things, and when you think about it, all of these things that we're taught in school only happened in the 1400's up... what were the Black people doing, like they were being savages in Africa? What were they doing, you know, and the whole point of the fact is...if we knew, I think it comes back to cultural

education, I think if they knew that [Black history] it would be empowering too, to be able to say no to that gun violence.

Dei (1996) reveals that it is very rare that Black students see positive representations of their reality and he believes the way Black students connect their identity to schooling is paramount in understanding their disengagement from school. Many of the participants identified youth being unsuccessful in school or dropping out of school as a cause of gun violence. Combining their opinions with Dei's research (1996), it seems as if a lack of Black history leads to students being detached from school and this disconnection from school might result in a higher probability of a youth becoming involved with gun violence.

Racism and the legal system.

The second structural factor identified by many of the participants as oppressive for Black youth was the legal system. They believed that negative encounters with the criminal justice system could be contributing to gun violence in Scarborough. Many of the participants believe that Blacks are over policed in Scarborough. One participant suggested that [we have] "a police force that is designed to target the Black community". Many feel that those in power construct laws specifically to put Blacks at a disadvantage so to maintain their powerful position within society. This was demonstrated through the comments of one of the participants:

When I was in high school people used to go to movies on the streets at night, cheap movies and hang out. I remember in high school they made a law, like an official law in the government, that any more than three

people congregating together is considered a gang and they can break it up. And that's a made up law right there, so then if you're in the mall hanging out, more than three people the police can say, you've gotta move on or you can get charged with trespassing. Rich people/the powers that be, make the laws, to protect their interest or outta being scared.

The same participant expressed that oppressive and discriminatory laws are created to allow the dominant class to hold their positions of power. He believes that this could lead to gun violence because individuals commit petty crimes, which in his opinion lead to larger crimes like gun violence. He suggested, "It's a cycle, once you get caught up in the system you stay in the system." This belief is very similar to those who oppose strategies like Broken Windows. Some participants seem to favor a strategy similar to that of San Francisco, which adopted less harsh policing practices, reduced arrest, prosecution and incarceration rates yet still managed to decrease crimes (Centre on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2002; Wikipedia, 2006). One participant believes that this strategy would be more successful because criminalizing youth by bringing them into the criminal justice system for petty crimes such as hanging out with friends in a group of more than three will lead to further criminal acts. When asked why he believes this is the case, he responded:

Like I said, it's all a cycle... once you get caught up in certain things and then you see that path, basically the bottom line is that most people involved in gun violence have nothing to lose. They have nothing to lose based on their life up to that point...if they got a record when they were like 16, 17 for whatever reason, they feel like fuck it, if I take this gun and

rob this bank and get the money then I'm good and if I get caught then what, cause I have nothing to lose.

Another participant also believes that once a young person becomes involved in the criminal justice system they are more likely to continue down a path towards gun violence. She believes that this is because of the lack of rehabilitation programs afforded to inmates:

We have a legal system that is, that is designed to put people in jail and do what with them? Just keep them in a cell and feed them, and let them just think about what they did. There's no room for anybody to be educated about, about, like what's going, about what's, about how to get, to become, to get to where they want to be.

Most of the interviewees seemed to agree that racial profiling, over policing, and discriminatory practices with the legal system exacerbate the issue of gun violence in Scarborough. Many participants seemed to think that being “tough on crime and cracking down on youth”, only seemed to push them into more criminal activities. Some believe as previously mentioned, that once young people get caught up in the system they have nothing to lose and will become involved in more serious criminal activities. Others seem to think it is due to a lack of rehabilitation resources within our criminal justice system. In addition, some participants suggested that youth who have negative experiences in the criminal justice system are more likely to become involved in gun violence because they lose respect for the law. This point is illustrated in the comments of one of the respondents:

I don't understand why the cops continue to harass and bother our community. Why don't they just leave Blacks alone? Don't they understand that the more they follow us, the more they pull us over, the more they arrest us for no reason, the more they throw us in jail, we will hate them more; and not just the police, but the law. We will hate the law. Who wants to live by a law, by a law that continues to persecute us? This law puts us down, it makes us secondary....but then they expect us to follow it....does this make any sense?

The previous statement illustrates two concepts. First, it highlights the 'belief' factor from the social control theory, which indicates that people are more likely to become involved with delinquent behaviour if they do not have a respect for the law. In this case, the interviewee reveals that continuous discrimination will cause people to lose respect for the law and thus be more prepared to break it. In addition, one can see how oppression and discrimination by a system can affect individuals and communities and can consequently lead to gun violence.

Unemployment and a lack of opportunities.

All interviewees expressed a consensus that unemployment and a lack of opportunities afforded to the Black community was at least in part responsible for gun violence in Scarborough. A general theme was that Black people in particular do not have the same opportunities as other races. One participant claimed, "the opportunities for Black people to work is very limited...it's harder for Black people to, to have a fair chance for example as Whites, or Chinese". He and many other participants believe that

the lack of opportunity afforded to Blacks often leads to Blacks trying to make money through illegal means and subsequently getting involved with gun violence. One participant revealed this when she said “Black men that don't have opportunities turn to gangs”. Another participant recounted how difficult it is for immigrant Blacks in Canada who are denied opportunities in Canada and might subsequently be forced into criminal activity. She suggests, “They are like doctors back home, they come here and they're made to be like factory workers or like taxi cab drivers...you see these educated people do this because according to Canadian standards they're not good enough”. Another participant had this to say about the lack of opportunities of Blacks in Scarborough:

They won't let us work, and they complain when we hang out on the streets like all day. They won't let us get money for our family and they complain when we go on welfare. They don't want us to go on welfare but then we get a gun and rob someone and they say to us - why didn't you just work or get social help, like social assistance... My mom used to say, ‘they shoot we in the foot and then they want to ask why we limping’ ... Of course, people are going to get involved in gun violence or crime if you don't let them do anything else.

The participants all revealed that the continuous systemic discrimination experienced by Blacks in Scarborough is directly tied to gun violence. As seen by the previous quote, many of the interviewees felt strongly that individuals were forced into gun violence due to the lack of opportunities for them to be successful and earn an honest living.

Discrimination and internalized hatred.

Many of the participants not only identified oppression as being problematic, but they also felt that once that discrimination was internalized, it could lead to larger problems such as gun violence. One participant questioned, “Why do we internalize it [racism] towards ourselves?”. Another participant discussed how internalizing racism and discrimination could lead to crime:

We constantly are made to feel bad. We're like the evil ones, the enemy. When they don't listen or they don't accept us, you know, like we're not a part of them. We don't want to be a part of them, but we don't want them to tell us that we can't be a part of them. And even though we should know better, we let them get to us, and they make us feel bad and not as good, or not worthy, you know? So then when we see another person...another Black person, we see that Black person as the enemy, cause Black is bad, right? So they make us feel bad about ourselves and then when we are shooting another Black person, we're shooting ourselves, cause we don't feel good about who we, who we are.

Another participant echoed this point when he indicated that gun violence is caused by self-hate in the Black community. He said:

When it comes to gun violence, that's a whole other situation; that's self-hate right there. A lot of people who are involved in gun violence, it's way deeper cause, like I said again, it starts from when you're young. It's self hate, you don't like yourself, so it's someone else who looks like you, you're going to do them harm. So things might happen that you would

normally let it slide but, it's, it's another Black man so you're going to want to try to exact that revenge, and then once one shot gets fired, it's a cycle, 'cause then people are going to come back and their friends and family it just goes on and on. So I think it has to do with self-hate which again, stems from, your young, grade one, grade 2, grade 3, how you're treated in schools and what you're learning about yourself.

While this participant declares that gun violence is a result of self-hate, and self-hate is initiated in schools and what you learn about yourself, other participants believe that self-hate or internalized racism also stems from negative encounters with other systems such as social agencies, the legal system, the immigration system and just general racism inflicted by other citizens.

In conclusion, numerous causes to gun violence were identified by the participants of this study. They placed responsibility mostly in three areas: the individual, families and the systems that Blacks encounter. Many of the causes identified by the participants are consistent with various theoretical approaches including but not limited to, Afrocentric theory, anti-oppressive theory, social control theories, labeling theory and rational choice theory.

Chapter 6: Moving Away from Gun Violence

In the previous chapter, it was determined that the participants believe that the causes of gun violence lie with individuals, families, and broader social structures. However, when asked about potential solutions to gun violence the participants did not identify specific changes required by individual community members. Instead, the participants suggested interventions that may be beneficial to families, the Black community and to larger systems which influence Blacks.

Solutions to Gun Violence: Addressing Family Concerns

As seen in the previous chapter, some participants believed that families are at least partially responsible for youth becoming involved in gun violence. It was therefore not surprising that when asked about potential interventions to prevent gun violence, many of the participants once again focused on the family. One participant responded to the question of whose responsibility it is to end gun violence by suggesting, “I’d say the people pulling the triggers but, that starts from an early age, first and foremost, their value system, so how they grew up, what their parents have taught them, their extended family.”

Some participants agreed that the families needed to play a role in preventing gun violence and they believed that there should be more support available for parents. For example, one participant commented:

If you want gun violence to stop, you need to work in a preventive way. You need to work with families. They need more support. More financial support, and more support with raising kids. If parents had more money, they could afford proper babysitters and might even have more time with their kids cause ... they wouldn't be ... working three jobs to support their family. Also, so many kids are having babies real young, they are...babies having babies and they don't know how to...take care of a kid and like teach them...right and wrong. We need to have support for these young girls, they need to have someone help them raise their kids. They just need more support man.

Another participant also agreed that families need more support. She suggested that more parenting classes be available to help young people raise children. She revealed:

think we should have more parenting classes, I think parenting classes should be made mandatory for anybody who's going to have a baby, I think, I think, people have lost the art of parenting, they rely on TV and TV has bad messages.

Another participant also believed that more support was needed for parents, and that the larger extended family should get involved in raising children. He conveyed this by saying:

Some parents, they, they do the best that they can. They work lots of jobs, and they try to spend time with their kids you know. But they need help. Like I said before, the government needs to step up and put more money

into childcare and parenting programs to help out these parents, cause some of them are tired, and they, they just like don't have any more to give and they need help. You know what? It's not just the government, like their own families, like Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandma, Grandpa, everyone needs to come together for the young ones. Like people say, it takes a community or a village to like brings up a kid. So everyone needs to be involved. If Dad is not in the picture, we need Uncle to be involved. And you social workers and community workers and stuff, you guys need to work to bring families together and the families need to work to come together so that they can all be there for the kids. If the kid does not have anyone, then they're going to run the streets. But if we form a loving like network for these kids, then, then, they can go down a brighter path. So we need to bring families together and support the entire family.

While many participants seemed to think that the government or social workers or someone else needed to help parents and families raise children, others thought that the parents or families themselves needed to simply step up and do a better job raising young people. One participant said:

Parents need to stop trying to be the kid you know, I'm hearing, I hear a lot of stories about parent [who] leave their children and go out to party and...something happens I mean, I think, I think a lot of it has to do with refusing to grow up, people need to take time to look at things for what, for what's going on. Parents can't expect that someone else is going to teach their kids right from wrong....it's the parents responsibility to instill

proper values in their child and show that that having a gun is not the right thing. Parents need to step up and start parenting if we want this thing [gun violence] to end.

Some participants made it clear that gun violence could be reduced or even eliminated if families were supported in raising children and given the tools to mold children into successful pro-social members of society. Others believed that it was up to parents to “grow up” and be more responsible for their children. While they may have had varying opinions on whose responsibility it is to ensure that parents and families are successful in raising children, they all agreed that significant changes are required at the level of the family in order to prevent or eliminate gun violence.

Solutions to Gun Violence: Addressing Concerns within the Black Community

Along with family interventions, interviewees also thought that the changes in the Black community were also necessary to combat gun violence in Scarborough. The participants offered many suggestions related to the Black community uniting in order to fight gun violence. One participant suggested that it was up to the Black community to educate the youth and instill a sense of pride in them:

It's the responsibility of the [Black] community to be able to educate their own, to educate you know the people, their youth that are coming up, to be able to know that they are capable of many many, many different things. To be able to say, you can do whatever you put your mind to, you know, and honestly, it just comes down to that. Like if a child grows up knowing that they can do anything that they want, they will not stop at getting

kicked out of school. And they will not stop at, like, at seeing a system that is completely trying to tear them down cause they'll know that they're better than that, you know, and that's where a lot of this comes down to.

The same participant also called for the Black community to become more politically active in order to combat gun violence. She suggests, "It also comes down to the community being able to take back places in government". Another participant echoes this point:

Black people need to do something for themselves. We can not just sit back and expect that [Counselor] Raymond Cho or like [Counselor] Norm Kelly are going to do anything for us. If this is a Black problem, then Blacks need to get involved at the, at a level that matters...that level is in government. We need to become more politically active so that we can change laws, we can make sure that those who need support like get what they need and we can do something and not just sit around and complain that nothing is being done. These political people don't care about Black people, ask Kayne who said...Bush doesn't care about Black people. Well our government doesn't care about us either and the only way that we can make changes to benefit us is to step up and do it ourselves. My Dad always says, if you want something done, you need to do it yourself....Black people need to step up and become involved in politics if they want something done.

Many of the participants expressed strong beliefs that the Black community should come together and take responsibility for the actions of their youth since they feel

that nobody else is taking steps to improve the situation of gun violence in Scarborough. An interviewee comments, “Obviously people at City Hall aren’t doing it for us, people at, in Ottawa aren’t doing it for us, there’s nothing coming from those place to, to be able to say yes our government backs us up.”

There was consensus that there is a lack of support for the Black community and their issues. However, some participants also felt that there was a lack of support for youth within the Black community and that the Black community needs to start to support each other, especially their youth. One participant observed that other communities come together and support each other, but felt that the Black community did not always do that. He said:

Ok, so we said that a lot of people get involved in gun violence cause they need to get money. For whatever reason, they need money, it could be food, for their kids, for their rent. So they have to go out and sell drugs, rob, or kill to get money, to survive. But why can’t they just go open a store like Chinese people or other races? Easy....cause nobody is going to support it. You see other races, they only shop at stores owned by their own, they’ll go there because someone from their race owns the store. They help each other. Black people almost do the opposite. They see a Black person trying to be successful and instead of helping them out, they’re going to complain that they can get it cheaper at Walmart or like somewhere else.... I don’t understand why but we just don’t support each other and then we wonder why our people are killing and shooting.... We

need to start supporting each other and helping out fellow Black, that's how this stupid thing [gun violence] is going to end.

Another participant also noted that Blacks seem to have a difficult time working together and in fact he believes that there is even self-hatred within the Black community. He suggests:

I think that the main thing would be if we could just manage to get all of the whatever it is between us, the hate, the hatred and be able to come together as one big unit and try to heal our own community first before we try to venture into others that way we can, we'll be stronger as a whole.

He also had the following to say about what the Black community could do to end gun violence:

I think we can, as I said, there's the whole thing about working together. If we can actually get everybody, people who are struggling, people who are involved in the violence and people who aren't involved in the violence, to just work together... You can have like meetings and say you know what; we're doing this to our own selves, and have examples of what we can do...If we could have generally more ways to get everybody to participate in things. So whether we have this organization of a fun day or something like that, or we go out and say ok, lets have a BBQ or some sort of obstacle game or something, or we're going to paint a house today or something, where everybody gets a sense of gratification or reward out of it, and it's just the more positive things that are portrayed on our community that might be better

Some interviewees also felt that a part of coming together involved having strong leadership within the Black community, which includes, mentoring and supporting Black youth. One participant agreed that the Black community needs to support each other and she thought that a valuable strategy to combat gun violence would be peer support, and commented that, “[Black] youth should be educating other Black youth against gun violence”. Another participant called for mentorship and positive leadership. She felt that Black leaders spent a lot of time calling out the Black youth and not supporting them in trying to make better decisions. She had this to say about the role the Black community should play in ending gun violence:

Successful [Black] people in the community should go back and help those who are less fortunate...Like, big sister, big brother programs, like provide an example for them [youth]. You know, maybe all of their parents can't be there and they need someone to provide, to be example ...and help and guide, mold, and motivate them in the right direction. Move them in the right direction, and also be supportive and like not point fingers... If, the Black community doesn't stand up for the Black community, who else is going to? ...If the Black community, if the leaders in the Black community speaking out against these people, and in a negative way, how is, how is anyone else going to stand up for them?

Another participant also saw a need for leadership within the Black community:

I think that gun violence is a crisis. Just like slavery, I think we need to have something like the civil rights movement. The problem is, we don't have a Martin Luther King or even a Malcolm X...we need to have strong

Black leadership, someone to show us the way, a better way, not the violent way. And even if we don't have Black leaders like Martin Luther King, we could still have leaders on a, on a smaller scale. Like what about a Black teacher, or a Black parent, or you know what about Black people in the community who own a business or something. Everyone, just kind of does their own thing, but some of these strong Black people need to start speaking out and guiding the youth coming out. And helping the Youth get involved in their community or something.

Similarly, another participant saw a need for guiding young people:

What the Black community can do about gun violence is help the youth...not call them out and make them feel worthless. They can tutor them in school, or how about even just setting a good example? They can look out for youth in their neighbourhood who may have absent parents and show them right from wrong. We wait until something goes down....when something goes down we speak out against it.... Why not be there for the youth, be there before something goes down, you know?

To one participant, good leadership in the Black community meant standing up against violence and reporting it. It was also a way that she personally could contribute to solving the problem. She suggests, "I think peers, people need to stand up and speak out against it [gun violence], report it, you know? Report it! I think that's sometimes all you can do. Reporting it could be something simply I could do for my community". The two participants, who were considered youth leaders within the Black community, also both felt that they had personal responsibilities in helping to end violence.

When asked about his role in preventing gun violence, the seasoned Hip Hop artist had this to say:

People will listen to what I'm saying, they may not take my advice and do what I'm saying but some people that listen to what I'm saying, and as long as you're listening, and like they say, as long as you change one persons life then you're good to go. You know, all it takes is one person, but they're gonna listen. They may not follow what I say, but they're going to listen to what I'm saying, and then it's up to them again, so it's like another person in their ear, telling them, you know, this is right, this is wrong, if you do this, this is what's going to happen, if you do this, this is what could happen, there's no absolutes. And when I get bigger on a bigger scale, then it's even going to be better for the Black community as a whole and young people coming up. Cause then the more people that hear me the more, the more people I have to listen and share my knowledge with, my knowledge and my wisdom.

According to one established youth leader and activist, her role is to encourage new youth leaders and provide support to them so that they can also be successful in getting an anti-violence message out to today's Black youth:

Being a youth that does activism work, I think, for my, for my point of view ...I can only help support those who are trying to make those movements who are trying to support youth in what they're doing. Everyday I go to Toronto Youth Cabinet, I have a youth coming up to me saying I have this idea, I want to do this and this and this, and I completely

support them until their goal is set. Cause I'm empowering, cause that is what I do in a everyday basis for all of the organizations that I work for, whether it be for METRAC or whatever the hell I'm doing, it's my goal to empower them to the point where they can do whatever the hell they want to do.

She continued to explain how she supports youth by helping to give them opportunities to have a voice:

so if they have this project that they think would be beneficial to them and to anybody else, I find them the funding, I find them ways to get around to do those things, like, I'm there to help them to get to where they want to be, you know, I'm going to support them,. They'll call me up if they have a problem, they'll call me up and say...this is what I have to do, what should I do, how should I get to that point, and I'll let them go with it and I'll let them do it for themselves, because that's empowering them to get to where they want.

Similar to the Hip Hop artist, she also believed that helping one person could benefit many. She suggests, "As a youth leader to stop gun violence I think that, that's honestly, I think that's a big step...if you can get to one person, that one person will get to one person and it'll be an ongoing cycle of everybody just finding out."

The participants were in consensus that the Black community has a significant role to play in ending gun violence. Some believed this role was necessary because of a lack of support from individuals outside of the Black community. In contrast, others expressed the view that the Black community in Scarborough fails to support each other

and that needs to change in order for gun violence to cease with the community. Many participants identified the value of the development of Black leadership in the fight against gun violence. The participants who are considered youth leaders within the Black community agreed and thought that they in particular had an important role to play in ending gun violence.

Solutions to Gun Violence: Examining Systemic Barriers

The majority of the solutions suggested by the interviewees were related to systemic concerns in Scarborough. Therefore, while many of the participants thought that individual problems caused gun violence they also believed that the solutions to gun violence lie with the larger community. As one participant claimed, “Society breeds its own criminals. I mean no one comes from Mars and is a criminal, you’re brought up here”. In other words, the society creates situations that lead people into criminality and gun violence and in order to resolve the problem of gun violence we need to address the system issues in larger community of Scarborough. The participants suggested that changes be made with respect to the government, the education system and the legal system. The interviewees also identified community development as essential and that social workers should play a role in preventing gun violence. In addition, participants shared their opinions on how religion and spirituality might play an important role in the problem of gun violence in Scarborough.

The Government.

All of the respondents were consistent in their opinion that government should play a key role in working towards a solution to gun violence in Scarborough. One participant expressed “I think the government needs to step up, I think the government needs to step up and change policies”. Many interviewees highlighted systems that need to be readdressed such as the education system and the legal system, and felt that they should be addressed at the levels of municipal, provincial or federal government. One participant commented:

There are so many problems, which lead to gun violence, and there are so many areas, which we can improve to stop gun violence. But the power to make those improvements and changes is with the government, whether it be Toronto Government, Ontario government or the big wigs in Parliament. They can change schools, they can change laws, they can give more money for preventative programs....they can do so much, yet they do so little.

Some participants felt the government needed to give more power to parents and “revise their position on discipline and spanking” in order to prevent gun violence. Others thought that the government’s role includes funding social programs. One participant felt that members of the government have the power to make significant changes which could reduce gun violence but he believed that they were too far removed from communities such as Scarborough to recognize what needs to be done. He suggested:

The Prime Minister and government people should come [to Scarborough] ... actually come and spend time themselves with ... the troubled people or the people that need help. If they do work with them, and literally get their hands dirty and they spend their time, then maybe that might give them a sense of the community and the problems. People may start feeling that they do somewhat care about us because they're actually here saying we're actually going to help you as opposed to sitting there doing nothing and we never see anything from them. I think experiencing what is actually going on would probably be your best learner, because you know exactly what is going on and then you would learn better on what needs to be done.

As previously mentioned, most participants felt that government was responsible for making changes with the educational system and the legal system as well as funding social programs. The following sections will examine in more depth their thoughts on these topics.

The Education System.

Many participants thought that one of the causes of gun violence was the so-called failing education system in Ontario and that changes to the educational system were required to solve the problem of gun violence. One participant pointed out that schools need to play a large role in preventing gun violence because they have the ability to play a large role in the lives of kids. Another participant highlighted the classroom

learning and material, teaching, and educational policy as areas, which could be altered to benefit the community and reduce gun violence.

Some participants, for example, felt that changes were necessary to the current curriculum. One participant made this comment, “if you change the curriculum it would be better, change the whole school curriculum, history classes, what you teach”. Many participants feel that the educational curriculum should accurately reflect their history.

One participant pointed this out when she said:

If you make the school work something that they can relate to, like if it's not all about white people and you can see how the, the contributions of Blacks are, than kids might want to go to school. The government, the teachers, the school board people, they can all start making sure that classrooms are teaching kids something that they can relate to. Like did you hear about the Black school in Toronto that's going to be teaching math by using statistics on racial profiling...by the police. Our culture and our experiences can be put into the classrooms in all courses not just history. Maybe then Black people will study harder and be in school instead of on the, you know, on the street or something.

Many participants agreed that schools need to alter course material; however, some believed that schools should go one step further and provide completely different educational opportunities from classroom learning. One participant put forth the following idea:

Give them [youth] alternatives, if they don't want to be in school, a lot of people don't need to be in school. It's not their pathway you know,

there's a lot of trademanships, there's a lot of apprenticeships that you can go to, things that don't require you to be the educated kid

Another participant acknowledged that some alternative programs are available in Toronto schools but believes that there should be more and that they should be more accessible. She had this to say about alternative programs:

Let's have an alternative type of classroom for kids who need it. I know they have some programs like that but they don't have enough and they don't do enough to get those kids in those programs who need those programs. You know what I mean? Identify kid's abilities, like; I think we need more trade schools, in Toronto. You know it must be frustrating for somebody who's not, you know, interested or able to do calculus to have to sit through a calculus course when they really like, I don't know, fixing things or learning how to do, like, you know, trade work, why not have them go to a trade school. Instead of the dropping out and running the streets shooting people. These solutions seem so practical to me.

As well, one of the other participants felt that alternative programs were necessary but he also saw a need for more support within the classroom or specialized programs for those who are having difficulty in regular classrooms. His concern however was the stigmatization of students in Special Classes. He suggested:

I think that maybe if there was, and they had like, Special Ed and stuff that would help. But I don't think everyone wants to be classified as Special Ed, some people just want to be in the normal classroom, and won't go to school if they aren't with the rest of the kids. Maybe have like a teacher in

there or like TAs [teaching assistants] or something like that to come around and do like extra help with students. I think if some students got a little more attention they would stay in school....keeping kids from dropping out is key....when you drop out your choices are limited and that's when you pick up a gun.

Some of the participants also believed that teachers could make a difference when it comes to preventing gun violence. One participant felt very strongly and explained that it was a teacher that led him away from a life of crime:

Some people don't realize how important teachers can be. If you get the right teacher at the right time, you know like they can really be like there for you. They can encourage you to do the right thing. I had a teacher who saw that I was hanging with the bad boys, you know the wrong crowd...he didn't tell my parents or anything, he just got me involved in track and talked to me and let me believe that I could be something, like do something positive and not just get involved with the fast life and the gangs. Teachers have so much power....we need more teachers to use their influence to straighten out the youth.

Another participant also saw the need for more good teachers to become involved. In particular, he noticed that there is a lack of multicultural teachers and he identified a need for more Black teachers to act as role models to youth. He had this to say about what schools could do to prevent gun violence:

They need to hire more Black teachers, cause to be honest and I'm not even, I'm not even being racist, Black people don't listen to White

folks...Blacks feel like what can this teacher, teach me that I don't already know about myself, or what is this teacher going to teach me that can help me apply to what I do in my daily life.

Another participant agreed with this point and, in addition, spoke to the importance of role models:

I think that school need to adjust their hiring practices...ok, so like I said before the main problem here is that Blacks kids are dropping out of school, not finishing school or not doing well in school. So we need to change school to keep them in school and away from guns. So when they finish school they can get a job and they don't end up doing stuff, like bad stuff, you know. So yeah, schools should change who they're hiring. If youth can see Blacks being successful, like being teachers, they can believe that they can do it to [be successful]. But when all we see is white peeps [people], up there teaching, holding those big positions, then we don't have any role models. I think we'd see Black students do a lot better if they had Black teachers supporting them.

In addition to, changes within the classroom and with school staff, many participants pointed out the need to amend school policies. The primary focus of their discussions was on the controversial Safe Schools Act. One participant revealed her thoughts about school policies:

First and foremost, I think that the government needs to rethink their zero-tolerance policy. There have to be better ways of punishing kids than kicking them out of school. This plan is obviously not working,

cause they're leaving school and shooting people on the street. I think we should go back to in-school suspensions, giving kids more homework, and finding out why they did whatever they did, you know, getting to the root cause of the behaviour before we give them the boot. But this zero tolerance, all it does is kick Black kids out of school, Black more than anyone else, and it needs to go.

Another participant has a rather radical idea for a replacement of the Safe Schools Policy.

She had this to say:

I think that we should have the opposite to zero tolerance. We should have complete tolerance. You know what I mean?....like kids should get multiple and multiple chances, they should never be removed to school. They should speak to people like you, like social workers, they should see guidance counselors; they should go to a shrink if they need to, but kids need to be in school. I think the whole zero tolerance policy is a waste of time and I think that it really hurts kids. Well maybe not all kids, but Black kids....I say lets scrap zero tolerance and teach kids that we don't give up on them cause they make a stupid mistake.

The participants had many interesting and thoughtful ideas with respect to changes to the educational system. These ideas ranged from hiring more Black teachers to abolishing Ontario's current Safe Schools Act. The main theme that was observed throughout the interviews was that the participants felt that changes to the school system were essential to preventing gun violence because for youth, schools are an important and influential part of their lives.

The Justice System.

Along with interventions to the educational system, all of the participants conveyed their conviction of the need for significant change to our legal system. Some participants saw a need for more police training, and others thought that an increase of police officers on Scarborough streets would be beneficial. As well, almost half of the participants felt that changes ought to be made to our written laws.

Many of the participants were of the view that police officers were not adequately trained to combat gun violence in the Black community. Some of them strongly believed that with increased police training, the police would be in a better position to prevent gun violence. One participant conveyed this point:

You have a bunch of white cops running around thinking they know everything and they don't. They don't understand our [the Black] community, They think they can intimidate us and look down on us and bully us and that's going to stop people from committing crimes and from shooting. You gotta be kiddin me. If they think that fear and ignorance is working, look around, look at how many people died this year. I think that police need to start having a better relationship with people in the community and they need to learn about us and our culture. If they understand what people went through, maybe they'd be more sensitive, but all they are doing is making the community more angry and when people get more angry they want to go out and do something about it and

that might be shooting someone. All police should take a course that would teach them about the multicultural diversity of Scarborough.

Another participant thought that police “need to have more youth training”, so they would better be able to relate to the youth that they are trying to serve and protect. As well, many participants felt that the police should not only learn about the communities they work in, but should begin to interact more with the community. One participant suggests, “It shouldn’t be them [the police] against us [the community members], the police should take the initiative to work with the community. Everyone always blames us for not coming forward with information when someone gets shot, but maybe we would if we trusted the police”.

Not only did participants indicate that the police should develop their skills, but they also revealed that an increase in police presence would assist in reducing gun violence. One participant pointed out, “they need more police to be on the streets, more, underground police, more educational like, police giving educational services to the youth of today, trying to basically prevent it, instead of reacting, right now police are reacting as oppose to preventing”. Another participant also believed that police need to be more present in communities and agreed that reaching out to the youth through education would be beneficial. She recommended that:

Police should get out there... and walk the streets and have more of a presence in a non-threatening way. You know, make kids respect police again, I remember when we were kids, and Herbie the little car would come into the schools and we would talk to the cops, it was just fun. You were so in awe of the police and now it’s like, people don’t like the police,

even kids like don't like the police, they go like, ohhh, like I don't like the cops. And you're seeing it at younger ages and I think it's because of police presence, is just so, it's like gone...unless they're responding to something ... you don't see cops in these kind of neighbourhoods.

One of the other participants also thought that increased police presence would deter individuals from getting involved in gun violence and that the police could run more programs to get guns off the street. He questioned:

Do you think someone is going to whip out a gun and shoot someone in front of cop? It don't matter how much people hate cops, the only reason they do these things is cause they can. If Police were around, they couldn't do, they couldn't shoot off guns. If people knew that underground policemen were in clubs...no one would bring guns to a club. No one would do a drive by if a Police was waiting to chase them down. So the solution to gun violence, put cops out on the street, in the malls, in the clubs and wherever people are getting shot. But also, have the police interact with the people so that they can develop a relationship so that when cops aren't around people will report crimes. Cause like, if someone gets shot in like the middle of like a club and no one reports it, then people aren't afraid to shoot up places. But if the people [the community] were on the police side, then you couldn't shoot people in public cause you'd get caught.

The participant suggested a program that he believed could be successful in reducing gun violence:

As well, we need to have more of those safe programs. I can't remember what they're called, but when a man can like bring in a gun and not get charged. That shit works because it gets guns off the street. Now those guns can't be used for shooting someone.

Another participant echoed a similar thought and she said "maybe they should have more programs where they...you know when people like drop off gun...anonymously".

Besides affecting change in policing practices, many of the participants thought that changes to the legal system could also contribute to reducing the amount of gun violence in Scarborough. Some of the participants felt that harsher punishments were required to deter people from committing gun crimes. One participant commented, "they [those who enforce the law] need to be tough on the guilty but fair to all". Another participant when asked how we can reduce gun violence replied, "we need stricter punishments". He continued by explaining his position:

well, for example, if I shoot someone and I'm under 18 and all I know is I'll be getting a couple of years of juvenile detention maybe a house arrest. There's no real, like, it's not going to scare me that I'm going to be going away for a while, it's not like I'm locked up for life and I can't come out. So pretty much I can do what I want and I'll come out in a couple of years anyway...only in very rare circumstances that you'll have someone stay there for a long time

Another participant thought that "... drastic action needs to be taken, I think there needs to be a zero tolerance gun policy, where possession gets you x amount of years and discharging a firearm gets you x amount of years". One of the other participants also

agreed with the idea of stricter punishments for gun crimes and suggested the following when asked about solutions to gun violence:

maybe, stronger punishment could be put into effect... I don't really follow trial law but it always seems like there's something that undermines the system. I think they could be a lot more, I guess more punishing, for people who have... committed violence to people. Make them feel as much [...] pain or something so that they get an idea of what they're doing to other people.

An interviewee not only thought that punishments should be more severe for perpetrators, but in order to reduce gun violence, she believed that gun manufactures should also be held accountable. She insisted:

I think, gun manufacturers, there need to be stricter penalties, on it, on them... I really believe that there are, guns getting on the streets on purpose in some cases, I really believe that. I really believe that, that there's a lack of, regulation in the gun industry, and if gun co-corporations were held responsible for unlawful use of their firearms, believe me, they would find ways to better regulate the sales of their guns

The participants in this study identified police training and an increase of positive police presence on the street as key strategies in reducing gun violence in Scarborough. As well, they believed that harsher punishments and better regulation of firearms could contribute to a safer Scarborough for all.

Program development.

Many of the participants identified a lack of community involvement as a cause of gun violence. Therefore, it was not surprising that participants indicated that any solution to gun violence in Scarborough must involve the government providing more funding for community programs. One participant expressed the view that the government needed to provide more funding to social programs:

I think they [the government] need to... revisit the availability of social programs, and I think they need to boost their recreation, and the Toronto recreation facilities for kids, come on, they need to give kids another option, do you know what I mean, like kids don't have options these days

A participant thought that more clubs, sports, and activities that were open late at night would attract youth. He claimed, "It gives youth another option of something to do, so they're not out on the streets causing problems". Another participant expressed a similar sentiment about the importance of youth involvement:

One of the ways [to solving gun violence] that we need to look into is getting kids into more involved in community work and being able to channel those angers ... you know into something positive...into, you know, things that they can be successful with, in a positive way or a legal way as opposed to the you know, negative things and drugs and guns, et

Likewise, another participant believed that it was important to provide funding for youth program. She added that these programs need to be accessible and she stressed the idea of outreaching to at risk youth:

why don't you [the government] put more money into community development, community programs, community, I don't mean community--- the whole Black community--- I mean like for Scarborough itself. Like put more money into having programs for youth to be able to do, more outreach towards them. Don't expect the youth to come to you, because they won't. Because obviously if they're standing on a corner for example, just randomly, go to them, go and talk to them. Go and let them know, they have these things available to them, and there are a lot of great services around Toronto. Like a lot of people don't know, like there is this huge book it's called the T11 book or something, and it's full of social services for people and they don't even know about. I wouldn't know about that if I didn't work for the organizations that I work for, and I think it's a lot of getting out there and getting outreach towards youth and then empowering them, even for themselves. You know, cause then they'll have the power to say no to what they want to say no to like gun violence.

Participants also saw the value in supporting the community, with respect to youth athletes, youth programs and youth initiatives. Some felt that if young people were "supported they would have a greater respect for their community and would be less likely to get involved in crimes." Other participants simply felt that the government should provide more funding for youth programs because they believed that if youth were involved in their community they would have less time for guns and other negative activities.

Social Workers.

Less than half of the participants saw any value in social workers' abilities to work towards preventing or ending gun violence. One participant thought that social workers were only valuable in working with perpetrators of gun violence after they had really committed a gun crime. Similarly, another interviewee thought that social workers were "reactive instead of proactive".

Conversely, a participant suggested, "Social workers can help alleviate some of the social problems which lead people to get involved with gun violence". When asked how this could be done she replied, "Social workers can help people get jobs, or welfare, or they can work with kids so they don't get kicked out of school, or they can target at risk youth on the street or in groups homes to show them a better way". Another participant agreed that social workers could be valuable in eliminating gun violence:

I think social workers, and like group homes and just things like, like services that are there to support kids, could just commit again to those kids and make sure that they're provided with appropriate assessments and services that they require. Maybe it could change or turn a lot of their lives around, you know. And like, not just fix them but then also you know, like it should be like a, like a long term plan. Like, let's find out the problem, let's solve the problem, ok, let's get you what you like to do, let's get you certified in something, let's get you a job. Like, kinda like this life program, like, get them, start them on the right path to have a successful life, in terms of having a job and being able to support themselves and feel worth something again. I think feeling worthy is a big

thing, kids need to feel worth again, especially in those situations and I think that's where social workers can come in.

There were some obvious differences between the participants concerning the role of the social worker in preventing gun violence. Four participants either had nothing to say about the role of the social worker, or felt that they do not play a significant role in the fight against gun violence. Only three participants identified the importance of social worker in eliminating gun violence.

Religion, Spirituality, and Culture.

When asked if Religion, Spirituality and Culture could contribute to the reeducation of gun violence, the participants were split on the value of religion or spirituality in preventing gun violence, but there was consensus that there is significant value in youth learning about their culture.

Some participants felt that being religious or spiritual would not cause a person to stay away from guns or violence. One participant expressed her view in this way:

my friends that are religious they feel that the things that they do are ok, as long as they pray and they can repent their sins, kinda thing to god. I don't know how that works, you know, they're ok in the end, going to hell is not a big deal, because we're in hell right now, like to them, you know, to them, this is like the ultimate punishment for anything that they've done before.

Another participant voiced similar views: “I know more so called Christians or religious people with guns under their beds than anybody else. They wear their cross while they are shooting their gun. Religion does nothing”.

Some of the participants were neutral to the idea that religion and spirituality could assist in eliminating gun violence. One participant believed that it wasn't the belief in the religion or being spiritual which would deter individuals from picking up guns, instead she felt that being involved with a religion was just another activity to occupy one's time, thus reducing the available time for negative activities. She had this to say when asked if religion and spirituality could reduce gun violence:

It's [religion] is just something else, you know what I mean, whether it be church, whether it be an athletic team, whether it be an athletic course or learning a musical instrument, something else, something to do, something to focus on, something to, to, motivate you, something to keep you busy, something to, you know, something you can be passionate about, would ah, definitely, deter people from participating in violence, you know and, more specifically gun violence...I'm not saying that everybody has to go to church, but I'm saying something, something it has to be something, it has to be something that's there other than the day to day routine, just the something they have to do, just something that's in their life that they're passionate about and they should find it.

Other participants felt very strongly that religion could be an answer to gun violence in Scarborough. When asked about if religion and spirituality could contribute to eliminating gun violence, one participant responded:

...knowing that there's a God and that there's a higher power, whoever your God may be whatever your higher power may be, knowing that there's someone out there that controls what's going on in the environment, and that sees everything. Just knowing that if people actually took the time to say yeah, I believe in god and I know that what goes around comes around, if I do good, good's gonna come back, if I do bad, bad's going to come back. Knowing that is going to prevent a lot of stuff, cause me personally knowing that kept me out of a lot of trouble. And I never followed religion and I was never really into church but I do know that there's a God, a higher power that control and sees everything

Similarly another participant suggested, "In the Christian faith, we have the 10 commandments, you shouldn't kill people is one, maybe if people followed that they wouldn't".

When asked if Black youth would be less likely to get involved with gun violence if they were taught about their culture, the overwhelming response was yes! All participants thought that with more Black history and Black culture taught gun violence would be reduced in Scarborough. One interviewee responded:

of course, cause it gives you a sense of belonging, confirms where you're from and that's always good cause a lot of times your actually doing these things cause you feel like you don't belong, so you're trying to fit in somewhere and that is one way to help, you know

Another respondent echoed this sentiment:

If they [Black youth] knew what Black people before did to get what we have now, like picking cotton, stuff like that. And now we can actually do stuff but I think if they realized ok, now all of those people went through all of this to get into a certain state ... if they realize what they did then they'd say ok, we're going to continue, and you know lets keep barreling and maybe that might help as well. I think if they did, if they were more spiritual and they did follow it and had some more history and knew that the struggle, what it was before to what it is now and I guess the big thing is like actually having an appreciation for it and appreciation for life and stuff like that, I think that would help.

One of the participants agreed with this point by saying, "it all comes back to cultural educations, I think if they [Black youth] knew that, it would be empowering, to be able to say no to gun violence". Another participant put forth a suggestion of how individuals could become more spiritual or learn more about their cultures:

When it comes to spiritually, I get that it can't be in schools really, I get that we can't pray anymore and follow Christianity. But why can't we learn about all religions? Maybe someone would begin following any religion and because of that be less likely to do wrong or pick up a gun. But learning about Black Culture is easy. That can be put into schools, and I don't understand like why it isn't already. In my high school we barely celebrate Black History month. That's an easy solution right there. Or maybe the government could give money to organizations to hold Black cultural classes, just like how we have Chinese school and Greek

school, so that Blacks can identify with their culture and belong somewhere. When we can do that, we might not need to pull a gun on somebody.

In sum, the participants thought of many solutions, which could be very useful in preventing gun violence. They identified various strategies, which could be implemented by government with, respect to funding programs, assisting families, or making policy changes. Some participants felt that if individuals in Scarborough were more religious gun violence might decrease, and all participants felt that teaching Black youth about their history would lead to less involvement in gun violence on the part of Black youth in Scarborough.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

The preceding findings revealed many similarities and consistencies with the existing literature on gun violence. However, the findings also captured the opinion of some Black youth in Scarborough and shed light on various issues that are absent in academic literature. The findings also illustrate how Afrocentric and anti-oppressive perspectives can work together in eliminating gun violence. This Chapter will highlight the extent to which the research findings and the literature reviewed for this thesis can provide new contributions to the fight against gun violence. Moreover, the importance of emphasizing Afrocentric and anti-oppressive approaches will be stressed.

Gun Violence Impacts Blacks in Scarborough

As outlined in the literature review, there is a lack of research on the impact of gun violence on the Black community in Scarborough. It appears that the government, the media, academics and other professionals are preoccupied with simply finding solutions to the problem. According to anti-oppression theory, we need to explore and comprehend the hardships and the oppressions that people face and the structural factors causing them before we can work with them to construct solutions. Thus, it is necessary first to understand the Black community and their feelings and experiences with gun violence before we can work with the community to address this problem. If we fail to see gun violence through the eyes of those whom it directly affects we do not understand the problem, and without a clear understanding of the magnitude and impact of gun

violence on people, we can not possibly construct culturally appropriate solutions to this problem that seems to be plaguing the Black community.

Discussion on the impacts of gun violence on individuals.

Buka et al (2001) suggested that victims of community violence experience three major forms of reactions to gun violence---psychological, social and biological. With respect to psychological reactions, Buka et al (2001) and Garbarino et al. (nd) commented that common psychological effects of violence include post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive symptoms, insomnia, failure in memory, and decreased ability to concentrate. Although not asked directly about psychological effects, none of the participants revealed any psychological concerns in the qualitative interviews despite the fact that almost half of them had been shot or shot at, and all but one of the participants had directly lost a friend because of gun violence. A study by GrantMakers in Health (2003), revealed that Black people, especially Black men are more likely than others not to seek medical attention, to avoid symptoms and to ignore medical (especially psychological) concerns. The absent mention of psychological impacts by the participants could be because they had not actually experienced psychological effects or fear of stigma attached to mental illness might have made them reluctant to disclose these impacts. In addition, participants might be unaware that concerns, such as insomnia, might indicate psychological distress.

Buka et al (2001) and Garbarino et al. (nd) suggested that individuals who have experienced violent situations might experience biological reactions to these situations. These effects can include symptoms of stress such as an increased heart rate, decreased

cortisol levels and chronic sleep disturbance. Although participants were not specifically asked about the biological effects of gun violence, similar to the findings regarding psychological reactions, no participants in this study revealed any biological reactions to violent experiences. Again, the participants might not have experienced related symptoms or not disclosed out of fear of stigmatization or lack of knowledge that associates such symptoms with their experiences of gun violence. As well, many of the participants in this study indicated that when they were exposed to gun violence “it all happened so fast/quickly”. It is quite possible that participants were unaware of their body’s biological responses because of the brief period of time that they were exposed to the violence.

The works of Buka et al (2001), Kastenbaum (2004) and Garbarino et al. (nd) also demonstrate that those who witness violence in the community are likely to experience social effects. Social effects include feelings of anger and isolation, a tendency to become violent or desensitized to violence. Consistent with the previously mentioned studies, the respondents in this research expressed numerous and varied social responses about the gun violence they experienced. Some participants revealed feelings of anger, resentment and disgust at the violence in their community, which was consistent with feelings highlighted in Kastenbaum (2004). Some participants expressed feelings of violation and fear that resulted in the participants altering their life/lifestyles in various ways. For example, some participants explained that they restricted or altered where they went, what activities they participated in, and even where they lived or who they spent time with, out of fear for gun violence. It is thus evident that gun violence has had a

serious impact on the lives of these Black youth in Scarborough as most of them have made drastic changes in order to avoid gun violence.

In addition, Kastenbaum (2004) held that individuals' responses to gun violence could be "indifference". Similarly, in this study participants expressed that they felt "desensitized" to gun violence around them because of their multiple experiences. Buka et al. (2003) suggested that individuals who experience or witness violence repeatedly in their neighborhoods may become desensitized to violence and are thus at risk for engaging in violent acts themselves. As my findings reveal, although many interviewees felt desensitized to violence none indicated that their desensitization led to them to participating in violent acts themselves.

In addition, some of the participants revealed positive effects in relation to their experiences with gun violence. This was an unexpected finding as there is little discussion in the literature that documents positive effects from something as traumatic and serious as gun violence. Participants indicated that as a result of their experiences, they now make better choices in who they become friends with, they have become more politically active, some have become more religious, and others suggest that they view the world in a different light and value life a lot more.

Discussion on the impacts of gun violence on families.

Kastenbaum (2004) and Osofsky (1995) both provide insight into the impact on families when violence infiltrates a family system. Much of the literature indicates that families can become closer or lose closeness when the family encounters violence, even when a loved one loses his/her life to violence. In addition, the literature suggests that

families may lose faith in their belief system, question higher powers, and lose confidence in those around them (Katenbaum, 2004; Osofsky, 1995). In this research study, some of the respondents also identified the strengthening of family bonds and the unification of the family system when a family member died because of gun violence. They revealed how Black families come together and support each other through traumatic events.

Contrary to the literature, there was no indication of family members isolating themselves, ceasing to communicate, losing faith or confidence in higher powers or other family members. In fact, the opposite was true and some people were found to become more religious as a result of gun violence. From personal experience, I noticed that during the most difficult times, my family seems to be the closest and most supportive of each other. Many of the participants also felt that when a traumatic experience occurred as a result of gun violence, that their families, or families that they have observed, have been able to put their differences aside and really be a source of support for each other. As well, even years after the traumatic event, the participants revealed that families continue to be close because of it. In fact, some of the families came together annually to honour the death of their loved one.

These results also reflect the resilient nature of the Black community as; we can see how the Blacks in Scarborough are able to act in positive ways after experiencing a very negative situation. Observing and using the strengths within families is essential to empower and thus to encourage young people to see positives in their family in spite of all the tragic experiences.

Discussion on the impacts of gun violence on neighbourhoods and Scarborough's Black community.

With all of the violence that has occurred in Scarborough over the past few years, the participants revealed that they observed many changes. Whereas, the literature highlights the ways that violence can affect individuals and families however; the impact on neighbourhoods has not been significantly recorded. This study adds to our current understanding of the impacts of gun violence by illustrating various changes that the participants observed within their neighbourhoods. The participants indicated that safety had recently become a concern for many people living in their neighbourhoods. Kastenbaum (2004) suggested that individuals lose confidence or faith in community members when violence ensues. Some participants reported that people in their neighbourhoods became less trusting of others: some participants reported, for example, that they saw more people locking their doors, staying inside at night and/or purchasing security systems. Other participants did not notice any changes in their neighbourhoods and reported that they believed that people carried on as usual.

Another identified effect of gun violence in neighbourhoods in Scarborough was that individuals relocate to perceived safer locations. There were many implications of the exodus from Scarborough. This ghettoized Scarborough and created the stereotype that Scarborough is an unsafe place. In addition, individuals continuously moving in and out of the city may reduce the ability of creating bonds between community members. The lack of community bonds as depicted by social control theory can in fact encourage crime. This pattern may well encourage more individuals to follow a similar path and to

conclude that if you cannot tolerate gun violence, you should move out of your neighbourhood.

The literature also demonstrated that there are both positive and negative effects on communities when violence occurs. Kastenbaum (2004), for example, outlines that tragic situations can bring communities together around a common cause. The results of this study were consistent with this theory, as some participants believed that the Black community in Scarborough was brought together because of the gun violence. They highlighted the resilience of the community, and indicated that some community members motivated by their hurt, loss, or anger became community leaders and activists as a result of violence in Scarborough.

It was also suggested that violence and death can create social isolation and cripple communities (Kastenbaum, 2004). The participants in this study expressed similar beliefs. Many of them thought that gun violence in Scarborough was dividing the Black community. They thought that it caused infighting and that some Blacks were trying to distance themselves from the community so that they were not perceived as bad or violent. The participants revealed that Blacks often place the blame for gun violence on specific groups of Blacks. For example, they believe that Black youth, Blacks that live in specific geographic areas or those Blacks that were born in specific places (i.e Jamaica) are responsible for gun violence. This is a way that people can separate themselves from the stigma of gun violence in the Black community.

Anti-oppression and Afrocentric Theories can Further Explain Gun Violence

The participants in this study provided many views on the causes of the gun violence. Some participants thought that individuals were to blame, and others identified family and parenting as key in causing gun violence in Scarborough's Black community. While the participants had diverse opinions into the roots of gun violence, they all believed that structural issues and systemic inequalities were the underlying causes of gun violence in their community.

Reconsidering individualistic theories.

The literature proposes many individualistic theories, which explain crime and deviance by referring to individual's values, motives, attitudes and beliefs. Many participants in this study also identified individual's personal characteristics as causes of gun violence. However, although these theories contribute to our understanding of gun violence, they are incomplete, as they do not address the underlying structural issues, which are key to our understanding of crime. The following discussion focuses on the usefulness and shortcomings of three individualistic theories: rational choice theory, labeling theory and social control theory.

As outlined in the literature chapter, the premise of rational choice theory is that individuals make rational assessments of the costs and benefits of committing a criminal act and only do so when the benefits outweigh the costs (Liska and Messner, 1999). This research found that some Blacks believe that the sensationalized view of Black men who are often seen as tough, aggressive, drug dealers with a lot of money, nice cars, and expensive jewelry is to blame for violence in the Black community. They identified

various reasons for this. First, they believe that Black men become involved in gun violence because they have a desire to live up to this image. Consistent with rationale choice theory, many participants revealed that to some Black men, maintaining this tough image and having street credit is more important than the consequences of gun violence (going to jail, being shot at, taking a life, dividing the Black community, and/or perpetuating a negative image of Blacks).

As well, the participant revealed that some Blacks may become involved in gun violence in order to be able to buy expensive things (jewelry, cars etc) in order to align themselves with this socially constructed image of Blackness. Moreover, some participants revealed that some individuals may become involved with gun violence in order to provide a source of income because they either cannot or do not want to find a legal job. In either case, participants thought that Blacks might decide to gravitate towards gun violence because the financial benefit of it outweighs the alternatives. One alternative might be working in a low paying job, accepting welfare, living in government housing, not being able to support themselves or their family, or not being able to afford expensive things. Of course, some individuals may simply choose to become involved in guns and other illegal activity because they believe it is easier than working at a legitimate place of employment in a low-paying and dead end job.

Rationale choice theory as highlighted above may help to explain an individual's motivation for becoming involved with gun violence. However, this explanation does not speak to the underlying or root causes of the problem. For example, rational choice theory would suggest that obtaining a sensationalized image would be a benefit to becoming involved in gun violence. However, the real concern to be considered here is

not the individual's benefit of status but the underlying issue of the racist stereotypical social construction of Blacks in mainstream media. For example, many participants felt strongly that news broadcasts portrayed Blacks in a negative fashion. Some of the participants believed that newscast went out of their way to highlight bad behaviour of Blacks while glossing over crimes committed by people of other races (or simply not mentioning the race of perpetrators if they were white). In the United States, a study by Entman and Rojecki (2000) found that a mug shot of a Black defendant was 4 times more likely to be shown on local television than that of a white defendant and the Black accused was twice as likely to be shown in physical restraints. In addition, the participants believed that many popular movies and television shows usually portray Blacks as vulgar, drug dealers, criminals, or uneducated people in low status jobs. Entman and Rojecki (2000) found that only 17% of White female actor in popular movies used profanities, while 89% of Black females used profane language. Similarly, Blacks were 5 times more likely than whites to be violent in movies and almost 5 times as likely to be seen in restraints in popular movies (Entnam and Rojecki, 2000). The issue of concern is thus, the creation of these images and the impact that they may have on Black youth. Anti-oppression theory prompts us to understand that these labels are created to allow White Canadians to maintain their powerful position while creating a subordinate class of Blacks. Afrocentric theory encourages us to challenge these negative labels and to establish a more positive image of the Black community.

Similarly, rationale choice theory fails to consider systemic oppression which is necessary in any discussion on Blacks and gun violence. As previously mentioned, rational choice theory explains how individual might become involved in gun violence

because they can not find adequate employment. However, this theory does not address the underlying issues which contribute to Blacks not being able to obtain higher paying positions and earn legitimate means to support themselves and their family. For example, a study by Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) revealed that racialized groups (including Blacks) are underrepresented in high paying jobs and over represented in lower paying jobs. They also found that racialized groups had a double-digit income gap and a higher rate of unemployment than non-racialized groups (in spite of level of education). The same study concluded that racial discrimination continues to be a barrier in employment opportunities for racialized groups (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi, 2005). Similarly a study by Cohn (2000) argued that the evidence of his work strongly suggest that Blacks are more likely to be unemployed than Whites because of discrimination. When faced with obstacles such as discrimination some individuals may feel that they have no other choice than to engage in criminal activity in order to survive. This decision must be more complicated than is suggested in rationale choice theory (what brings an individual the most pleasure), and needs to consider the larger societal oppression, when examining what pushes individuals into criminal acts such as gun violence.

In addition, some of the participants were of the view that individuals become involved in gun violence because they believe it is what is expected of them. Participants identified that Blacks are constantly submitted to negative criminal images of other Blacks and thus feel that as a young Black person they to are expected to be negative and criminal. As one participant commented, “it eventually becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy”. This idea is consistent with labeling theory, which suggests that an individual can internalize negative labels leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-

esteem and eventually the individual will resort to subsequent acts of violence (Hickey, 1997). The theory contributes vastly to our understanding of criminal motivation, as it informs us that low self-esteem and feeling inadequate can lead to criminal acts.

The shortcoming of labeling theory, however, is that it fails to explore broader causes of low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. Labeling theory solely attributes low self-esteem to the criminal labels imposed on an individual after they commit a deviant act. Anti-Oppressive and Afrocentric theories, however explain how multiple oppressions, consistent discrimination, feeling powerless and second class, and not understanding the disconnect with historical and current context of your being can lead to lower self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. These feelings and self-concepts can lead to deviant behaviours (Hickey, 1997).

Labeling theory acknowledges that labels are present in society and that they can affect the behaviour of individuals. However, anti-oppressive theory reflects on how these labels are created and utilized as a reflection of hierarchical powers and privileged which are attached to being a part of the dominant group (i.e., White). Without an adequate understanding of how and why these labels are constructed it is impossible to eliminate such labels from society.

Social control theories operate under the premise that individuals are naturally unrestrained and need certain controls to prevent acts of deviance. Suggestions made by some interviewees were consistent with social control theories. For example, many participants believed that one of the causes of gun violence is the lack of social programs available to youth. Young people, they explained, have too much free time because social activities are not available to them, and they consequently have abundant free time

to become involved in gun violence and illegal activity. This argument is consistent with social control theory, which suggests that when an individual is heavily involved in conventional activities there will be no time to engage in delinquent or criminal acts. Some participants believed that youth were not engaged in extra-curricular activities because they are not interested in partaking, because they could not afford to participate or because funding for activities is absent in Scarborough, particularly in low income areas. This research contributes to social control theory by adding an anti-oppressive and Afrocentric perspective to the theory, which stresses the importance of structural change at the political and economic level, and the consideration of class by indicating the in-affordability of programs.

More than just a family concern?

The participants in the study also highlighted a lack of positive role models in the Black community (in particular Black males), and the absence of good parenting skills as causes of gun violence. According to social control theory, individuals will be less likely to become deviant if they have 'attachment' that they have someone to look up to that they would not want to disappoint. In addition, it was suggested that parents were at times absent or engaged in illegal activities themselves and thus were an inappropriate role model for their children. Some of the participants believed that this led to youth becoming involved in gun violence. This point is consistent with the ecological theory of human development, which among other things, offers that human behaviour can influence the behaviour of others. In other words, if a young person sees a parent

involved in illegal activity and gun violence it may influence the child to engage in similar behaviour.

Many of the participants identify social factors as contributing to family problems, absent parents and poor parenting. These factors include unemployment and poverty caused by discriminatory practices and policies in areas such as education and employment. Due to these factors and other discriminatory practices, Black parents can end up working multiple jobs to support their family thus being absent from the home and unable to actively participate in parenting. In addition, the same factors may lead parents to become involved with illegal activities, drugs and guns, thus setting a poor example for youth.

The ecological theory of human development and social control theory are both valuable as they reveal that youth can become involved with gun violence because of negative influences present in their lives. What is missing from these theories is the ability to explain the reasons for the existence of such family problems. Such an explanation can be accomplished by examining the structural forces and oppressions as illustrated above, which place families in negative situations and render parents unable to fully engage in positive parenting.

A systemic problem encountered by the Black community.

Most of the participants in this study connected gun violence with larger societal problems such as systemic racism and structural oppression. The participants felt strongly that problems within the educational system, the legal system, and the job market led to the over representation of Blacks involved with gun violence. The

following will explain how larger systems and the racism they perpetuate can lead to gun violence or feelings of low self-esteem that consequently create violence in the Black community in Scarborough.

The participants in this study proposed that the education system in Ontario contributes to gun violence in Scarborough. They identified three main concerns with the education system: 1) the disproportionate use of the Safe Schools Act on Black and minority students; 2) the practice of streaming Blacks out of advanced level classes; and 3) the lack of Afrocentric curriculum offered in schools. These practices have been identified by various bodies in the past, including, the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (1994) and a report issued by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2005). It is evident from the literature and the findings in this study, that the school system in Ontario unfairly treats black students. Black students are disproportionately expelled and suspended from schools, they are streamed into non-academic streams and are not represented in current course material. They act as barriers to the academic success and consequently the future success of Black youth. Studies have shown that Blacks are more likely to be disengaged with the education system and drop out of school than other races (Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning 1994). In fact, between 1987 and 1992, 42% of Black students were found to drop out of school before finishing (Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning, 1994)

As the participants in this study indicated, when students are denied opportunities to succeed in school they are likely to end up being pushed out of secondary school, or to not attend post-secondary school and, subsequently, likely to end up in lower paying jobs. Such outcomes can lead to the aforementioned individual and family problems created by

not being able to obtain gainful employment. Moreover, the continuing racism and failing in a system that has overwhelming barriers for Blacks to be able to succeed in the first place, can lead to low self-esteem among Black youth. The connection between self-esteem and violence will be discussed at the end of this section.

In addition to their concerns with the education system, the participants explained that the legal system also presented significant barriers for Black youth, which could contribute to gun violence. The participants recounted feelings of being over policed, harassed, unnecessarily questioned /detained, and discriminated against by police. Some of the participants expressed sentiments of powerlessness with respect to the criminal justice system. This is consistent with literature, which suggests that in an institution where the power dynamic clearly advantages one identifiable group of people, it is almost inevitable that implicit and explicit forms of racism will exist (Russell, 2000). Jones (1997) called this form of institutionalized racism “group privilege”. In the criminal justice system, white privilege is set into place as whites hold positions of power (i.e police, judges, lawyers, etc.) and blacks hold less influential positions (cited in Franklin and Boyd-Franklin, 2000).

Furthermore, some of the participants felt that the police were harassing, arresting and charging Blacks at alarming rates. The notion that Blacks are arrested and charged at higher rates than whites is also supported in a study by Tanner and Wortley (2003) of 3,400 Toronto students. When the students were asked if they had been stopped or questioned by the police on more than one occasion, 50% of the Black students responded positively while only 23% of whites and 11% of Asians responded positively. Similarly when asked if they had ever been physically searched by police officers, 17%

of white students and 11% of Asian students responded positively while more than twice as many (40%) of black students also did.

Tanner and Wortley (2003) also found that Black individuals were being detained at a higher rate than whites: 15.5% of the Black people that were arrested were remanded until they could have a bail hearing compared to 7.3% of white offenders that were held for bail. In addition, they argue that Whites with no criminal record who were caught possessing drugs were far more likely to be released at the scene than Blacks were who had no criminal record and who were found in the possession of drugs. In addition, Tanner and Wortley (2003) reported that when they interviewed Toronto high school students who identified as drug dealers, 65% of the black students reported being arrested for drug related crimes while only 35% of white students were ever arrested. These statistics clearly demonstrate that Black people are caught, arrested and detained more frequently than White individuals. In addition, one of the implications of this unfair treatment, as expressed by the participants is that once a youth enters the criminal justice system it is difficult to get out.

The cycle of oppression, self-esteem and gun violence.

Oppression and a lack of identity or cultural awareness can lead to low self-esteem. Black youth in Scarborough encounter oppression and discrimination. They are discriminated against in schools, in the criminal justice system and when seeking employment. Moreover, they are denied opportunities in school to locate themselves within the cultural context of their own history and identity. A contribution by Boyake with Este and Acton (2003) to a recent study on racism suggested that continuous racism

particularly as experienced in Black males, leads to anger, frustration and lowered self-esteem. The men in the study revealed that their lack of earning power and inability to obtain employment on par with their skill level causes feeling of incapacitation. In addition, Afrocentric theory contends that dislocation with culture that Blacks experience can cause individuals to feel lost or worthless (Asante, 1980).

One participant commented, “A lot of people who are involved in gun violence, it's way deeper cause, like I said again ... It's self hate”. This participant and most of the other respondents suggested that there is a relationship between gun violence, internalized racism and low self-worth or self-esteem. Numerous studies and theorists who have also proposed that low self-esteem leads to deviance and violence support the importance of this relationship. For example, a study by Steffenhager and Burns (1987) concluded that low self-esteem is the underlying psychodynamic mechanism to deviant behaviour. They believe that many therapists work with clients to resolve conflicts and suggest that this is ineffective because as one conflict resolves another will be created. In contrast, it is believed that in order to prevent deviancy it is necessary to work with individuals to increase their self-esteem thus reducing the likelihood of deviant behaviours (Steffenhager and Burns, 1987). According to Afrocentric theory, a successful strategy to raise the self-esteem of Blacks is to reconnect them with their African cultural and history (Asante, 1980).

In addition, a study carried out by Merwin and Ellis (1985) using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale measured the attitudes towards violence of 233, 11-15 year olds from a city middle school in the United States. The study revealed that those who had low self-esteem, particularly males were more likely to have accepting attitudes towards violence

(Merwin and Ellis, 1985). Once again, this study highlights the relationship between lower self-esteem and violence, thus establishing the need to consider ways to increase self-esteem when creating strategies to prevent gun violence.

Another study of similarly aged children examined the effects of self-esteem in grade seven students (Ellickson and McGuigan, 2000). Their study pointed out that low self-esteem in middle school youth was a significant predictor of violence in later life. They suggested that programs be established to improve school performance of young people and to increase their self-esteem as a preventative measure to gun violence (Ellickson and McGuigan, 2000).

In addition, Davis (1993) studied a group of twenty youth ages 13-17. He concluded that violence was a result of “self-image compensating”, suggesting that many individuals commit violence to compensate for their feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem (Davis, 1993). He also proposed that failed child rearing practices a lack of role in society and an inordinate concern for respect and reputation were involved in violent tendencies. Davis’ (1993) results are consistent to the opinions of the participants in this study who believed that living up to an image (reputation) and having feelings of insecurity and low-self esteem can lead to an individual becoming involved with Gun violence.

Baumeister et al. (1996) leads the debate that contends that violence is the result of egotism as opposed to low-self esteem. However, Shapiro (1998) finds results that are inconsistent with Baumeister et al. (1996). He supports the widely accepted clinical view that low self-esteem can be a cause of violence. Furthermore, he adds that individuals with low self-esteem or low self-concept can be damage by disrespect. They

are thus vulnerable to the (mis) conception that violence can repair damaged pride. Moreover, African Americans were found to report higher levels of aggression as a response to shame than White Americans (Shapiro, 1998). This research by Shapiro (1998) highlights the fact that low-esteem can lead to violence and that this is particularly common among Black individuals.

It is my contention that oppression and structural inequalities in and of themselves could result in gun violence. This was illustrated above in discussions on education, image and the criminal justice system. For example, pushing Black youth out of school can limit their future opportunities making gun violence either a more appealing or the only alternative to work. Moreover, multiple oppressions and/or the dislocation with African culture that Blacks face lead to low-self esteem and feelings of inadequacy, which could in turn lead to violence. It is the argument of this thesis, based on the relevant information gathered from interviews and previous research that in the case of Blacks in Scarborough, structural oppression and perpetuated racism can lead to gun violence in itself or create feeling of low self-esteem and social inadequacy in Black youth, which could also lead to gun violence. Gun violence further stigmatizes the community as a whole as Blacks are perceived as criminal and violent, which consequently leads to more barriers and systemic discrimination in the Black community. This concept is illustrated below in Figure 1.

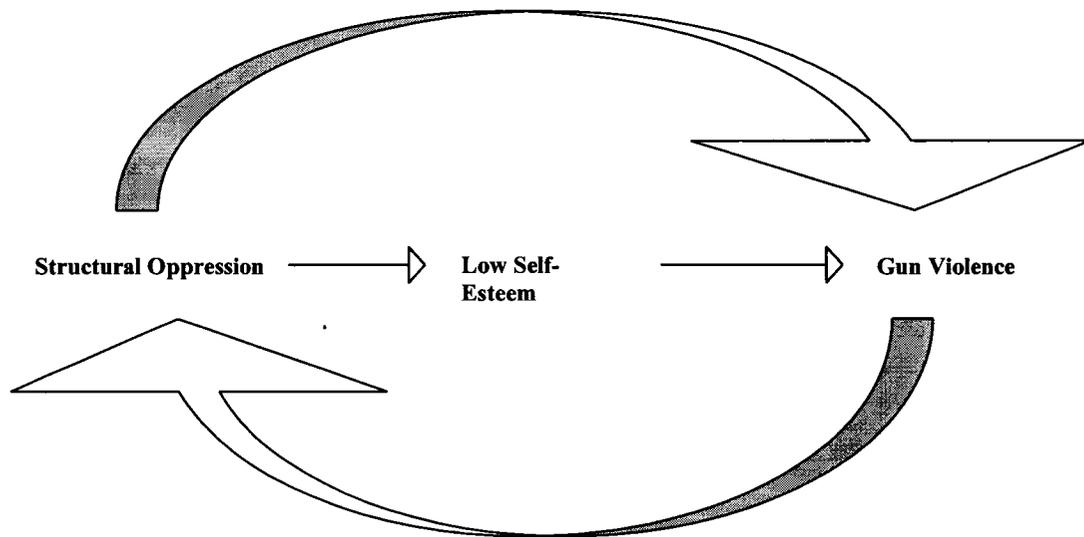


Figure 1: The Cycle of Racism, Self-Esteem, and Gun Violence

Avoiding Band-Aid Solutions

The results of this study revealed that the participants believed that previous and current interventions to gun violence tended to focus more on individuals. However, the participants stressed that the focus should be on the underlying root causes of crime (systemic oppression) and not simply on the symptoms of the root causes. The participants highlighted suggestions for interventions with respect to families, the Black community and larger systems.

Many participants discussed the importance of supporting parents and families. Some believed that parenting classes ought to be provided and others called for extended family members to contribute to raising children. It was acknowledged by some of the participants that many families do the best that they can under given circumstances and that changes to larger societal problems could assist families in parenting. It is

recommended that we support parents in order to address complex family issues. This would include education programs, job training programs, parenting classes and financial assistance (affordable housing, affordable daycare, financial compensation and/or food vouchers) to assist parents. In addition, anti-discrimination programs or an increase in employment equity awareness to encourage employers to value the contributions that Blacks can make in the workforce.

Education of Black youth to install a sense of pride and regain self-esteem in them was a common suggestion to combat gun violence. This intervention is consistent with the ideals of Afrocentric theory, which suggests, that Blacks should be relocated within their African culture to establish pride in their heritage and increase their self-esteem. In addition, consistent with anti-oppression theory, participants thought that it would be necessary for leadership to emerge from within the Black community to guide youth. Moreover, it was felt that Black leaders should work towards empowerment within the Black community, so that the community can work towards uniting and reducing the self-hate and division present within the community.

As was suggested by the participants, in order to prevent gun violence one must work to eliminate systemic barriers thus removing the cause of the low self-esteem, which leads to gun violence. The participants suggested the following with respect to removing systemic barriers in Scarborough.

The education system.

First, the participants discussed a need for changes in Ontario's current education system. They suggested implementing curriculum, which would better represent Black students. Thus, Black students might be more successful in school as they will be able to connect with the course material and they could gain a positive sense of self by observing positive representations of Black people. This is consistent with Afrocentric theory which would add that through African-centered curriculum, Blacks will be able to see the world through their own historical and current context and they can relocate within their own culture. This could be accomplished through the establishment of Afrocentric school programs, after school programs and/or the infusion of Afrocentric material in mainstream schools.

Moreover, many participants saw the need to encourage Black youth to stay in school. They felt that this would open more doors for the youth and increase their self confidence. In order to assist them in this process, some participants suggested that new educational opportunities be provided to students. For example, trade programs; special education or extra academic assistance could improve the likelihood of a youth graduating. However, because the participants also felt that Blacks were streamed into non-academic and less desirable courses it is essential that students are informed of all of their academic opportunities and given the option in consultation with parents to choose a stream that would increase their likelihood of success based on their interest and ability and not on the colour of their skin.

Similarly, participants called for reassessment of the Safe School Policy, which is believed to disproportionately affect Black students and push them out of school. Some participants suggested a more compassionate response to student behaviour and others

suggested that more supports need to be offered to these youth so that they do not “act out” in school. Some participants did not oppose the policy itself but suggested that it be implemented consistently to all students. It is thus recommended that the Safe Schools Act be reassessed and that the community be consulted on this issue.

A part of ensuring that schools do not discriminate against Black youth lies with the staff at the schools. The participants in this study suggested that more Black teachers and principals be hired. In addition, all school staff should receive anti-oppressive training so that they recognize and amended discriminatory behaviours. Without discriminatory barriers such as the Safe Schools Act and racist school staff, Blacks might have an opportunity to flourish within their school environments thus reducing their self-confidence and self-esteem and reducing their involvement in gun violence.

Recommendations for change include, facilitating changes to Ontario’s curriculum to incorporate Afrocentric material, and created entire schools based on Afrocentric material. As well, culturally appropriate extra-curricular activities should be made available to Black youth in schools. For example, Steel Pan, African drumming circles, cultural dance classes or African art clubs could be implemented. In addition, specialized programs should be created to assist youth in accomplishing their academic and future employment goals. For example, more specialized classes (e.g., computer, technical, culinary), and special needs classes should be available. In addition, fair and equal access should be granted to these programs so that Blacks are not streamed into or denied opportunities to access specialized programs. Moreover, it is essential that all school staff receive anti-racist training so that they can implement non-discriminatory practices in their schools.

Justice system.

Similar to the education system, the participants in this study called for anti-oppressive training for those in the criminal justice system. First and foremost, participants felt strongly that police officers should gain a better understanding of the Black community and the struggles they face. This is consistent with anti-oppressive theory, which suggest that communities are experts at their own impression and that we need to see things through the eyes of the oppressed. The participants felt that if police officers could better understand the community they would be less likely to persecute and harass Black youth. Again, this could remove negative labels imposed on the Black community thus preventing youth from being caught up in the system and increasing self-esteem and reducing gun violence. Therefore, it is recommended that police officers receive anti-racist training. Moreover, it is recommended that police officers be exposed to the experiences of Black youth. This could be incorporated into their training by having youth representatives share their experiences with new police recruits.

Furthermore, the results of this study illustrate that it might be beneficial for other key players in the criminal justice system to also be exposed to anti-oppressive training and cultural sensitivity. For example, it is believed that judges, lawyers and probation officers also should gain a deeper understanding of the Black community and the oppression that they face. Not only is this consistent with anti-oppression theory as highlighted above but it is supported by Afrocentric theory which reveals that systemic barriers should be broken down by challenging the negative labels imposed on Blacks by broadening others' world views. It is therefore recommended that other key players in

the criminal justice system be exposed to anti-racist education and the struggles of the Black community.

Recommendations for the Black community.

Some of the participants in the study were very frustrated at the divide in the Black community. They felt that Blacks were turning on each other instead of coming together to fight gun violence and the systemic problems, which cause it. Three of the seven participants pointed out that they felt either that Jamaicans were the cause of gun violence, or they felt that it was a common perception that Jamaicans were responsible for gun violence. This phenomenon was coined “Jamaicanization” by James (2004). “Jamaicanization” according to James (2004) is the tendency to believe that all Blacks based on skin colour, language/accent, or behaviour are Jamaicans. This assumption is extremely dangerous because not only does it deny various ethnic and cultural experiences of Blacks not from Jamaica but also because of the value that is attached to this title. Jamaica is stereotyped as having a high crime rate, and its citizens are perceived as drug dealers or dangerous people who kill at will with no thought of consequences (James, 2004). Therefore, if all Blacks in Scarborough are seen as Jamaican they are perceived as violent and dangerous.

Extending from this point by James (2004), this study found that some Blacks knowing the misconception about Jamaicans, feed into the stereotype of “Jamaicanization” to separate themselves from the violence. They would inform people that they were from Trinidad, Barbados, Africa or elsewhere in order to separate themselves from gun violence, which was seen to be a Jamaican problem. Consequently,

these individuals in attempting to separate themselves from gun violence are socially isolating Jamaicans and dividing the Black community.

Afrocentric theory stresses the value of unity and recognizing that all Blacks share a common ancestry. Therefore, according to Afrocentric theory it is important to reduce the “us” and “them” attitude in the Black community. This is accomplished by reminding all Blacks that we have one common ancestry as we all came from Africa. By having Blacks relocate themselves within their African heritage, we are in fact uniting the community as opposed to creating “us” and “them” barriers. This uniting of the community can be empowering, as it will facilitate Blacks becoming mobilized to fight the oppressions that they encounter.

It is therefore recommended that the Black community come together in an empowering fashion to take a stand against gun violence. They should avoid Jamaicanization and socially isolating other Blacks. This can be accomplished in a variety ways. It is suggested that first Blacks be exposed to cultural and historic experiences so that they can relocate in their African heritage and bond over common experiences. This can be accomplished through the sharing of experiences at forums, the introduction of African art, music, books, and other cultural information, and the exposure to African history, which could be provided in the schools system or in community classes.

In addition, it is recommended that people support and encourage Black leaders who can work to promote and unify the Black community. It is important that Blacks become involved in politics so that they can give input and their values and opinions can

be reflected in policies. Adequate representation in all levels of government is essential to ensure that the voices of the community are heard.

Avoiding the sole use of individual strategies.

Participants also thought an appropriate intervention would be to provide more community programs. Consistent with social control theory, they believed that if a youth could participate in an extra-curricular activity they would have less time for criminal activity. It was also pointed out that these programs must be accessible so that all youth could attend and not simply those who could afford them or who lived in areas that offer programs. In addition, many participants called for more education about African culture. If these two ideas are combined, one can state that culturally appropriate accessible programs be provided to youth in Scarborough. For example, a free African drumming program or a future Black politician youth group in a low income area could satisfy both requirements. Whereas youth can further develop a positive sense of self by being involved in their community and learning about their own culture and identity. These programs could be structured using an Afrocentric approach, which would highlight the strengths and resilience of the Black community, and framing their experiences within a cultural context.

As outlined above, the suggested approach to preventing gun violence begins with preventing systemic oppression to place individuals in a situation where they are likely to be involved with gun violence and by assisting youth in developing positive as opposed to negative self-esteem. It is thus important to address the underlying root causes of gun

violence: structural and systemic oppression (including the disconnect that Blacks may feel from their cultural identity). Individualistic solutions such as increasing police officers, cracking down on petty crimes and enforcing harsher punishments have and continue to be used today. However, these individualistic strategies will never be successful on their own because they do not address systemic issues such as discrimination in schools, lack of academic achievement, lack of employment or high paying jobs and/or discrimination within the criminal justice system.

Individualistic strategies may temporarily address some concerns in the community, but can not solve larger problems which Blacks face, such as low self-esteem and self worth brought on by the absence of cultural awareness, or racism and discrimination. In fact, using individualistic theories would be the equivalent to putting a band-aid on a deep open wound. It may temporary stop the bleeding, but will not close the open wound. By addressing the oppression that Blacks face as illustrated in anti-oppression theory and by relocating Blacks in their African Identity as recommended by Afrocentric theory, we would in essence be healing the wound which inflicts the Black community in Scarborough and not just be putting a band-aid over the problem. The following is the summary of the aforementioned recommendations:

Summary of Recommendations

What should be done at the family level.

- Support should be given to families and parents by addressing the social discrimination which Black families face
- Support should be offered to parents in the form of parenting classes or education on positive parenting

What should be done at the Black community level.

- Educate youth and instill a sense of pride within them
- Become politically active and take back power
- Establish leadership and work together through the empowerment process
- Promote togetherness and avoid socially isolating specific groups of Blacks
- Gain representation in all levels of government
- Implement and attend cultural programs to gain awareness of African history

What should be done at the societal level.

- Provide African-centered curriculum in Afrocentric schools and within mainstream schools
- Provide fair and equal access to specialized education programs
- Reassess the Safe Schools Act
- Provide anti-oppressive training to school staff, police officers, and other community members

- Provide culturally appropriate activities to Black youth which will highlight the strength and resilience of their community

Directions for Social Work Education and Practice

As highlighted in figure 1 (page 153), this study indicated that gun violence is the result of two inter-related causes: structural factors and low self-esteem. These are issues that should be addressed in both social work practice and education. According to the Ontario Association of Social Workers (nd), “Social workers believe in the intrinsic worth and dignity of every human being and are committed to the values of acceptance, self-determination and respect of individuality.” It continues to say, “The culture of individuals, families, groups, communities, and nations has to be respected without prejudice.” It is thus reasonable to conclude that issues entrenched in the social disadvantage of Blacks such as gun violence, should be a priority to social work education and subsequently, social work practice. Social workers can persist in offering their support against gun violence by addressing micro and macro level concerns and providing education on this issue.

At the micro level, we as social workers can intervene and support initiatives and programs/services that boost the self-esteem of individuals in the Black community. This is particularly important for children and youth clients. It is important that when we offer groups, services and community programs, that we ensure that they are culturally appropriate so that our Black clients and other clients are able to identify with the material presented. Moreover, as social workers who work in schools, we need to advocate for Afrocentric curriculum that incorporates the historic and current context of

our Black clients. Furthermore, we should encourage our schools to adopt extra-curricular activities such as African drumming that will allow Black students to learn about, embrace and gain a sense of pride about their culture and heritage. We should also be advocating for the hiring of Black and visible minority school staff who can act as appropriate role models for Black youth. Furthermore, we can assist in the anti-racist training of school staff and other students in order to foster a positive learning environment for Black students.

Social workers can encourage and support those who have encountered discrimination to address their issues in the proper forum. For example, we can direct participants to address racism by filing complaints when appropriate and being proactive in fighting against oppression. This can assist our clients in the process of gaining empowerment and higher self-esteem.

At the macro/structural level, social workers also have a significant role to play in preventing gun violence. As social workers, we need to help the black community to mobilize against barriers that cause unemployment, underemployment, poverty, program cutbacks, difficulty with education, and conflict with the criminal justice system. We need to work with the Black community to give them a voice and be active in creating awareness about the systemic boundaries that this community faces. Furthermore, we should be advocating on their behalf in our organizations for antiracist policy and practices. On a larger scale, it is our responsibility to ensure that the government and other authorities make policy changes to eliminate our systemically racist practices in education, immigration, criminal justice and other areas. Moreover, we should be putting pressure on the media to rectify the negative image of Blacks, and in particular

Black youth, so that we can begin to break down some of the dangerous stereotypes about the Black community which has led to increased instances of racism and lower self-esteem.

Schools of social work also need to be involved in combating gun violence. Courses should be offered to all social work students on the historical context of Blacks in Canada, and more importantly, these courses should highlight how the implications of this historical context helped to shape some of the problems which Blacks in Canada now face. Social workers should be taught about the needs of Black clients and best practices for working with Black clients and the Black community.

Social workers can also promote multiculturalism and equity within society. They can continue to support the fight against gun violence by disseminating knowledge surrounding the issue in schools of social work and elsewhere. Educating people on racism, multiculturalism and breaking down cultural barriers may lead to a greater understanding of all ethnic groups. Understanding may lead to the changing of opinions and views about certain racial/ethnic groups, which in turn, may decrease the structural barriers which Blacks face and increase self-esteem in Blacks. Social workers must continue to break down these barriers in society if there is to be any hope of eliminating discrimination and racism. In order to prevent gun violence, it is essential that social workers work with the black community to eliminate systemic barriers, and boost low self-esteem.

This study showed that anti-oppressive and Afrocentric frameworks can be used to approach the problem of gun violence in Scarborough. These theories are both useful in understanding the impacts and causes of gun violence. Moreover, anti-oppression and

Afrocentric perspectives can contribute to gun prevention strategies. In addition, this study showed that there are many other areas to research with respect to gun violence. Including but not limited to expanding this research to incorporate the opinions and ideas of other Blacks in Scarborough and even broaden this study to incorporate other Blacks throughout Toronto. In addition, this study focused mainly on systemic barriers and discrimination related to racial and class issues. It could be useful to determine if barriers, which Blacks face due to other factors such as sexual orientation. More attention could also be paid to the connection between gender and gun violence in the Black community. Gun violence continues to be a concern and it is the fervent hope of this writer that the Black community can come together and using Afrocentric and anti-oppressive strategies to work towards a solution to the problem that is effecting our community.

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Appendix A- Advertisement

Are you concerned with gun violence in Scarborough?

I am a University student writing my Master thesis on gun violence from the perspective of Scarborough's Black community.

If you are over 18 years old, have lived in Scarborough for at least one year and identify yourself as being Black, you are invited to participate in my study on gun violence in Scarborough.

Participants will be asked questions about (1) how gun violence has affected their lives; (2) what they believe has caused gun violence in Scarborough; and (3) what can be done about the violence.

The study Participants will not be asked to disclose any illegal activity, nor will they be asked for names of others who may be involved in gun violence. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

Participants will receive a small token of appreciation following the interview.

If you are interested, please contact me at kris_te12@hotmail.com

Appendix B-Letter of Information

Dear Participant,

As a Master of Social Work student at Carleton University, I am conducting research and writing a Masters thesis on the impact that gun violence has on the Black community in Scarborough. In addition, I would like to examine the causes of and solutions to gun violence from the perspective of Scarborough's Black community. I hope to speak to 10-15 individuals who have lived in Scarborough for at least one year and identify themselves as being Black. All participants must be at least 18 years of age.

The purpose of this thesis is to find out the Black community perspectives on questions such as how gun violence has affected their community, what caused gun violence, and what can be done about the violence.

Each participant will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. With your consent, these interviews will be taped to assist in the accuracy of my final report. The information collected will be used only for research purposes. I will do my best to ensure that your name remains confidential. Some of the information that you discuss during the interview may be directly quoted in the final report but for assurance of anonymity at no time will your name be attributed to any particular statement. However, your anonymity can not be completely guaranteed due to the small number of participants in the study and the possibility that you may know the other participants in the study. All interviews will be tape-recorded. Participants will be given a numeric code to assist in protecting their identity. The recorded sessions will be labeled with the code and not your name and will be locked in a safe location where only the researcher and the research advisor will have access. Information relating to your identity will always be kept in a secure location and only the researcher and research advisor will have access to raw data. All interviews and research notes will be retained by the researcher following the completion of the research project. However, your consent will be required for the obtained information to be used in an future study by the researcher

If you choose to consent to participate in this research project, you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. At this point, you can determine what will happen with any information already obtained. Participants also have the right to refuse to answer any particular questions during the interview process. Please be aware that as a social work student who is bound by the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. I will be obligated to report any criminal or illegal behavior revealed to the appropriate authorities. You will not be asked any questions about your personal criminal history and you will not be asked to divulge any information about particular crimes. Electronic research results will be made available to you if you request them

If you have any questions or comments about the research project please contact me at kris_te12@hotmail.com or at 416-418-5236. You may also contact my thesis advisor Professor Behnam Behnia by phone at (613) 520-2600 ext 2665 or via email at behnam_behnia@carleton.ca. This project has been cleared by the Carleton University ethics committee. For further information about the ethics process, please contact, Prof. Antonio Gualtieri, Chair Carleton University Research Ethics Committee at 613-520-2517 or at ethics@carleton.ca. I appreciate the interest that you have taken in this project.

Sincerely,
Kristy Weekes
School of Social Work
Carleton University

Appendix C-Consent Form

I understand that this research project is to be conducted by, Kristy Weekes, a Master of Social Work student from Carleton University as a requirement of her graduate degree. Kristy is conducting research in Scarborough on the impact that gun violence has on the Black community. In addition, she would like to examine the causes and solutions to gun violence from the perspective of Scarborough's Black community.

I understand that the purpose of this thesis is to find out the Black community perspectives on questions such as how gun violence has affected their community, what caused gun violence, and what can be done about the violence. I understand that I will be asked to share my experiences with gun violence and to indicate how gun violence in the city has affected my life and community. In addition, I am aware that I will be asked to provide insight into my beliefs on the causes and solutions to gun violence in Scarborough.

I recognize that my participation in this study will consist of meeting the researcher at a neutral location and being involved in an interview of approximately 1hr in length. I recognize that many participants will not suffer any discomfort or inconvenience during the interview process however, I am aware that there is some risk to the participants. For example, if I divulge information indicating previous criminal behaviour, I know that the researcher is ethically obligated to contact the police. The researcher will not ask me any questions regarding my criminal experiences or the names of others who have been involved with gangs or gun violence. In addition, I am aware that there is a risk that some of the information discussed may cause me emotional distress, for example, speaking about the loss of a loved one or recalling a time when I may have witnessed or experienced gun violence, could be particularly difficult. I have been made aware that there will be an opportunity to debrief after the interview.

I recognize that anonymity cannot be afforded to participants due to the small sample size and snowballing techniques used. However I know that my name will not be used anywhere on the final written product. I am aware that digital copies of each interview will be stored electronically on CDs and locked in a secure location and that only the researcher and the thesis advisor will have access to the CDs. I understand that the interviews will be transcribed for the purpose of analysis and that all written notes will be locked in a separate file compartment in a locked and secure location. Only the researcher and thesis advisor will have access to the interview materials. My name will not be included in any document

By choosing to consent to participate in this research project, I know that I have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. At this point, I can determine what will happen with any information already obtained. I also have the right to refuse to answer any particular questions during the interview process.

I have read the above description of the study and I am aware that my

participation is completely voluntary. My signature indicates that I understand the potential risk and I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____
Participant's Signature: _____

Appendix D-Interview Guide

Introduction

Explaining very briefly the study purpose and the issues of confidentiality and anonymity

-signing of consent forms and explanation of process

Impacts

In this section, I would like to examine the effects of gun violence.

1. Have you yourself or anyone that you have known, directly been a victim of gun violence? If so, has that caused any changes in [you], your life, or in the lives of your acquaintances?

2. Has the recent increase in gun violence in our city affected you in anyway?

3. Has it caused you to change your lifestyle at all? If yes how?
Probes-your image, fear, employment (economic)

4. Have you noticed any changes in how others treat you as a

result of gun violence?

5. Have you noticed any changes in your [neighbourhood] as a result of Gun Violence? Or Is your neighbourhood affected by gun violence?

6. In your opinion, has gun violence had any impact on the Black community? If so, how?

Causes

In this section I'm going to ask you a set of questions on your opinion on the causes of gun violence

1. In your opinion what are the reasons behind Gun violence in Scarborough?
2. How would you explain the fact that the majority of victims and offenders of gun crimes are Black? Do you think that race plays a role in gun crimes? If so, how?
3. Most victims and offenders of gun violence are also males. Do you think that gender plays a role in gun violence? If so, how?
4. Considering that most victims and offenders of gun violence are poor and low-income individuals, in your opinion does class background

Solutions

In the remaining part of the interview, I would like to ask your opinion on how to address gun violence in Scarborough.

1. In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to end gun violence?
2. Does the Black community have a role to play in preventing gun violence? Why do you think that way? How could they do it?
3. Do you think that spirituality, cultural, or religion in any form can reduce gun violence? How so?
4. Who else should play a role in ending gun violence (family, school, media, police, politicians, religious group, community agencies, the community)- Why, What (is the role), how could they do it?
5. In your opinion, what types of interventions are necessary to prevent gun violence?

Demographic Question

1. Age

18-21

22-26

27-30

Not comfortable responding

2. Sex

Male

Female

3. Marital Status

Single

Married

4. Do you have any children?

Yes

No

5. Education level

Not finished High school

High school

Some College

Some University

College Diploma

Undergrad Degree

Graduate Degree

Vocational training, apprenticeship

Other

4. Are you currently working in Scarborough?

Yes

No

5. How many years have you lived in Scarborough?

6. What is your ethnic background?

Caribbean

African

Other

7. Do you affiliate with any particular religion, if so, which one?

Yes _____

No

8. How would you classify your citizenship status?