

# ***Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy***

**The Acquisition and Use of Power and Control: A Model for  
Understanding Violence among Incarcerated Youth**

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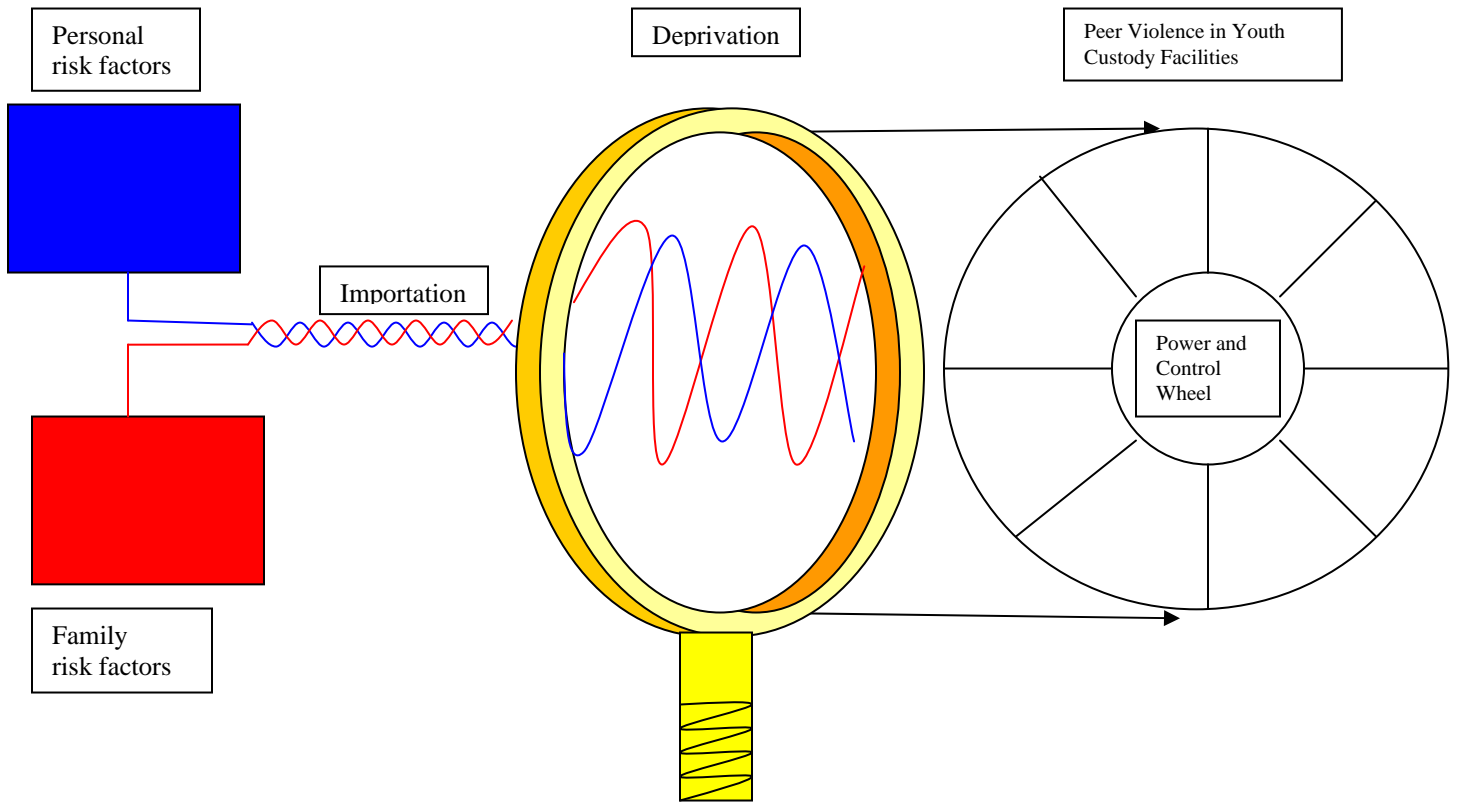
## Introduction

This model offers a framework for the analysis of peer violence among incarcerated youth (Figure A). Traditionally, inmate violence has been understood in the context of a prison subculture that developed out of the deprived conditions of correctional institutions and the pre-prison disposition of its inmates. This explanation has historically been driven by research in adult correctional organizations. Recently, however, studies have applied this theory to juvenile institutions (McCorkle et al., 1995, Paterline & Peterson, 1999, Poole & Regoli, 1983).

Earlier studies debated the extent to which coercive, dehumanizing prison conditions forced inmates to behave in violent ways to alleviate the “pains of imprisonment” and regain control over their social environment – the deprivation model (Sykes, 1958 and Thomas, 1977). In contrast, the importation model theorizes that pre-prison life histories, attitudes and values supporting violence, determine the adaptive responses of inmates to incarceration. Inmates ‘import’ a culture of violence to the institutional setting (Paterline & Peterson, 1999 Cao et al., 1997). The interaction between these two models has been widely accepted as providing a more convincing understanding of the impact of prisonization on inmate violence than either model separately (Thomas & Peterson, 1977). The integration of the two models into one theoretical perspective provides the impetus for the model presented herein.

Studies in Ontario of peer violence in young offender settings report that almost three quarters (72%) of youthful offenders were involved in peer violence (Shields & Simourd, 1991) which was felt to be an integral part of institutional life (Ellis, 1997). There is considerable consistency in the types and descriptions of peer violence as described in the literature (Connell & Farrington, 1996, Kennedy, 1995, Palmer & Farmer, 2002, Power et al., 1997). The data collected for most studies was obtained through youth self-reporting. This method was considered more reliable and valid than staff or peer reports or the reliance on documentation (Connell and Farrington, 1996, Cooley, 1993, Dyson et al., 1997, Ireland, 1999, Ireland, 2002).

Figure A



**The Acquisition and Use of Power and Control: A Model for Understanding Violence Among Incarcerated Youth.**

Recent studies have acquired information from youth that provides an analysis of bullying and peer violence that goes beyond incidence, definition and categorization of behaviour. These studies confirm the existence of a peer sub culture within the custodial settings. Peer norms, roles and social rankings organize and sustain hierarchical arrangements necessary in this culture. The ability to survive and adapt is to a large extent dependent on the youth's capacity to develop and maintain status (Connell & Farrington, 1996). Ireland (1999) reports that power and dominance are central to peer relationships. Peer cultural norms in this context promote victimization to gain social acceptance and status. Aggression is often in retaliation to challenges to reputation, striving for status or to gain goods and services (Ellis, 1997, Ireland, 1999, Ireland, 2002, McCorkle, 1992, Palmer & Farmer, 2002). Goods and services are differentially distributed according to status with the most dominant youth obtaining a disproportionate share. This is achieved through "taxing", intimidation and other bullying tactics (Ellis, 1997, Ireland, 1999, Ireland, 2000, Ireland, 2002, Kennedy, 1995, McCorkle, 1992, Poole & Regoli, 1983). Aggression and bullying are normalized and this forces the ranking of bullies and victims. The domination of the weak is essential to maintain status (Ireland, 1999 Ireland, 2000, Palmer & Farmer, 2002, Sykes, 1958, Thomas, 1977). Passive behaviour is generally interpreted as weakness or vulnerability and may provoke exploitation or domination (McCorkle, 1992, Sykes, 1958). The physical attributes and presentation of youth influence their status (McCorkle, 1992, Sykes, 1958). Overall relationships between youth are based on dominance, control and power, which promote aggression and bullying (Connell & Farrington, 1996, Ireland, 1999, Palmer & Farmer, 2002).

The Power and Control Wheel, used as a training and intervention tool for those working in the field of domestic violence, presents the primary tactics and aggressive behaviour that abusers use to establish and maintain control in relationships. Each tactic of aggressive behaviour described in the domestic violence wheel can be interpreted to reflect those used by bullies to establish control in peer relationships in juvenile custodial settings. The application of

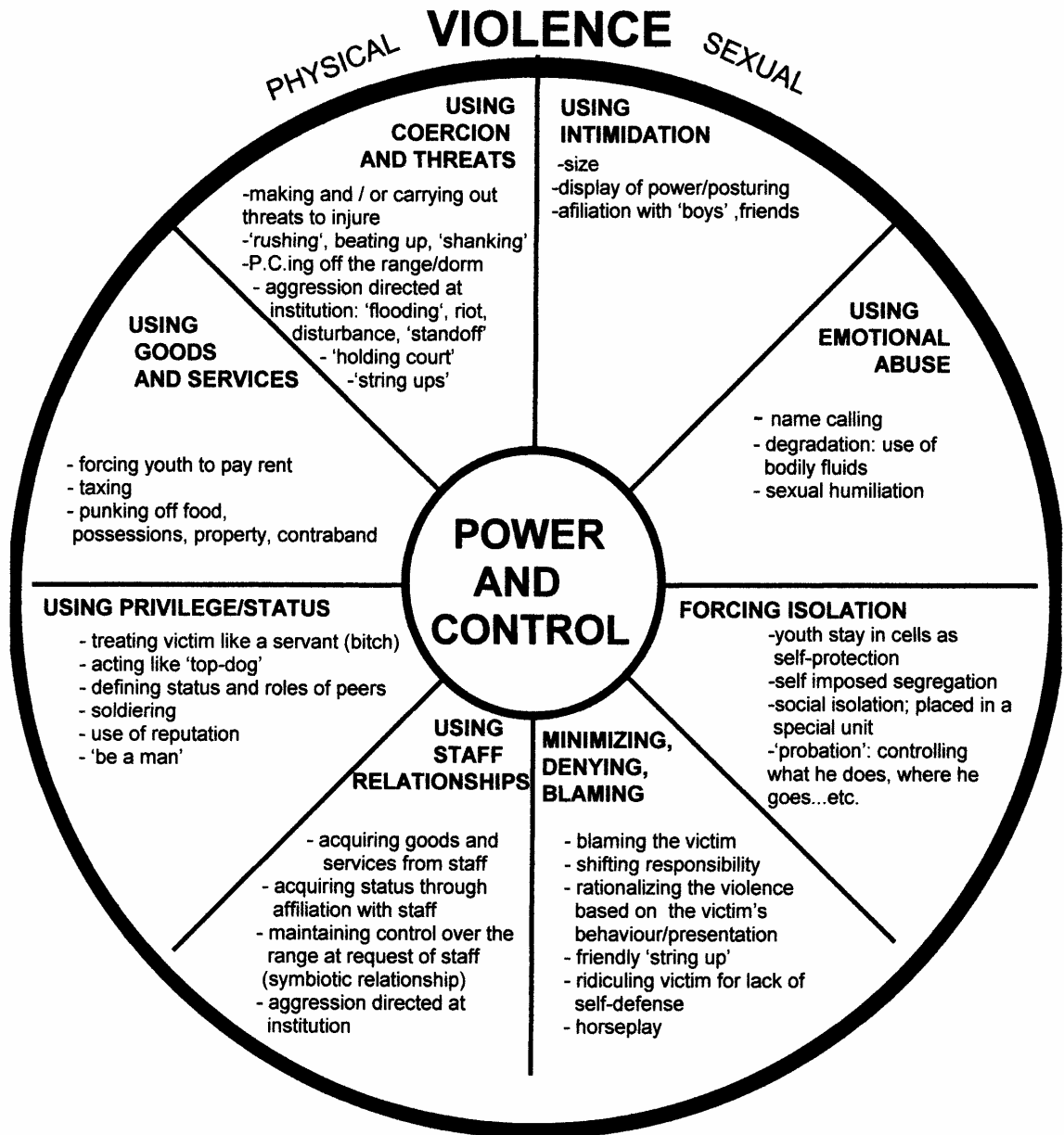
the Power and Control Wheel allows for the integration of both the individual power tactics and the social control strategies perpetrated by incarcerated youth. The full spectrum of violence within the context of the peer subculture is therefore captured in the adaptation of the Power and Control Wheel (Figure B).

To summarize, the literature reports that pre-prison experience and the conditions within institutions together contribute to the development of a prison subculture, which promotes peer violence. The prevalence of peer violence in Ontario young offender institutions precipitated the development of a descriptive analysis and typology of that violence. This typology was presented in the use of power and control by incarcerated youth (Paper One). The Power and Control Wheel was adapted, for that paper, as an interpretive tool to assist in the analysis. The model presented herein goes one step further and illustrates how importation and deprivation interact to promote a peer subculture based on power and control dynamics among incarcerated youth.

It should be noted that there are distinct differences in the prisonization of youthful offenders in contrast to adult inmates. This is directly related to the normal, developmental tasks of adolescence (Center for Adolescent Studies, 1996). In this study, the interpretation of the findings and the generation of the model were formulated from a developmental perspective.

Figure B

*PEER VIOLENCE IN YOUTH CUSTODY FACILITIES*



## **Methodology**

The model presented in this paper relies on the methodology, findings, and analysis described in Paper One: The Use of Power and Control by Incarcerated Youth. Paper One presented a typology of aggressive or bullying behaviour of youth. It was based on 380 self-reports by young offenders in 12 different institutional sites in Ontario. The present study utilizes the same data and findings as the basis for analysis in the development of a model to explain the acquisition and use of power and control by youth. The following is a summary of the method:

### *Role of the Advocacy Office*

The collection of data was conducted under the auspices of the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy (Advocacy Office). The role of the Advocacy Office is threefold: to elevate the voice of youth, to intervene when children and youth who live outside of their family's care report abuse or harsh treatment, and to ensure that care providers respect the legislated rights and entitlements of children and youth in Ontario. The Advocacy Office has experience and expertise in conducting interviews with youth, respecting uniqueness in language and development. Young offender settings are familiar with the Advocacy Office due to its regular on-site presence and mandated accessibility to youth.

Interest in the study of peer violence has been longstanding due to the frequency of it reporting by youth to the Advocacy Office. Furthermore, Advocates were concerned about the well being of youth during the deprived conditions they experienced at the time of the labour/management dispute within the Ontario government in the spring of 2002. The Office predicted escalation in peer violence during this time.

## Participants

Youth participants were restricted to males who had committed offences at the ages of sixteen or seventeen and who were admitted to the Phase II secure custody system in Ontario. A total of 380 youth participated in the study; 271 were in detention and 101 were in youth centers at the time of the interviews. Eight youth were not incarcerated at the time of the interviews.

## Procedure

In-depth, qualitative interviews were used as the primary means of data collection. Youth drove the interview process and analysis as active participants. Advocates administered a questionnaire used by the Advocacy Office in routine review of institutions. A subset of questions regarding peer interaction was included in this format. Two Advocates were present at the time of the interview; one recorded and the other conducted the interview.

There was variability in the sample selection process dependent on the setting and the goals of the interview. The sample selection process for the initial set of interviews (labour dispute) and the institutional review was consistent. The report of the daily count was obtained at each site and youth were randomly selected from that report. Court personnel identified the youth who had exited the institution for the subsequent set of participants. Finally, the key informants were purposely selected. Social work staff at two institutions selected youth that they felt had the requisite institutional experience with peer aggression and bullying and the ability to articulate their understanding of that experience. A community social worker also identified a youth for the study.

For the present analysis and model development considerable attention was given to the interviews with the eight key informants (see Appendix A). The eight youth were sought to assist as experts in the analysis of the information collected from the 372 interviews. Open-ended questions, based on emergent themes that were identified in earlier sets of interviews, facilitated more in-depth discussions with these youth. The key informants elaborated on the themes and guided Advocates in the analysis of the findings and the development of a theoretical framework from which to understand them. All key informants had 'lived' experience in detention and custody settings. At the time of the interview, three youth resided in a detention center, four youth resided in a youth center and one lived independently.

### *Use of the Lifeline*

At the beginning of the interview youth were asked to describe their progression through residential care placements. This represented their lifeline (Plaisant et al., 1996). Sheets of paper were produced and the Advocate assisted youth by writing each placement on the paper. Youth were requested to start at the present and, with the support of the Advocate, recalled the series of placements from the most recent to the first placement. Some participants had difficulty with their recollection of placements, particularly with those in young offender settings, due to their frequency and brevity. The Advocate recorded the dates and types of placements beside the name of the residential setting. The lifeline for each participant spanned a number of pages that were laid out in front of him on the interview table. Some participants stated that they had not previously had the opportunity to review their history. Youth added more information as they recalled it and reorganized the order as they wished. Without prompting, many participants included the time spent with family as part of their placement history. The use of the lifeline assisted youth in gaining perspective through the concrete visualization of their history.

### Theoretical Analysis

A review of the literature related to factors of importation and deprivation was conducted and formed the basis for the analysis and model development. This was in juxtaposition to the peer violence typology and the adapted Power and Control Wheel. The entire model process is couched in developmental theory relevant to adolescence.

Family violence is identified as the factor to be used to illustrate the model and offer the reader more clarity with regard to the model process through the use of an example. This factor was selected as it crosses both individual and family risk categories and it has significance to the Domestic Violence Power and Control Wheel. However, the primary reason for its use is that a number of the key informants cited family violence as a causal factor for the aggressive or bullying behaviour of youth in the institution as illustrated below:

“A kid who is beaten grows up to be violent”

“A child who is raised with anger and watched conflict (in their family) resolved through fighting...that’s how he is going to live his life...(He’ll) believe that’s the way it is.”

“Home life makes kids more violent.”

“The way you grew up, what you’ve seen, things begin done to you...my Dad was abusive...Mom picked up guys who were really violent...Mom’s boyfriends were mentally and physically abusive...I was an angry kid.”

### **The Developmental Tasks of Adolescence and Their Relevance to Prison Behaviour**

There are normal developmental milestones connected with adolescence. The youth in this study ranged from 16 to 18 years of age and are therefore, considered in middle adolescence. The primary developmental tasks for that age include (Center for Adolescent Studies):

- Development of a self-identity
- Self involvement
- Emphasis on peer group; group norms include selectivity, superiority and competitiveness
- Emphasis on sexuality; movement toward heterosexuality with fear of homosexuality
- Development of ideals and selection of role models
- Rule and limit testing
- Sexual and aggressive energies require direction
- Risk taking behaviour prevalent

Emotional or behavioral problems that may interfere with normal development are often evident with incarcerated youth (Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000, Laub & Sampson, 1993, Nicol et al., 2000, Shamsie et al., 1994, Thompson, 1988, Ulzen & Hamilton, 1998). Nonetheless, the presentation of youth within young offender institutions is largely consistent with the normal development expectations of adolescence.

There is a wealth of literature about prison behaviour among adult inmate. The seminal work of Sykes (1958) Thomas & Petersen (1977) and Toch & Toch (1982) describe the coping strategies of adult prisoners to manage the stress of confinement. A unique subculture or “society of prisoners” with complex roles, relationships, norms, rules and language develops to maintain social order. Features of the behaviour of adult inmates as described in this literature include the following:

- Most inmates have a desire to “do their time.”
- The maintenance of a balance or equilibrium on the range (living unit) is valued.
- Group solidarity and allegiance is a feature that facilitates stability in the social environment.

- Equity is valued among inmates who share and ensure an equitable distribution of goods and services.
- The prison social system is self-regulating.
- Prison leaders are established to reinforce inmate self-control.
- Homosexuality is used to sublimate sexual tensions.
- Guards develop close relationships with inmates with collegial undertones.
- There is reciprocity between the guards and inmates. Guards transfer duties (control) to inmates in order to keep the peace; prisoners regulate their own affairs.
- Guards will collude with inmates to maintain equilibrium on the range. A quid pro quo dynamic is evident in their interaction with identified leaders.
- A complex myriad of roles amongst inmates is established and maintained.

There are some similarities between the behaviours of adults and youth in prison environments. In all correctional institutions, penalties and incentives are used by staff to manage behaviour. Also, in those circumstances in which riotous behaviour occurs, the precipitors to riot are similar in both youth and adult jails (the Bluewater Report, 1996; Sykes, 1958). The identified motivators to riot in both settings are idleness, archaic disciplinary practices, corruption of authority, shortage of necessities, and bureaucratic indifference to rehabilitation. In both adult and youth prison sub cultures there is a similar initiation process to establish the status of leaders at the time of new admissions (Paper I; Sykes, 1958; Johnson & Toch 1983). The rule regarding the maintenance of secrecy (i.e. no ratting) is paramount in both settings. There is some similarity in the roles ascribed to inmates or residents. Finally, in both subcultures there is emphasis on respect and being “a man.”

There are significant differences however in youth behaviour in the acquisition and demonstration of power and control, and in the social relationships within the environment. This

is due to their age and immaturity and is consistent with normal developmental expectations. The youth's struggle to attain a sense of self-mastery over their environment, a sense of personal authority and a developing self-identity influence peer relationships and may challenge staff/youth relationships (Stone, 2002). The Advocacy Office observed differences between youth and adult social environments as it relates to specific behaviours of youth and the institutional response to these behaviours. The following is a set of those observations that are neither conclusive nor inclusive. They are useful, however, in understanding the peer subculture and the struggle youth experience in adapting to prison life. This is in contrast to the experiences in adult correctional settings.

- Youth have an immaturity in their understanding of social relationships, the rules of social discourse and social subtleties.
- Immature youth agitate excessively and disruptively within the environment (e.g. incessant banging, verbal demands, yelling).
- Many youth are attached to their mothers and this maternal dependency persists within the institution.
- Many youth sustain close external relationships while incarcerated.
- Numerous groups form with identified leaders. A pecking order is developed within the sub-groups and group affiliation is required. Solidarity or allegiance among all inmates is not established.
- Status is dependent on fighting ability.
- The level of peer aggression and bullying is high.
- Fighting opportunities are created to sustain status.
- Often aggression occurs for the sake of aggression (i.e.) adolescent bravado).
- Youth needs are often egocentric.

- There is not the same level of sophistication in the assignment and maintenance of roles as there is in adult custody settings.
- There is a taboo about homosexuality.
- Goods and services are used to acquire and reinforce status.
- The primary incentives for youth are opportunities for activity.
- There is a strong emphasis on education and learning.
- Youth are food reliant. Caloric intake is necessary for their continued development.
- There is an organizational requirement for the observation of rights with external mechanisms to ensure compliance.
- Many youth are dependent on the protection of guards.
- Guards who provide guidance and role modeling direct youth.
- Youth are dependent on guards for programming, assignment of points, level acceleration and daily structure.
- Routines are not self-generated or sustained.
- Youth are grouped by the organization according to need.
- Guards collude with the most mature inmates only. They do not align with youth due to their notoriety.
- Guards find the environments demanding due to the adolescent needs for activity, interaction and direction.

The observations described above illustrate the centrality of age and development on peer dynamics in the institutional setting. Discussion of the importation and deprivation models and the adapted Power and Control Wheel is framed accordingly.

## The Model

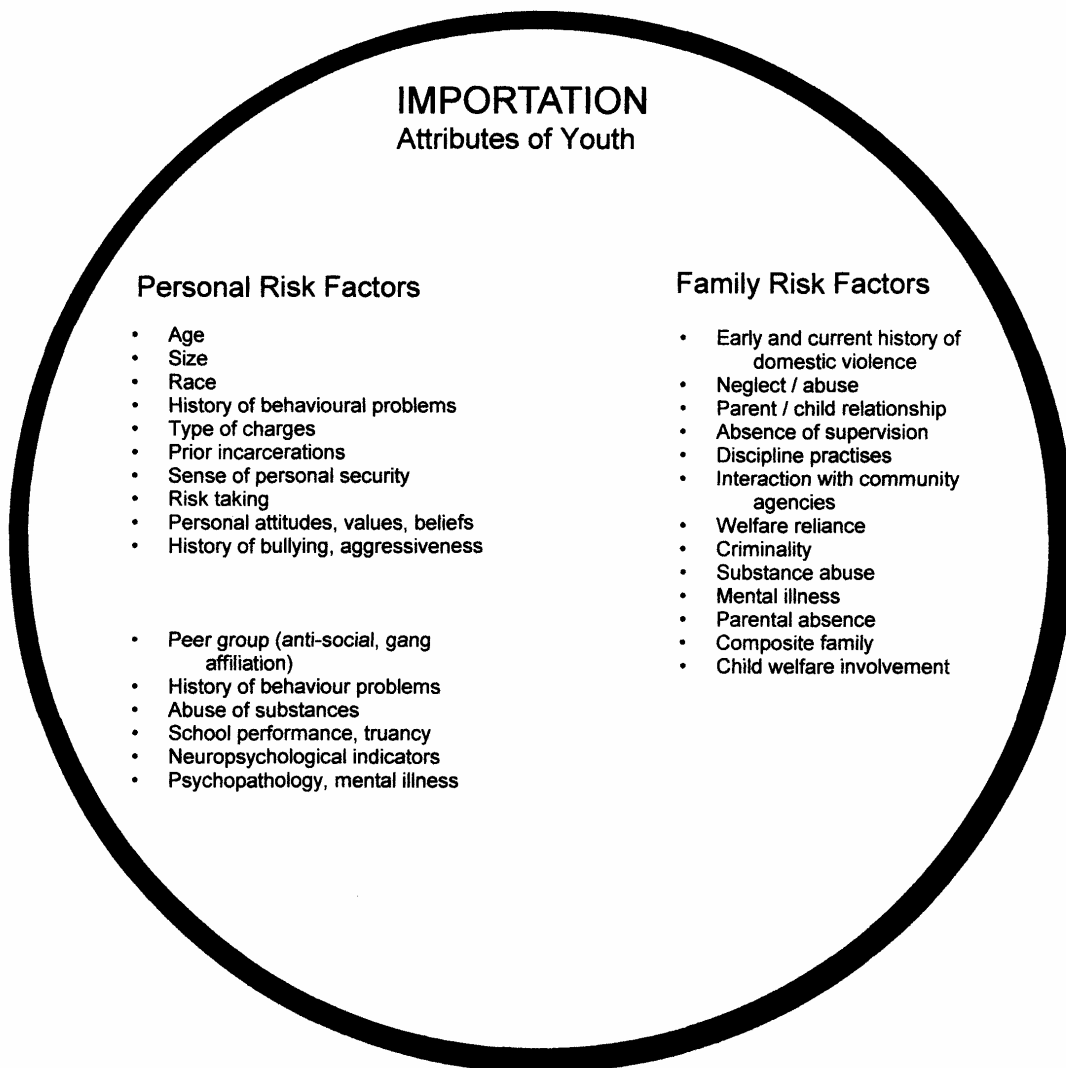
Paper One clearly establishes the existence of peer violence in young offender institutions in Ontario. It provides a description of the characteristics of the violence and the elements of a subculture that precipitate and nurture that violence. The present analysis (Figure A) attempts to identify pre-incarceration risk factors and institutional features, which make youth vulnerable to victimization and violence in young offender institutions. This analysis postulates how these importation and deprivation factors interact to produce the power and control dynamics described in Paper One (Figure B).

### ***Importation: Attributes of Youth***

#### *Personal Risk Factors*

Research evidence identifies a number of personal risk factors (Figure C) that influence the use of aggression and violence in young offender settings. These include age; race; size; previous history in the criminal justice system; and type of charges. (Paterline & Petersen, 1999). Age, across adult and youth settings, was viewed as having the strongest effect on aggressive behavior (Ellis et al., 1974). The younger the inmate, the higher the probability of aggression (Feld, 1977; Poole & Regoli, 1983). A rationale proposed was that adolescence was associated with greater risk taking behaviour and therefore potentially more aggression (Currie & Covell, 1998; Ellis, 1984; Ellis et.al.,1974). Youth were described as precipitating more violence than their adult counterparts. Tannenbaum (1978) and Bartollas & Sieverdes (1981) conclude that dangerous youth tend to be black (rather than white) and are incarcerated for more serious offenses. These youth tend to be the bullies and aggressors in young offender institutions (Ellis et al., 1974; Mutchnick & Fawcett, 1991; Paterline & Petersen, 1999).

Figure C



J. Finlay  
June 2003

There is inference in the literature that perpetrators of peer violence tend to be larger, stronger youth (Ellis, 1997; McCorkle et al., 1995; Tannenbaum, 1978). Youth describe this as a perception rather than the reality. Youth fear larger youth due to the potential of being assaulted. They reported that larger youth did not commit a greater number of assaults. However, they controlled other youth through the use of their intimidating presence (Paper One). Prior incarceration was also demonstrated to be a measure influencing attitudes and beliefs about the use of violence for the purpose of problem solving (Paterline & Petersen, 1999). Finally, pre-institutional violence emerged in the literature as the best predictor of peer violence (Feld, 1977; Poole & Regoli, 1983). Youth who came from backgrounds, which reinforced a set of attitudes and values condoning aggression acted violently in youth institutions (Poole & Regoli, 1983).

There are a number of factors identified in the literature that predicts violent behavior in youth. However, these factors have not been examined or empirically tested in relation to bullying and aggressive behaviours among incarcerated youth. The present analysis and model presupposes correlation between these factors and peer violence in youth correctional institutions. A poor outcome related to personal risk factors is delinquency. Delinquency in youth consistently starts with a history of behavioral problems (Andrews et al., 1992; Borum, 2000; Loeber & Loeber, 2002). Early disruptive behaviors in boys often are persistent and these youth become serious offenders (Loeber & Loeber, 2002). Borum (2000) classifies risk factors which predict aggression and violence in youth. Among the predictors are negative peer relations, which may include gang involvement and delinquent behavior. A history of behavioral problems and association with deviant peers may lead to affiliation with gangs in adolescence (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996; Lahey et al., 1996; Patterson et al., 1989). Abuse of substances (Borum, 2000; Andrews et al., 1992); poor school performance (Andrews et al., 1992; Borum, 2000; Patterson et al., 1989); neuropsychological- indicators (Andrew et al., 1992; Perry, 1995); and psychiatric disorders (Andrews et al., 1992; Dimond & Misch, 2002)

are all documented predictors of violent behaviour in youth. The personal risk factors described above are prevalent among incarcerated youth (Dimond & Misch, 2002; Nicol et al., 2000; Ulzen & Hamilton, 1998). These factors influence a youth's pre-prison disposition and will to a large extent determine the youth's response to imprisonment and will frame the nature of his involvement in the peer subculture the peer sub culture.

### *Family Risk Factors*

There is a wealth of knowledge and understanding about the influence of the family on the offending behaviour of youth (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996). The effect of adverse family circumstance is cumulative in nature and gives shape and meaning to a youth's development (Figure C). Peer violence among incarcerated youth has not been attributed to family risk factors; however, these factors have been linked to aggressive behaviours in youth and are given consideration in determining the conditions that predispose youth to crime (Andrew et al., 1992; Borum, 2000; Cunningham et al. 2000; Hoge & Andrews, 1996). Similar to personal risk factors, these factors are evidenced among incarcerated youth and may influence the youth's response to peer violence and the institutional milieu. Family risk factors consistently documented in the literature include: early and current history of domestic violence (Borum, 2000; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996; Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001); neglect and abuse (Borum, 2000; Jaffe et al., 1986; Kupers, 1996; Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001; Sprague & Walker, 2000); parent/child relationships (Borum, 2000; Madden & Harbin, 1983; Moffitt et al., 1996; Tolan, 1988); absence of supervision (Andrews et al., 1992; Borum, 2000; Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001); discipline practices (Borum, 2000; Hoge & Andrews, 1996; Madden & Harbin, 1983); interaction with the community (Andrews et al., 1992; Tolan, 1988); welfare reliance (Andrews et al., 1992); criminality (Andrews et al., 1992; Borum, 2000; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996); substance abuse (Moss et al., 1995; Tarter et al., 2002); mental illness (Fergusson & Lynskey,

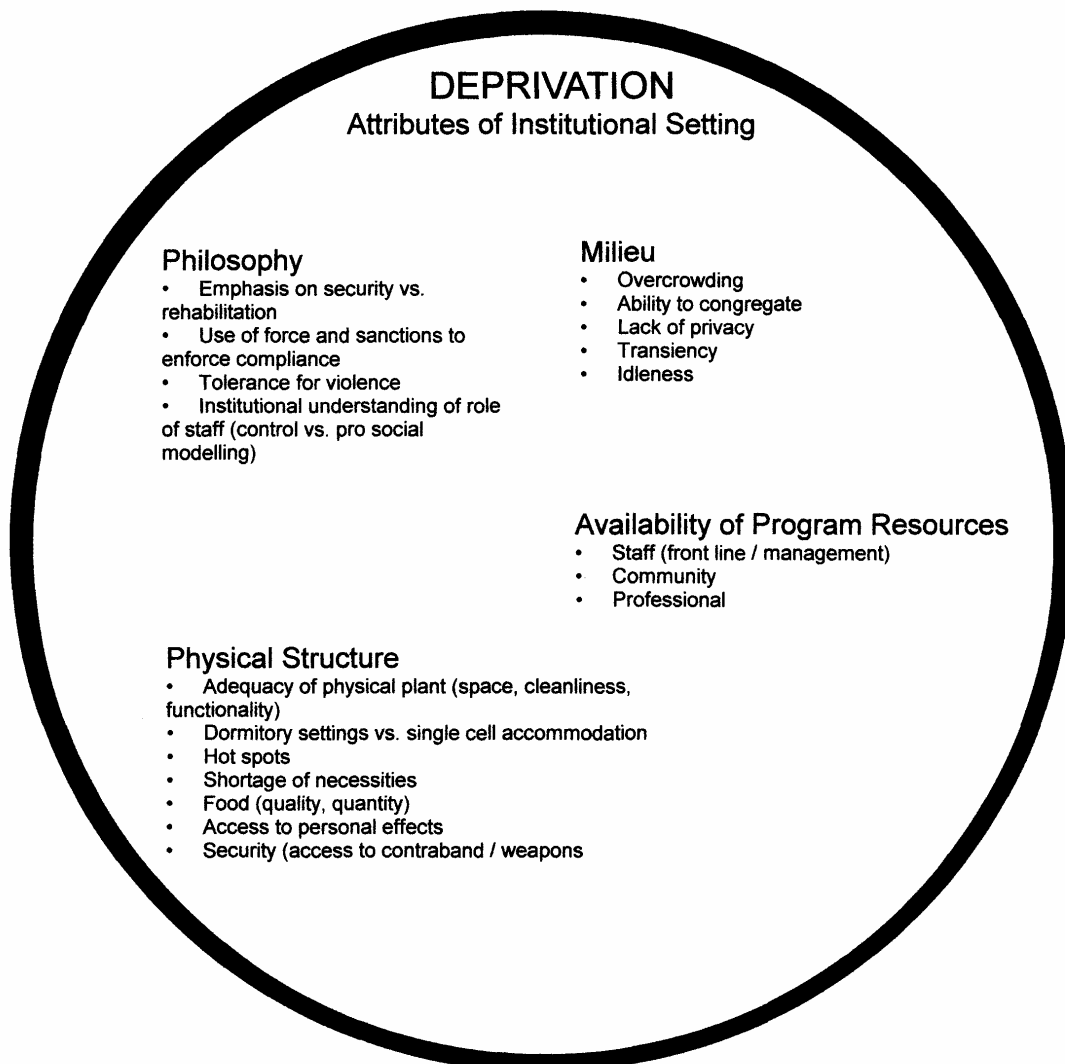
1996; Moss et al., 1995; Tarter et al., 2002); parental absence (Andrews et al., 1992; Sprague & Walker, 2000); composite family (Andrews et al., 1992; Sprague & Walker, 2000); and child welfare involvement (Andrews et al., 1992).

Personal risk factors and family risk factors are directly connected. Family circumstances and relationships determine the developmental pathways and functioning of the youth. There may be a causal relationship between family risk factors and personal risk factors with the former offering the greater contribution or influence. The youth imports these personal characteristics and life history into the prison environment and these contribute to the adjustment to his institutional milieu and the peer subculture.

### ***Deprivation: Attributes of the Institutional Setting***

Considerable research exists regarding the deprivation model and those attributes of the institution, which contribute to a violent peer subculture (Figure D). For the purpose of this study, components of the organizational structure in young offender institutions are divided into four categories as follows: philosophy, milieu, physical structure and program resources. These categories were developed to match the prison conditions described in the literature that contribute to the nature of youth adaptation to incarceration. The level of deprivation experienced influences the nature of the peer subculture (Paterline & Petersen, 1999; Feld, 1981).

Figure D



J. Finlay  
June 2003

## *Philosophy*

The philosophy of the institution represents the ideology and goals of the organization. Emphasis on security in the environment and the community requires the maintenance of internal order through rules, regulations and sanctions. This creates a philosophy that is deterrent based and punitive (Ellis, 1977; Feld, 1981; McCorkle et al., 1995; Sykes, 1958; Thomas & Petersen, 1977). In contrast, a rehabilitative model emphasizes youth development through incentives based programs and management by relationship (Ellis, 1977; Feld, 1981; Poole & Regoli, 1983; Sykes, 1958). Peer violence is used to relieve the deprivation imposed by the institutional culture. The use of sanctions and social control strategies that are coercive enforce obedience and compliance. This renders youth powerless and alienated (Ellis, 1977; Feld, 1981; Paterline & Petersen, 1999; Poole & Regoli, 1983). A violent peer subculture develops to respond to the various forms of deprivation such as: deprivation of autonomy, self-determination, security, social acceptance, relationships and material possessions (Lesheid et al., 1997; Sykes, 1958).

## *Milieu*

The milieu or environment of the institution may also substantively contribute to deprivation. There is conclusive evidence that overcrowding (Ellis, 1984; Farrington & Nuttal, 1980; Kennedy, 1995; McCorkle et al., 1995; Paterline & Petersen, 1999); lack of privacy (Lesheid et al., 1997); transience (Ellis, 1984; Ellis, 1997); the ability to congregate (Ellis, 1997) and the level of meaningful activity (McCorkle et al., 1995; Poole & Regoli, 1983) all significantly influence peer violence.

## *Physical Structure*

The physical plant was the component of the organizational structure that was most prevalent in the literature as it relates to deprivation. The physical conditions and standard of living in prisons are often described as “painful” (Sykes, 1958; Thomas & Petersen, 1977; Toch & Toch, 1982). The space, cleanliness and functionality of the environment can promote non violent ways of behaving (Ellis, 1997). Steel bunks, steel washbowls and toilets, cage like cells, long rows of cells, and living spaces that are made of concrete and steel create dehumanizing environments. Cottage or campus-like designs are more conducive to rehabilitation (Cesaroni, 2002; Dimond et al., 2001; Ellis, 1997; Lesheid et al., 1997). Single cell accommodation is preferable to dormitory settings as it may reduce the danger presented by congregating youth (Ellis, 1997; Lesheid, 1997). Dormitories were considered the primary ‘hotspots’ i.e. locations in which inmates and staff believe there is a high risk of violence (Ellis, 1997; Kennedy, 1995; Lesheid et al., 1997; McCorkle, 1992; McCorkle et al., 1995). The shortage of necessities such as personal possessions and hygiene products negatively influences a sense of well being and comfort (Sykes, 1958). The quality and quantity of food is a significant feature for youth due to their age specific need for caloric intake. Food is used as an opportunity for “punking off”, intimidation, coercion and extortion (Paper One). Access to weapons and contraband influences the level of security felt by incarcerated youth. The presence of weapons is a constant threat to youth. Dominant youth achieve and maintain status through the acquisition of goods and services that are often in the form of contraband. Intimidation and bullying tactics are used to procure the contraband. These activities reinforce the power and control dynamics in the social environment (Ireland, 1999; Ireland, 2000; Kennedy, 1995).

### *Program Resources*

The relationship with staff was viewed as a significant factor in mitigating the deprivation experienced in custody (Bidgood & Pancer, 2001; Ellis, 1997; Feld, 1981; Lesheid, et al., 1997). Attachment to staff achieved through formal and informal collaboration between staff and youth; emphasis on managing youth behaviour through relationship; pro-social role modeling; and adequate staff supervision and vigilance, was identified as a key feature in reducing peer violence and aggression. A high staff/youth ratio was considered essential in achieving this (Ellis, 1997; Lesheid et al., 1997; McCorkle et al., 1995). Access to family and community (Paterline & Petersen, 1999; McCorkle et al., 1995); medical services (McCorkle et al., 1995); and educational, vocational, therapeutic, and recreational programming (Ellis, 1997; Feld, 1981; Lesheid et al., 1997; McCorkle et al., 1995; Poole & Regoli, 1983) were all significant factors in a positive peer culture and in the reduction of violence.

In summary, attributes of the institutional setting organized herein according to philosophy, milieu, physical structure, and program resources influence the level of deprivation experienced by youth during incarceration. Coercive, authoritarian structures lead to a level of powerlessness, alienation and oppositional defiance on the part of youth. The level of deprivation influences the response of young offenders and the need for a peer subculture to relieve the deprivation. The inmate subculture facilitates power and control tactics and dynamics which are aggressive and bullying in nature. It follows then, that the greater the level of deprivation the higher the level of violence.

## **Describing the Model Process**

It is the interaction between importation and deprivation that offers a more inclusive understanding of peer violence among incarcerated youth than a restrictive focus on one set of factors or the other. The peer subculture which produces a spectrum of violence (Paper One) is dependent on the extra-custody attributes of youth that affect the youth's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour and the critical influence of the prison organization. The model presented in this analysis (Figure A) postulates that the youth imports personal characteristics and a life history into the correctional environment. Both personal and family risk factors determine the personality and functioning of the youth. These factors are inextractably intertwined. The youth's presentation and response patterns at admission and throughout the period of incarceration are conditioned by these factors. Institutional attributes such as philosophy, milieu, physical structure and programs magnify the personal attributes of youth. These govern his response to the institutional conditions and ultimately his adjustment and adherence to the peer subculture. The level of deprivation in the institutional structure will determine the level of magnification of attributes and the level of violence produced by the subculture. The Power and Control Wheel (Figure B) describes both the spectrum of tactics used by youth to acquire status and dominance and the strategies and dynamics used to maintain this power and control within the social environment.

## **The Use of Domestic Violence to Illustrate the Model**

An early and current history of domestic violence was identified as a family risk factor and a pre-prison attribute that is imported by youth into the custodial environment. Again the key informants specified family violence as a causal factor for peer violence. The

intergenerational transmission of violence received considerable empirical support (Henning et al., 1997; Hurley & Jaffe, 1990; Jaffe et al., 1986; Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001; Spraffken et al., 1986). Relevant to this analysis is that research concludes that the experience of violence in the family of origin influences violent behaviour in adolescent males. Social learning theory supports that children who grow up in violent homes learn that violence is a legitimate response to problem situations and a means of maintaining power and control over people in familial relationships (Jaffe et al., 1986; Jaffe et al., 1990). Victimization may also be viewed as inevitable and children may be conditioned to be victimized (Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001). Recent evidence demonstrates that 45-70% for children who witness domestic violence are themselves victims of physical abuse (Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2001). The violent spouse typically perpetrates this abuse. Home environments fraught with adversity, including violence, render the non-offending parent compromised in terms of her ability to consistently parent and provide safety, guidance, supervision and nurturance to the child (Jaffe et al., 1990). This is described as a secondary effect of domestic violence. Perry (in press) conducted research into the area of neurodevelopment that has assisted in the understanding of children's response to domestic violence. Children exposed to chronically violent, chaotic and traumatic home environments suffer from a persistent state of fear, are hyper sensitive to external stimuli and are hyper vigilant (Lewis et al., 1987; Perry, 1995). These children may present as hyperactive, behaviourally impulsive and anxious. Males will develop maladaptive aggressive responses, due to the neurodevelopment state, which accompanies persistent childhood exposure to trauma. Furthermore, children who have been physically abused engage in provocative, aggressive behaviour to elicit a predictable response from their environment (Stone, 2002).

Studies conclude that boys who are exposed to domestic violence exhibit adjustment difficulties and symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder similar to boys who are physically abused (Henning et al., 1997; Jaffe, 1986). These maladaptive responses carry into adolescence and adulthood and are exhibited as internalizing difficulties, externalizing

behavioural problems and psychological distress (Henning et al., 1997). Externalizing behaviours, evident in children and youth, include bullying, intimidation and threatening behaviours in the community and the home. These youth are often feared by other children and have poor peer relations (Hurley & Jaffe, 1990). Widom (1989) reports that youth from adverse family histories gravitate to the youth criminal justice system. High proportions of young offenders have a history of family violence (Kakar, 1996; Koppers, 1994; Jonson-Reid, 2002).

In summary, exposure to family violence either as a victim or witness is a risk factor that generates a pathway for youth which leads to the development of anti-social and maladaptive behaviours. This in turn produces negative outcomes such as delinquency, aggressive acting out and entry into the young offender system (Sprague & Walker, 2000).

It is important to offer theory driven explanations to the findings of the literature reviewed in this analysis. From a systems perspective, the emphasis is placed on the complexity of interactions in domestic relationships. The links between violence against women and the ensuing family processes, that include children, allows for a causal explanation of the effects of witnessing family violence. It provides a framework from which to understand the secondary effects of spouse abuse, such as parent-child attachment, parenting practices (Cunningham et al., 1998) and the propensity for abuse against children by the violent spouse. Children who grow up in familial environments that include spousal violence learned to emulate aggressive behaviors as problem-solving strategies. From a social learning theory perspective, violence is viewed as learned behavior, the impact of which is dependent on the strength of the relationship with the parent modeling the behavior, and the consequences of that behavior. This theory provides a framework for understanding the intergenerational transmission of violence. The major implication of the feminist approach is the introduction of the power and control dynamics of family violence and the impact of these dynamics on the victim. It emphasizes the lived experience and voice of women as victims of domestic violence. The

Power and Control Wheel is the most widely adopted model of explaining and treating domestic abuse. Eight control tactics used by abusers are represented, which in combination with the overt use of violence enables the abuser to maintain control and power over the victim (Cunningham et al., 1998). All theoretical approaches to family violence concurred that there is an intergenerational transmission of violence. This may be a function of social learning, trauma that shaped neuro development, interactional patterns in family systems that enable violence or the power and control dynamics that facilitates violence directed at women. Application of these theoretical approaches to peer violence and custodial settings must, however, be understood within the context of developmental theory (i.e. how the experience of family violence effects a youth's development).

As indicated earlier, adolescence is the developmental period in which the youth attempts to establish a sense of identity in relation to the role emulated for him by the parent (Truscott, 1992). If exposed to parental violence, the youth's normal socialization process is disturbed. As a consequence, he may have fewer inhibitory controls over aggression, and may have a tendency to behave more violently. Abusive family environments shape a youth's expectations and response to the world (Galambos & Dixon, 1984). Aggressive adolescent offenders tend to hold sets of belief supporting the use of aggression as a legitimate response.

Another feature of adolescence is risk seeking and risk taking behaviors. Adolescents under estimate their personal vulnerability and may make choices and decisions consistent with demands or expectations of their social environment (Currie & Covell, 1998). In young offender settings, the influence of the peer subculture on decision making may increase risk taking behaviors. This is particularly problematic with youth who have a history of violence in their family of origin.

Intra psychically, the adolescent bully or aggressor is discharging feelings of rage, fear, revenge, humiliation and helplessness that stem from adverse and abusive family relationships. Due to the relief experienced in the emotional discharge, feelings of empathy or

remorse are rarely experienced by bullies (Snyder & Rogers, 2002). The position of toughness and bravado is preferred to depression, helplessness, and alienation. Aggression can also be used to alleviate a poor self-image (Slaby & Guerra, 1988).

In summary, the experience of familial violence predisposes youth to a disrupted sense of identity; fewer inhibitory controls to the use of aggression; the belief that the use of aggression is legitimate; the use of aggression to alleviate a poor sense of self; exaggerated risk taking behavior; faulty decision making abilities; the need to discharge feelings of fear, rage and helplessness; and a childhood conditioning to power and control dynamics relationships. A youth carries this predisposition with him into the institutional environment (Figure E). The normal developmental tasks facing adolescents may manifest behaviourally. This combined with an adverse family history and resultant behavioural difficulties exacerbate his ability to successfully navigate his world.

The behaviors and characteristics of youth in a correctional facility have been described earlier. Taking into account the responses of youth to environments which have attributes that contribute to a negative peer subculture (Paper One), a revised set of characteristics and behaviors of youth are developed (Figure F). As discussed earlier, there is a pathway for youth from violent family homes to act on aggressively, commit offenses and enter young offender institutions. Indeed, there is a preponderance of youth in the young offender system with this type of history and predisposition. When comparing the pre-prison characteristics of youth who are victims or witnesses of family violence (Figure E) with the characteristics and behaviors of youth and deprived custodial settings (Figure F), the interconnectedness is dramatic. There appears to be a magnification of the pre-prison characteristics and behaviors as youth engage in the institutional setting and peer subculture. There is evidence of entrenched, exaggerated

responses by youth to the setting, which is consistent with their sense of self, coping strategies, maladaptive family relationships, and conditioning to power and control dynamics.

The model process (Figure A) is verified through the use of family violence as an example of 'importation'. A youth's predisposition to aggression is generated by domestic violence. The personal risk factors (i.e. a history of behavioral problems, a history of aggression, risk taking, and personal attitudes and values about the use of aggression) are interdependent with the family risk factors (i.e. an early and current history of domestic violence and concomitantly, neglect and abuse) (Figure C). It has been demonstrated that these youth enter young offender settings with a specific predisposition to violence (Figure E). Youth exhibit these behaviors and characteristics in the context of the conditions of the setting. If the institutional setting is "loaded" with elements of deprivation (Figure D), a negative peer subculture will develop that uses aggression and violence as a primary strategy to cope with the level of deprivation. In the peer subculture, a spectrum of aggressive behaviors or power tactics is used to acquire and maintain status over other youth. Positioning in the social hierarchy is critical to relief the 'pains of imprisonment'. This status is achieved through dominance and aggression (Figure B). Youth who have witnessed or experienced family violence are acutely aware of these dynamics and reenact them with ease. The institutional setting, in these circumstances, can be described as perpetuating the intergenerational transmission of violence.

## Figure E

### **Pre-Prison Characteristics of Youth Who are Victims or Witnesses of Family Violence**

Characteristics and behaviours pre-disposing youth to poor adjustment in institutional cultures:

- Poor self identity
- Aggression used to alleviate poor self-image
- Aggression discharged to relieve feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, rage, humiliation and fear
- Persistent state of fear
- Impulsive behaviour
- Few inhibitors to aggression
- Limited capacity for empathy
- Exaggerated risk taking behaviour
- Abusive parental role models who used aggression as a problem-solving tool or coping strategy
- Aggression viewed by abusive parent as legitimate
- Victimization viewed as inevitable
- Hyper vigilance required in unsafe family environment
- Lack of protection by adults
- Limited discipline, parenting, guidance or nurturance
- Affiliation with negative peer groups
- Conditioned to power and control dynamics in relationships

## **Figure F**

### **Characteristics and behaviours of youth in custodial settings with high levels of deprivation**

- Immaturity in negotiating social relationships
- Impulsive, frequent use of disruptive behaviour in the environment
- Frequent use of aggression for the sake of aggression (emotional discharge)
- Aggression used to acquire and maintain dominant status over others
- Use of intimidation, coercion and threats to gain dominance over others
- Humiliation and degradation of others
- Lack of empathy
- Hyper vigilance due to fear of victimization
- Feelings of lack of safety
- Need for activity
- Structure and routines not self-generated
- Seek protection of adults in the setting
- Dependent on adult role models
- Attachment to family

## **Conclusion**

The interaction between the importation and deprivation models has been widely accepted in the literature as providing a convincing understanding of the process of prisonization and its impact on inmate violence. The analysis of these models both individually and in combination has largely been developed in the context of the adult correctional system. The present analysis and model development is specific to youth custody settings and utilized youth voice and self-report as the primary source of information. The model was reliant on a description of a peer subculture and the resultant typology of violence reported elsewhere (Paper One). The model process, verified in this analysis, illustrates the intertwining of personal and family risk factors to create the personal attributes that are imported by the youth into custody. The features of the custodial institution (philosophy, milieu, physical structure and program resources) magnify these personal attributes. The level of deprivation exhibited in the custodial setting will determine the level of magnification and the level of violence produced in the peer subculture. The model process came alive with the introduction of family violence as the risk factor identified to illustrate the model. The normal developmental tasks and behavioral expectations of adolescence consistently influenced the discussion of the components and the process of the model. As a number of custodial environments were used in the study, there was a range in the level of deprivation experienced by youth. Observations

of characteristics and behavior of incarcerated youth across these settings was described in detail.

There is a preponderance of youth in young offender settings, who have a history of family violence. These youth exhibit, through their presentation and behaviors, a constellation of features that they import into the custodial environments. Their family experience has conditioned them to normalize the use of aggression and violence. If these youth are forced to interact with an aggressive peer subculture, they adapt with coping strategies that are reenactments of family dynamics. The intensity of a deprived environment exaggerates these features of youth and perpetuates their existing expectations and lifestyle. They use aggression to elicit predictable responses from their environments. They are ripe to develop a system of social interaction that relies on the establishment and maintenance of power and control. Young offenders with histories of family violence are already predisposed to troublesome pathways. Incarcerations in environments that are not rehabilitative in nature magnify this predisposition and escalate the pace of the journey on these pathways.

There are critical access points to interrupt this process. Early decisive intervention to limit the childhood experience of family violence is the preferred approach. Intervention with violent youth needs to take into account the context of that aggression. Unfortunately, once a child becomes an adolescent, the focus is centered on the youth's behavior rather than his history or life circumstances. Many young people enter young offender institutions with complex needs. Ironically, the youth's last chance for rehabilitation is often in the very system that is least equipped to deal with his mental health needs. The correctional system needs to accommodate the needs of these troubled youth or divert them from the system altogether. Attempts need to be made to neutralize an aggressive peer subculture by reducing the conditions of deprivation from which youth seek relief. It is critical that emphasis in custodial sites be placed on safety, appropriate personal boundaries, meaningful activity from dawn to dusk, group problem-solving, pro social role modeling by staff, management of behavior

through relationships, adequate supervision and vigilance by staff, and restorative strategies for violence. This approach de-emphasizes an organizational ideology of social control and security and embraces a philosophy of rehabilitation that is consistent with a youth's developmental needs and history.

The model successfully demonstrated the interaction between the predisposition of the youth and that of the institutional environment using family violence as the clarifying example. It is presumed that the application of this model can be applied to other risk factors with similar results. A more comprehensive and rigorous study is required to test the model components and process. A methodology that augments self-report with multiple sources and methodologies is optimal due to the complexity of issues presented. This theoretical analysis poses more questions than answers.

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