

The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in Addressing School Violence: Insights from the Change from Within (CFW) Programme in Jamaica

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Abstract

School violence is a serious issue in Jamaica, where school violence mirrors that which occurs within communities. The Change from Within programme seeks to engender wider school culture change to build peace within schools. Part of the programme's multi-faceted approach focuses on parental and community involvement. This generic qualitative research study utilises semi-structured interviews with school stakeholders to explore the roles that parents and community members play in addressing violence. Findings indicate that parental and community relations can have positive (e.g., parents and community members' investments of time and love in their children's lives, partnership with teachers) and negative (e.g., students' replication of negative behaviours of community members) impacts on peacebuilding efforts. Concerted and cohesive efforts to build relationships with parents and community members to support peacebuilding efforts within schools are chief among the recommendations emerging from this study.

Keywords: parental involvement, school violence, school culture, Jamaica, peacebuilding

Introduction

Violence against and amongst children is a serious problem in the Caribbean (Baker-Henningham et al., 2009; Cabral & Speek-Warnery, 2005; Gardner et al., 2003, 2005). In Jamaica, for instance, youth are likely to be both victims and perpetrators of violence (Gardner et al., 2003). Violence amongst young people is notable according to Cole and Anderson (2016), leading to this becoming a "major public policy issue and a serious public health concern" (Smith & Green, 2007, p. 417).

Violent behaviours in schools are proving to be increasing sources of concern in nations such as Trinidad and Tobago (De Lisle, 2007; James et al., 2014; Williams, 2016), Guyana (Cabral

& Speek-Warnery, 2005) and Jamaica (Bourne & McLymont, 2020; Down et al., 2005; Miller, 2018; Miller, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2012; Patterson, 2017; Porter, 2020).

In Jamaica, studies have focused on various aspects of school violence, including: secondary school students' experiences of violence (Meeks Gardner et al., 2003); primary school students' experiences of violence and impacts on academic achievement (Baker-Henningham et al., 2009; Bourne & McLymont, 2020); the impact of bullying on students' psychological well-being (Pottinger & Gordon Stair, 2009); the development, evaluation, and scaling up of early childhood violence prevention programmes (Baker-Henningham et al., 2023); the nexus among community, social relations, school

procedures, and violence (Edwards–Kerr, 2018); and the role of leadership in addressing school violence (Ferguson et al., 2018).

Turanovic and Siennick (2022) suggest that school violence is multifaceted and encompasses physical aggression, battery and physical assault, non-contact aggression, bullying, robbery, weapon possession, verbal threats, fighting, and sexual contact. School violence is not limited to students as enactors or victims but extends to teachers as well. Among a list of strategies to prevent school violence, the World Health Organization has recommended that schools and education systems implement and enroll parents and students in educational activities that focus on violence prevention, allowing skilled teachers to deliver violence prevention programmes and leveraging the school environment to challenge harmful social and cultural norms (World Health Organization, 2019).

Given the upsurge of school violence in recent decades (Caribbean Policy Research Institute [CAPRI], 2018; Mathison, 2024; Miller, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2012; Porter, 2020; Williams, 2024), it is important for Jamaica, particularly as a Small Island State within the Caribbean, to engage with the notion of parental involvement. Several researchers working within the Jamaican context have highlighted that parental involvement is one facet that is critical to addressing the issue (Cole & Anderson, 2016; Edwards–Kerr, 2017; Mighty & Ferguson, 2022). As Cole and Anderson (2016) explain, some of the programmes aimed at addressing school violence in the country “fail to capture the family and the homes in their implementation. As a result there is no lasting impact on positive changes because teaching and exposing students to certain skills in one setting does not necessarily transmit to learning in an environment where students are socialised to use aggression as a means of survival and social exchange” (p. 12). It is important to note that the role of parents is part of a wider systemic approach needed to address root causes of violence (Edwards–Kerr, 2017), wrapped up in the roots of Jamaica’s colonial history and contemporary forces such as drug crime, gang violence, and the use of violence as a political means.

Given the positive potential and the important role of parental involvement to mitigate against school violence (Bliss et al., 2006; Lesneskie & Block, 2017; Song et al., 2019) and to counter negative forces, it is important to at least acknowledge that, *inter alia*, the family can socialise children into “aggressive behaviours and tendencies” (Cole & Anderson, 2016, p. 12). “Hostile” or “punitive” parenting alongside parents who are uninvolved or insufficiently involved in their children’s lives can lead to violence and antisocial behaviour (Steinberg, 2000). Indeed, poor monitoring and supervision of children and harsh physical punishment are strong predictors of violence during adolescence and adulthood (Mercy et al., 2002).

One of the programmes in Jamaica that focuses on peacebuilding is the Change from Within programme, implemented by an education department at a regional university. Since 1992, the programme has sought to address school violence through a school culture change process that includes parental involvement as one of its principles. On the basis that parental involvement and the education process exist as a symbiotic relationship (O’Connor Bones et al., 2022), this generic qualitative research explored the role of parental involvement in peacebuilding amongst four of the schools involved in the programme. Further, as the study was conceptualised and undertaken within the context of the COVID–19 pandemic, the ways in which parenting and peacebuilding efforts might have been influenced by the pandemic were explored.

The research questions were: How do parents/community members (negatively/positively) influence peacebuilding efforts? What roles do participants feel that parents/community members can play in supporting peace? How do participants feel that the COVID–19 pandemic has influenced parental/community involvement in schools? Note that the focus on parents and community members is based on one of the Change from Within programme’s operational principles, which speaks to the “involvement of parents and the wider community” (see Figure 1).

Figure 1*Change from Within Programme Principles*

This exploration is significant, given frequent incidents of school violence in the nation (Mathison, 2024; Williams, 2024) and the positive associations recognised between parental involvement and fewer incidents of school violence (Lesneskie & Block, 2017; Song et al., 2019). The findings are relevant for schools involved in the Change from Within programme (as they can inform further efforts to enhance parental involvement – an important facet of the programme) and for schools in the nation and region that are seeking to form cogent, comprehensive responses to school violence. Additionally, the findings contribute to the regional body of literature.

In the following sections, we offer an overview of the study's theoretical framework and of the literature surrounding violence in Jamaica, as well as parental involvement and violence. We then describe the Change from Within programme, after which we outline our research methodology. Thereafter, we share our findings and discuss the meanings drawn from these findings. We conclude by outlining some recommendations for enhancing parental involvement in our Change from Within schools, which may also be relevant to other schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that informs this study is Epstein's framework of parental involvement. As posited by O'Connor Bones et al. (2022), "Parents and schools working in harmony is pivotal to improve the educational outcomes, development and well-being of children regardless of their age or school setting" (p. 940). Epstein articulates six layers of involvement that are integral to family, community, and school partnerships (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Epstein & Salinas, 2004), including:

Parenting: strengthening of parenting skills and family support; offering home conditions that support children's learning;

Communicating: fostering two-way (home-school and school-home) communication channels so that parents and teachers are on the same wavelength about children's activities, needs, etc.;

Volunteering: facilitating parents and families volunteering at schools and other environments important to their children;

Learning at home: involving parents and families in their children's learning activities, such as homework and other tasks related to their curriculum;

Decision-making: involving parents in school decisions and governance through mechanisms such as parent-teacher associations, school committees, and other means; and

Collaborating with the community: drawing on community resources to support students, schools, and families; and facilitating and encouraging these entities to contribute to the community.

All of this is critical since research demonstrates the importance of parental involvement in mitigating school violence (Bliss et al., 2006; Lesneskie & Block, 2017; Song et al., 2019).

Literature Review

Violence in Jamaica

Sutton et al. (2017) shared that over 40% of the Caribbean region's population identified crime and security-related issues as the dominant factors impacting their countries. Consequently, violence poses challenges to sustainability (Le Franc et al., 2008; Muturi & Donald, 2006; Sutton et al., 2017; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2012; Ward et al., 2012). Crime and violence can deter external investments; divert national expenditures from sectors such as education and health care towards national security; impact physical/mental health within the populace; lead to outward migration; and destabilise countries.

In Jamaica, according to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019) report, increases in interpersonal violence over the past 6 decades have been recorded and attributed to various issues, including gang and political violence. As reported by *The Gleaner* (2021) and Statistica (2025), between 2021 and 2024 Jamaica's homicide rate (which is amongst the highest in the region) ranges between 40.1 to 46.5 per 100,000 people. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2021) argues that the high rates of crime and violence in Jamaica have negative consequences such as hindrances to economic growth and social development, insecurity, and heightened levels of fear. Researchers have characterised violence within the country as an endemic problem (Geary et al., 2006).

Parental Involvement and School Violence

Parenting is critical to children's overall growth and development (Cole, 2020). Language skills, social skills, and knowledge about their environment are all learned within the home (Cole, 2020). Parenting is also significant for school life, as the involvement of parents is critical to children's academic achievement and their overall development (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). Parental involvement "refers to a cooperative process that brings parents, school staff, and students together by establishing

shared goals and activities to provide students with a healthy and stable learning environment" (Reschly & Christenson, 2009, as cited in Song et al., 2019, p. 405). The involvement of parents in all aspects of school life allows them to offer "valuable insights and unique perspectives to schools, which serve to enhance home-school relationships, student behaviour, and academic achievement" (Soliman et al., 2018, p. 4). Parental involvement allows parents to work with teachers to ensure consistent expectations with respect to behaviours; establish social networks that allow for monitoring of children's behaviours and protect them from violence; recognise at-risk students; understand school violence; and problem-solve in relation to conflict (Song et al., 2019).

Research has found that parental involvement is associated with and/or perceived to be associated with fewer school violence incidents (e.g., Bliss et al., 2006; Lesneskie & Block, 2017; Song et al., 2019). Using school-level data for the 2009–2010 school year, Song et al. (2019) found that parental involvement was related to reductions in the level of school violence in elementary and middle schools in the United States of America (USA). This was due to factors such as parental involvement in back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, and volunteering, which allowed parents and teachers to establish mutual goals and likely allowed parents to recognise at-risk behaviours in students and implement actions to address these behaviours (Song et al., 2019). Worthington's (2014) research, which involved a sample of 948 middle schools across the USA, drawn from the National Centre for Education Statistics 2005–2006 School Survey on Crime and Safety, found that parent-school communication contributed to the decrease of school violence in middle schools as it allowed parents insights into the academic and social lives of their children, and teachers gained a greater understanding of their students' family environments. Murray et al. (2010) found that parents who communicated peaceful solutions to conflict such as walking away, speaking to an adult, or working with their peers to problem-solve, had children who were less likely to become involved in aggressive acts. Murray et al. (2010) also pointed out that various research studies "have shown that adolescents are less

likely to engage in aggressive behaviours when parents provide high levels of monitoring or have knowledge of their adolescents' whereabouts" (p. 176).

Parenting style, however, can be a source of conflict as permissive parents (those who are accepting of and non-punitive towards their child's negative behaviour) and/or authoritarian parents (those who adopt absolute standards of conduct with no clear guidance or explanation) are more likely to raise aggressive adolescents than authoritative parents (those who institute clear rules of behaviour in a rational manner that is clearly communicated to their children) (Baumrind, 1996). Parent discipline practices (e.g., harsh punishment) have been associated with a growth in conduct problems and deteriorating social skills amongst students (Baker-Henningham & Francis, 2018; Kokkinos, 2013). Parent discipline practices can be classified into three main categories: (1) non-violent (e.g. removing privileges, explaining why something is wrong), (2) psychologically aggressive (e.g. name-calling, yelling), and (3) physically violent (e.g. slapping, beating with an object) (Baker-Henningham & Francis, 2018). In the Jamaican context, the use of harsh punishment (defined as numbers 2 and 3) as a disciplinary strategy is pervasive at home and at school (Baker-Henningham & Francis, 2018). Baker-Henningham and Francis (2018) found that, amongst a sample of young children who were tracked from pre-school into primary school, frequent use of harsh punishment was associated with increased conduct problems and lower social skill levels over time.

Holt et al. (2008) found that bullies were more likely to come from homes in which parents did not know their children's whereabouts, suggestive of a lack of monitoring. As stated earlier, Mercy et al. (2002) pointed to poor monitoring and supervision by parents as predictors of violence in adolescence and adulthood.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the significance of parents was underscored. The education system was negatively impacted as schools globally faced closures, transitions to online learning, and learning loss amongst pupils. Additionally, students had to cope with isolation, stress and anxiety, and loss of peer

socialisation (Ribeiro et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2022). Notwithstanding, the pandemic offered opportunities for parental training and support in a more enhanced and concerted way (Thompson et al., 2022), and opportunities for new forms of involvement (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Ribeiro et al. (2021) found that Portuguese parents' support for their children aided in monitoring students' attention in classes and the realisation of tasks. O'Connor Bones et al. (2022) also found that, despite challenges, parents of children with special needs reported benefits from the pandemic, including discovering new things about their children, learning alongside their children, and talking together.

The Change from Within programme

Operating in Jamaica since 1992, the Change from Within programme has focused on peacebuilding and violence prevention within a group of primary and high schools through a process of school culture change that has included focus on aspects of leadership development, mentorship, capacity-building, fostering social capital, visioning and reflection, and the adoption of a change mindset. A number of the schools within the Change from Within programme are either located in volatile communities, surrounded by volatile communities, or have students hailing from these communities. Given that this school culture change process is initiated and driven by stakeholders from within the schools, the name "Change from Within" was adopted. Early research on the programme, conducted in 2003–2004, focused on seven schools involved in the programme; exploring the manifestations, causes, and impacts of violence on students. Findings highlighted that the capacity-building component for principals (which was the most effective part of the programme) was cited as "therapeutic, inspiring, and practical" and as "significant in its development of leadership in the schools" (Down et al., 2005). More recently, follow-up research further explored the role of leadership in addressing school violence, focussing on the experiences of principals participating in the Change from Within programme (Ferguson et al., 2018; Ferguson et al., 2020). There

has also been engagement with and focus on the concept of “social affirmation” used by the programme (Down, 2020). The value and power of parents and communities to contribute to school culture change has also been outlined in a booklet of short case studies on the programme (Myers, n.d.). There does, however, need to be more formal research on the role of parents and communities.

The programme is underpinned by eight principles, as outlined in Figure 1. Through facets such as mentoring, the use of new pedagogies in teaching and capacity-building, school stakeholders (principals, teachers, students, parents, community members) are introduced to conflict resolution strategies and restorative justice practices, reflection and clarification of values, and strategies to enhance interpersonal relationships.

Parental and community involvement has included parents’ involvement in school beautification projects; parents and community members repairing/rebuilding aspects of the school after natural events such as hurricanes; community members being available to counsel students in trouble; helping in school assemblies; and strengthening parent and parent-teacher associations.

Research Positionality

The purpose of the study is fuelled by our positionality, research interests, and professional practice. As first author, I am a senior lecturer in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with interests in peace education. I teach and research in the area, and I also (with colleagues) conduct workshops and webinars for teachers in the areas of conflict resolution and restorative justice. Additionally, I possess 9 years of experience as the leader for the Change from Within programme. Through my work in the programme, the workshops, and the webinars, I frequently hear stories about the value and power of parents as they work alongside teachers and the principal, adding value to their children’s educational experiences and the schools’ cultures. As the second author, I am

pursuing a doctoral degree in teacher education with an emphasis on ESD. My background in education encompasses over 13 years of cumulative experience working with students at the primary and secondary levels; pre- and in-service teachers; and pre- and in-service school leaders. My interest in undertaking this study is premised on my own upbringing in Jamaica and first-hand experience with school violence at the primary and secondary levels from both a victim and witness perspective. Education, I believe, is one of the most effective tools to understand and advocate for ending violence in schools and the wider community.

Methodology

Through a generic qualitative design, the study sought to capture the experiences and perspectives of 4 principals, 5 teachers, and 5 parents. Our intentions were to explore the meanings individuals ascribe to social issues (Creswell, 2014) while gleaning an understanding of how the participants “interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). As a qualitative study, our intention was not to present objective claims about school violence or generalise findings. Rather, our findings were exploratory and representative of the participants’ own understandings of any perceived connections between parental and community involvement and school violence. In keeping with high quality research ethics, a proposal for the study was submitted and received subsequent approval from the institution’s ethics committee. Additionally, all four principals were approached with respect to undertaking the research, with the particulars shared, and offered their approval. Thereafter, all participants (principals, teachers, and parents) were given informed consent forms which outlined all aspects of the research.

Data Collection and Participants

In keeping with the qualitative design of the study, data were collected from participants associated with four of the schools in the

Change from Within programme through semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Based on a review of the literature related to the study, and the researchers' interest in the experiences of individuals impacted by the Change from Within programme, three interview protocols were developed – one for each category of participants. The interview protocol for the principals comprised ten structured questions that captured their background as principals. These questions sought to evoke principals' experiences and perspectives of their school cultures; school and community relations and engagements; programmes and initiatives within their schools; and the impact of the pandemic in relation to community and parental involvement as well as peacebuilding efforts. The interview protocol for teachers comprised six structured questions geared at eliciting teachers' experiences within their respective school contexts, teaching and learning during the pandemic, and strategies used in the online space to promote peace. Ten structured questions were asked to prompt parents to share their experiences and perspectives of living in or around the school community; their involvement in school activities; the impact of school violence; and how the pandemic affected their involvement in school activities (see Appendix A for the interview questions). Probing questions were asked during each interview to delve further into the experiences of the participants.

The four school leaders were each purposefully selected because they led institutions that formed part of the Change from Within programme and could therefore provide valuable insights for the study. The teachers and parents, however, were selected subsequent to the interviews with each principal and based on the principals' recommendations. Consequently, the snowball sampling technique, which allows participants to identify others to become members of a study (Creswell, 2012), was used to select the parents and teachers. Contact was first made with parents via phone to provide information about the study and to ascertain if they were willing to participate in the study. Subsequently, emails were sent with written information and informed consent forms.

Cumulatively, the study sample comprised 14 participants which included four school principals, five parents, and five teachers, each of whom was interviewed for approximately 1 hour via Zoom. The intentional selection of the three groups of participants allowed us to garner insights from a variety of vantage points based on the research topic (King & Horrocks, 2010). With permission from each participant (identified by a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes) interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were subsequently shared with individual participants as part of the member checking process prior to data analysis.

Sample Groups

Principals. The principal sample group comprised three males and one female whose years of experience in principalship ranged from 5-13 years. In this category of participants, two were principals of primary schools while the remaining two led secondary, co-education institutions.

Teachers. In the teacher group of participants, there were four females and one male. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 5-25 years. Three of the teachers were from the secondary level while the remaining two were from the primary level.

Parents. The parent group of participants comprised five parents, four of whom were female while the other was a male, and it was noted that they spent a significant number of years living in the community where the respective schools were located. The male parent in the study had only spent one year living in the community. For the most part, the participants described their school communities as inner-city and most of them resided within proximity of the school.

Data Analysis

We engaged in an analytical process to transform the data into findings (Patton, 2002). This process included preparing the transcripts and modifying them based on member checking; reading through the transcripts to obtain a general sense of their content; and coding the data to generate the themes (Creswell, 2012) that

emerged as well as the descriptions outlined later in this paper. An iterative process of data analysis required the reading of transcripts multiple times and the generation of primarily descriptive codes during first and second cycle coding. Additionally, it facilitated the cross-referencing of codes which were independently identified by the researchers and agreed upon following consultations. Miles et al. (2019) characterise qualitative data analysis as a series of movements from codes, which are then clustered into smaller numbers of categories or themes. These themes then lead to the development of assertions, which are “declarative statements of summative synthesis, supported by confirming evidence from the data”, or “bullet points” of the major findings (Miles et al., 2019, p. 93).

Finally, a research assistant was co-opted to provide assistance with the study’s data analysis by coding the transcripts. This contributed to the trustworthiness of the study as the transcripts were also independently coded by the second author and comparisons made with those codes that emerged. In some instances, categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis were merged based on similarities. Subsequently, the first author conducted a third layer of data analysis by reviewing and comparing the analyses of the research assistant and the second author. The assertions, as put forth in the next section of this paper, were then agreed upon.

To help reduce bias, the interviews were carried out by the second author, who has no relationship with the Change from Within programme. This meant that responses from interviewees could be probed and explored without any pre-existing bias. Additionally, the coding by the second author and research assistant also meant that the data could be explored and analysed without partiality.

Limitations

A few limitations should be noted. Firstly, whilst a range of participants were engaged in this study (principals, teachers, and parents), the voices of students were not able to be gathered at the time of the research, given that it took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and it was felt that face-to-face engagement of students would

have been preferable to more readily establish the rapport and comfort that would have encouraged them to share. The challenges experienced by students accessing technology for schooling would also have inhibited access for interviews via Zoom. Secondly, although five parents were interviewed, it would have been useful to gather more views from other parents (particularly male parents), given that only one male parent was engaged. Thirdly, data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, which relegated interviews to the virtual space and would have prohibited any in-person observations. This might also have limited the participation of some individuals (particularly parents) who might not have had the technology or internet access to participate in online interviews.

Findings

In alignment with the research questions, and after careful analysis of the data, we present the research findings in this section. The seven themes that emerged were:

- i. influence of volatile communities and poor parental relations;
- ii. importance of teacher–parent partnerships;
- iii. connection between affection and behaviour;
- iv. importance of parental supervision from an early age;
- v. mixed views on the impact of COVID–19 on parental involvement;
- vi. pandemic enhanced parental networks; and,
- vii. parental involvement post COVID–19.

The themes formed the basis on which the findings are presented, using assertions based on each research question.

RQ1: How do parents/community members (negatively/positively) influence peacebuilding efforts?

Assertion: Peacebuilding efforts required collaborative and deliberate involvement to counter negative influences.

All four principals interviewed outlined the strong support that they received in general from the parents. Principal Ford shared the proactive

nature of some parents in seeing needs and immediately volunteering to address them.

And they also come and they would say, Sir, but I see that you want this or I will come back and help with this cleaning and so. So it is sometimes overwhelming, but I do get the support of the parents around me.

The parents themselves also outlined their desire and willingness to be involved in school life and, by extension, the life of their child. Mrs. Duncan (parent) shared,

Well, I wanted to get active in the school community, right? So I am always at PTA meeting. Always. I have never missed a PTA meeting. I am at devotion every Monday morning. I am at their school devotion every Monday morning. Basically I am at the school every day.

Likewise, Mr. Lincoln shared the ways he is involved, citing aspects such as preparing the children for athletic championship (popularly known as champs) and serving as an executive member of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

With respect to violence prevention, the principals believed that the degree to which peacekeeping is exhibited in schools was greatly dependent on the support of various stakeholders (parents, teachers, community, corporate). The principals felt that multi-stakeholder relationships and partnerships were important with respect to peacekeeping and shared various examples of this. Mr. Gilmore outlined an intentional approach to relationship-building to garner support for the school as well as "protection" for the school campus and those who frequented it: *"We intentionally pursue a good relationship with all the surrounding communities and they in turn protect us ... cause they feel they have a stake in it"* (Principal, Mr. Gilmore). Mr. Gilmore went further to recount an incident in which some students were setting themselves up as those "running" the school and trying to instill fear in other students. He therefore turned to the community for support, sharing what was happening: *"the community leaders clamped down on it immediately and made it very clear that they have no, umm, absolutely no right to do that and would have to stop"*.

Mrs. McDonald indicated:

"I want to put a plug in first that we are in an inner-city community, ... and what it took us was basically modelling the behaviour that we wanted in our school ... So we kind of forced them into a mould to get what we wanted. So the flare ups and so, we don't have that or I would say it's next to naught, right? ... We participate in the community by attending funerals that we need to attend or church services or so ... One thing I can say, knock on wood, the community members are protective of us. So if they think something is going to erupt, they are going to come and say leave the compound early ... we have not had any break-ins and I think that again it's the community that is looking out and protecting us" (Principal, Mrs. McDonald)

Thus, Mrs. McDonald ensured that a reciprocal relationship existed in which the school community attended events and supported residents in the community (e.g. by attending funerals), whilst simultaneously benefitting from their protection.

Parents believed that their contributions and roles were important. Parent Mrs. Duncan expressed:

I think what we can do as parents is to talk to our children before they leave out for school in the mornings ... Pray, ask God to guide them and protect them. It is hard sometimes because when you have a good child going to school and they are on the right track and then somebody else out of the blue just come trouble them and trigger them off. I think if most of us talk to our children and try to grow them up in the right and proper way it can scale it [violence] down.

On the other hand, all four principals felt that behaviours in volatile communities, twinned with poor parental relations and supervision practices negatively influenced peacebuilding efforts. All five teachers also felt that where poor parental supervision existed, it was one of the factors responsible for negative behaviour. One of the principals made reference to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact saying, "... it's clear to us that ... many of whom were offline for the period of over two years did not have structured parental guidance and support, based on some of the issues we see presenting to us at this time" (Principal, Mr. Murray). Thus, Mr. Murray drew a

link between the disruption in schooling due to the transition to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of structured parental guidance during this time for some students, and the behavioural issues presenting themselves as face-to-face classes resumed. Another principal, speaking more generally, indicated:

You walk into the cafeteria ... and you hear them as how they were in their communities ... Even the cadence of their speaking changes...the courtesy that you observe in the classroom disappears ... And there is a tendency to be a bit more impatient and even violent (Principal, Mr. Gilmore).

This principal highlighted how children mimic what takes place in their communities/home environments on the school campus.

Some teachers believe that volatile communities can influence how students handle disputes. Three of the five teachers who were interviewed felt that the communities from which students hailed influenced how students approached conflicts. Given that a number of these communities are inner-city communities with flare-ups of violence, students might not have experienced many examples of peaceful resolution to conflict. One of the teachers, Ms. Lamont, shared, "We work basically near quite a few inner-city communities ... And the students come in with a lot. And parents as well ... So some of them come with behavioural issues ... My second day of working [here] they kill[ed] somebody in a compound" (Teacher, Ms. Lamont). One parent, Mr. Lincoln, perceived that school violence was only a reflection of what obtains in society. He exclaimed,

What is happening in schools is similar to what is happening in society being that we are having issues, problems with crime and violence in the wider society and life is just reflecting, schools are just reflecting what is happening in society.

Mr. Murray highlighted how a lack of partnership and support could result in students receiving mixed messages and being inconsistent with respect to their behaviour. He stated,

So this affects their morals ... sometimes you are at school doing one thing but they go back home and into the communities and you find that gambling, use of

expletives, and so on is so much a norm that it, it becomes ingrained in them almost (Principal, Mr. Murray).

Thus, school-home partnerships could ensure that students experience consistent examples of positive behaviour and conflict resolution mechanisms, and not fall prey to mixed messages.

RQ2: What roles do participants feel that parents/community members can play in supporting peace?

Assertion: Teacher-parent partnerships are critical to peacebuilding efforts by monitoring behaviour, reinforcing positive behaviour and expectations, and offering loving environments in which students' behaviour can be positively shaped.

Firstly, parents recognised their own importance in molding peaceable attitudes in children. Mr. Lincoln shared the following:

You have to, as the parent, teach your child how to resolve different ideas, how to resolve different ways of doing things, ways of saying things without physical or verbal disrespect, you know. So I try to encourage my children and that is how I work on violence, try to have my children understand the value of discipline, understand the value of doing what is right, and the value of avoiding confrontation.

Four of the five teachers interviewed believed that parents' partnership with them enabled consistency in promoting desirable student behaviour. Ms. Lamont, one of the teachers, stated the following: "They [boys] did what was asked. As I said most of the parents were there so they had to do what was asked of them. The boys that I knew of that were on live classes, their parents were there" (Teacher, Ms. Lamont). Importantly, Ms. Lamont indicated that most of the parents were present during the online classes and that this contributed to their positive behaviours during these classes. This highlights the importance of home-school partnerships in ensuring that positive behaviours are reinforced. Additionally, it highlights the importance of monitoring students' behaviours.

Three of the parents interviewed believed

that parents and community members should offer children love and support in the home and community, as this significantly shaped how they behaved at school. One parent voiced, "Because sometimes most of our boys I think it's because of the structure of the home. Some fatherless, too much persons in the home, not enough love. So there are some stress[es] and that comes to school" (Parent, Mrs. Morgan). Mrs. Morgan further shared,

I'm always there. Honestly, I'm always there. My child is from a single parent home. So I never ever want him to feel left out at any point. So I always tell him that it's never about the destination, is all about the journey. So at the end, when I feel like my work is done, he can say that someone was there because he doesn't have a father figure. So I try to be at everything.

The demonstration of love and care in the home is important, given that the home is the first environment in which children are socialised.

Three parents believed that parents/community members should correct undesirable behaviour from an early age in order to improve behavioural outcomes. As one parent illustrated,

Like the other day I was there and a child was very rude to a teacher, we had to stand and talk to her about it and let her know that's not the proper way of doing things and so on. Send her to apologise to the teacher even though she didn't really want to (Parent, Mrs. Jacobs).

Allowing inappropriate behaviour to persist makes it more difficult for behaviour change to occur, as individuals get set in their ways. Thus, identifying misbehaviour or inappropriate behaviour at the outset and addressing the issues with children becomes important.

RQ3: How do participants feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced parental/community involvement in schools?

Assertion: The COVID-19 pandemic had positive and negative impacts on parental involvement during and post-pandemic, offering opportunities for enhanced parental involvement and networking on the one hand, whilst also disrupting the face-to-face interaction that can enhance engagement on the other hand.

Of the teachers interviewed, two of them held positive and negative views on the impact of COVID-19 on community/parental involvement in school. Ms. Lamont emphasised the positive impact, in which parents monitored their children during online classes and joint learning (for parent and child) took place. In reference to parental support, she stated:

Increased. Increased for us. Usually we would not see them. Usually homework is not done so, and you know what, too, you have to keep a check on them ... some of them were learning with the students to be honest ... some of them sat there the whole time during classes to ensure that the students were paying attention and the work was being done (Teacher, Ms. Lamont).

On the other hand, another teacher, Mr. Roberts, shared an aspect of the negative impact:

Before COVID now, the rapport with parents was more a face-to-face rapport, so parents would come in and parent teachers meeting very often so you would get to consultation face-to-face would really ... parents really get to look the child in his eye when teacher really say yow, this ya boy ... and being now online, the text message or the one voice note, I don't think it's as effective as how the face-to-face would have been.

Only one parent found that parents related more, and some even formed bonds during the pandemic through the use of online communication. Mrs. Jacobs, a parent, related the following as an illustration:

So she becomes changed and change her environment that she's living in. She started going to church. So it has helped in a way that it brings us as parents together. We started praying more as parents. If we hear that this one is in the hospital, we would bring it across. If we hear that a child is not well and so on. So it kind of brings us close when we start and then it spills right over back to when school is open up. So if one is going to school and they don't have it they say all right then, we're going to send some hot dog bread and some sausage (Parent, Mrs. Jacobs)

The formation of these networks is important to bolster support of parents for one another as they seek to support their children in various ways, whether it is through the provision of basic needs, or the offering of emotional support.

Three parents experienced mixed feelings about how COVID-19 restrictions impacted their involvement in school after the resumption of face-to-face modality. As with the mixed sentiments expressed in relation to the pandemic's impact on parental involvement, individuals also had mixed feelings with respect to the influence of the pandemic after children returned to school, with some indicating that the pandemic had disrupted what had been stronger parental involvement pre-pandemic. Mrs. Morgan voiced, "Oh, before the pandemic actually it was really better, because before the pandemic we as parents were able to come on the compound and we were able to sit with our children ... talk to the teachers ... PTA coming out was like hundreds." (Parent, Mrs. Morgan).

Discussion

The findings reveal that all participants interviewed (principals, teachers, and parents) found parental involvement to be an important aspect of schooling in general and peacebuilding more specifically. Significantly, the parents interviewed recognised the importance of their role, with those such as Mr. Lincoln acknowledging parents' roles in teaching their children conflict resolution strategies that do not involve verbal or physical violence; Mrs. Morgan citing the importance of demonstrating love and support to children; and Mrs. Jacobs highlighting how parents are important with respect to reinforcing behavioural expectations at school as she recounted the incident where a group of parents admonished a child to go and apologise to their teacher for the misbehaviour they had displayed. The parents in this study undoubtedly understood the importance of parenthood in children's development in general and with respect to peacebuilding specifically, and illustrated this by their own positive involvement in the lives of their children and the schools.

Participants felt that both violent and volatile community environments, along with poor parenting practices such as poor parental guidance and supervision, were linked with violence and poor behaviour amongst students. However, this poor parental guidance, monitoring, and supervision was magnified

during the pandemic in some but not all instances. For instance, Mr. Murray pointed out that circumstances during this time prevented parents from being fully "present" with their children, accounting for students' behavioural challenges in online classes. Ms. Lamont, on the other hand, indicated that for those children who participated in online classes, their parents were present — thus ensuring participation. The pandemic clearly presented an opportunity for some parents to be present in an enhanced way during their children's schooling, as pointed out by Ms. Lamont, and similar to parents in the Ribeiro et al. (2021) study. Participants also highlighted a link between parenting style/supervision and poor behaviour, in line with what has been stated in the literature (Anderson & Cole, 2017; Holt et al., 2008; Murray et al., 2010).

Related to this, our participants felt that the involvement of parents was important in addressing disciplinary problems (Soliman et al., 2018). Participants also indicated that parents had a clear role (alongside teachers) in correcting and addressing anti-social or problematic behaviours from the outset, before they became embedded practices. If too much time is allowed to elapse, behavioural change could be challenging. Interviewees also felt that parental love and concern were important as this had a positive impact on children's behaviour. One of the participants, Mrs. Duncan, spoke to the importance of simply talking to children, and interacting with them, to ensure that parents were countering any negative influences from other environments such as the community. One participant concurred, particularly with respect to male students who had absentee fathers or other parental figures. Anderson and Cole (2017) highlight the view that parents must have and maintain positive relationships with their children, even in cases of separation or divorce.

Additionally, social networks (e.g., parents-parents; parents-teachers) were deemed to be important for monitoring students and fostering positive behaviour through the reinforcement of positive behaviours learned at school and in the home environment. This was an aspect voiced by Mrs. Jacobs as she described the incident where parents had to speak to a student about being rude to a teacher. Further, these networks

allowed for parents to support other parents, and for teachers and parents to support one another, in order to address emotional, spiritual, and physical needs, as relayed by Mrs. Jacobs; and to help both groups better undertake their roles. Participants such as Mr. Gilmore and Mrs. McDonald spoke about intentional efforts to engage with the community in order to garner community support (and sometimes protection) of the school. Song et al. (2019) pointed out the formation of social networks as an important aspect of parental involvement that allowed for the monitoring of behaviours. So too did Worthington (2014), who highlighted the importance of parent-teacher communication. Indeed, Epstein's framework is predicated on the notion of family, community, and teacher partnerships (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004).

This study took place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus we were interested in exploring the ways in which the pandemic might have fostered or impeded parental involvement. Views were relatively mixed, with some participants indicating that the pandemic allowed networks to be enhanced. For instance, participants shared that WhatsApp, for example, became an important medium through which parents connected with other parents or teachers; one through which parents could offer tangible or emotional support when needs were expressed through these messages. Teachers also found that some students were able to stay engaged in the learning process online as parents supervised them, even at times learning alongside them, similar to some of the parents in the O'Connor Bones et al. (2022) study. Even within the context of the pandemic, the importance of parental involvement was highlighted. Significantly, aspects of Epstein's framework such as communicating, learning at home, and collaborating with the community were amongst those elements mentioned (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). The principals, teachers, and parents all mentioned the importance of two-way communication, to ensure that everyone was informed about happenings at home and at school; the involvement of parents with their children's learning (during and beyond the pandemic);

and the wider and surrounding communities as contributors to peacebuilding efforts. Further, within the context of Jamaica, whose culture is characterised by close family units; inclusive of extended families (Cole, 2020), this bodes well for harnessing the family unit as an educational factor with respect to violence prevention. Indeed, these Change from Within schools offer important examples of how the power of the family and the community can be harnessed in positive ways through the experiences shared by those such as Principal Gilmore (the community members who addressed the students trying to assert their "rule" in the school) and Parent Jacobs (relating how the parents admonished the child to apologise to the teacher for their misbehaviour).

Conclusion and Further Research

School violence is a microcosm of what takes place in the wider society and has various root causes in its institutional and structural issues. Given that school violence does have multiple causes at its root, a multi-faceted approach to school violence needs to be undertaken, inclusive of parental involvement, and also incorporating other strategies to create a holistic approach. Notwithstanding this, the involvement of parents should be an important part of efforts to address the issue, with the findings of this study pointing to how involved parents can positively shape their children's educational and holistic experiences.

In Jamaica, where school violence is a significant and pressing problem, garnering parental support and involvement in schooling is a necessity, as part of any wider systemic approach. The findings highlight, from the perspectives of school stakeholders themselves, the importance of parental involvement in the monitoring of behaviours, correcting behaviours, and reinforcing positive behaviours, as some of the important elements. With this in mind, we offer some final thoughts that might be useful for schools in general. Firstly, it is critical that parents maintain positive relationships with their children at all times, even in situations of divorce or separation, so that children have parental figures to show them love, care, and positive behavioural models. Secondly, parenting

programmes should be instituted by schools and/or parenting associations in the nation in order to strengthen parents' positive disciplinary strategies and to improve the competencies of parents (Baker-Henningham & Francis, 2018).

With respect to the Change from Within programme specifically, the findings point to the need to continue engaging parents and the surrounding school communities, as this has always been a strong point of the programme and continues to be so. There are possibilities to explore new programmes and enhance existing ways of supporting parents such as one-to-one mentorship, conflict resolution training, and empowerment sessions. Underpinning all of this, and in keeping with the philosophy of the Change from Within programme, is the need, firstly, to hear from parents as to their parenting needs, and then work to address these needs; and secondly, to hear from them their best practices for supporting peacebuilding, and organising forums for the sharing of these practices with their peers so we can learn as much as possible from their experiences.

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Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank Mrs. Ladeen Mignott-Holt for the research assistance provided.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Participants

Principals

1. For how long have you been the principal of this institution?
2. Which five adjectives would you use to describe your school culture and why?
3. How would you describe the general culture of your school?
4. What would you say are the major factors that influence your school culture?
5. How do you describe the relationship between the school and the community?
6. What initiatives/programmes exist in your school to promote peace?
7. What would you say is right about your school and why?
8. How have you shared what is right about your school with community members?
9. In what ways do you feel the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced community/parental involvement in schools?
10. In what ways do you feel the COVID-19 pandemic has affected peace-building efforts?

Teachers

1. For how long have you been a teacher in this institution?
2. In what ways has your approach to teaching changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What methodologies have you been using to engage boys in online learning?
4. How would you describe the participation levels of boys in online learning?
5. What have been your major successes or challenges with teaching boys online?
6. How have you established or maintained a culture of respect during online teaching?

Parents

1. For how long have you been living in the community?
 2. What would you say are your primary contributions, if any, to the school?
 3. In what ways are you involved in school life?
 4. Prior to the pandemic, how has the school sought to engage you as a parent?
 5. In your view, how would you describe school violence?
 6. What would you say is your role in preventing school violence?
 7. How do you think the issue of school violence could be addressed?
 8. How, if at all, has school violence affected the image of the school/community?
 9. Since the pandemic, has your involvement in school life changed? How?
 10. Since the pandemic, how have you been engaged by the school?
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