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**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES
TO THE TREATMENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIORS AT THE MIDDLE/HIGH
SCHOOL LEVEL IN A SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**By
Lynda L. Hinkle**

A Thesis

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
Of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
June 30, 2003**

Approved by _____

Date Approved 13 July 2003

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ABSTRACT

Lynda L. Hinkle

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES
TO THE TREATMENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIORS AT THE MIDDLE/HIGH
SCHOOL LEVEL IN A SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
2002/03**

**Dr. Thomas Monahan
Masters of Science in Teaching**

The purpose of this paper is to explore, in two separate studies, the impact of one comprehensive treatment and one curricular treatment on bullying behaviors within the context of a southern New Jersey school district. In the first study, 1280 middle school students were surveyed in the beginning of the school year and again at the end, after comprehensive treatment methods were applied. In the second study, a single high school writing class was observed both before and after the teaching of an anti-bullying curriculum. The first study showed an increase of students reporting that they were victims of bullying behavior in sixth and eighth grade with an 8% and 17% rise respectively. The seventh grade reported a reduction of 7.7%. The second study showed a decrease in bullying of 35% after the teaching of the anti-bullying curriculum, but external circumstances raise questions about the validity of that result.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Lynda L. Hinkle

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES
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2002/03

Dr. Thomas Monahan

Masters of Science in Teaching

This paper explores the impact of, first, a comprehensive treatment and, then, a curricular treatment on bullying behaviors within the context of a southern New Jersey school district. The first study, using surveys to collect data, showed a general increase of bullying behavior. The second, using observation to collect data, showed a general decrease.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“So here’s what I can’t figure out. If everybody who works at school is so smart, how come they can’t get rid of the bullies?”

-Jake Drake, Bully Buster by Andrew Clements

In 1983, Dan Olweus began a research study in Norwegian schools that raised the issue of bullying in schools to American academics.

In April 1999, the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado raised the issue of bullying and violence in schools to the entire nation. Suddenly, all threats and intimidation took on a dangerous pale to educators who had good reason to fear.

In the summer of 2002, the New Jersey legislature passed a bill requiring all public schools to address the issue of bullying and harassment within their walls. The bill states:

The Legislature finds and declares that: a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards; harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment; and since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. (New Jersey Anti-Bullying Law, 2002)

Further, the bill requires all schools to create a written policy and to develop an implementation program to achieve the goal of a bully-free school environment.

Williamstown Middle School had already begun the process of developing an anti-bullying campaign for the 2002-2003 school year when the law passed. Early in the school year, school administrators, who had attended seminars on bullying and decided that their school needed to tackle the problem, organized a committee of teachers under the supervision of an assistant principal to direct the campaign. The committee began by mining information from the student body on the nature of the problem at the school. As a member of this committee, I accepted the responsibility of analyzing data from a survey that was administered to the entire student body of 1280 sixth, seventh and eighth graders. I compiled the results and produced a report to the administration and faculty. One month before the school year ended, I then compiled the results of a follow-up survey conducted to ascertain what changes had been made as a result of the committee's efforts. The first study represented in this report will examine the data mined from these two surveys.

In the second study, I focus on a microcosm community within Williamstown High School, where I performed my student teaching. Within the context of a creative writing class of juniors and seniors whom I taught, I spent two weeks recording all bullying behavior that I observed. Then, I taught an anti-bullying unit, which included instruction as well as writing exercises designed to explore personal reactions to the issue of bullying, and I recorded observed instances of bullying behavior in the succeeding two weeks, as well as student reactions to these events.

The purpose of this research is to explore the result of these two treatment strategies in reducing bullying incidents within the context of the Monroe Township School District, in compliance with New Jersey law.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

What IS Bullying?

After school hours in a stiflingly hot language arts classroom at Williamstown Middle School, teachers and administrators gather to discuss strategies for incorporating the new anti-bullying policy into the school community.

One teacher raises a hand and puts to the group a question that had been boiling slowly throughout the discussion in the back of many of our minds.

“Just what...IS...bullying? It isn’t enough to say we’ll know it when we see it, is it?”

Dan Olweus, the Norwegian researcher whose work on bullying began the worldwide movement toward instituting anti-bullying strategies in the schools, defined bullying as:

“A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1993, p. 9).

He explains that such negative actions must also occur when there is an “imbalance in strength” and the victim is “somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass” (p.10).

Olweus’s definition is useful in developing a general conceptualization of bullying. However, in order to comply with the New Jersey school anti-bullying

legislation signed September 6, 2002, teachers and administrators must look closely at the expansive language of the bill itself, which reads:

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any gesture or written, verbal or physical act taking place on school property, at any school-sponsored function or on a school bus that:

a. a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property; or

b. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” includes, but is not limited to, any gesture or written, verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or a mental, physical or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic. (New Jersey Anti-Bullying Law, 2002)

But Is Bullying Really a Problem?

Dan Olweus's Norwegian study showed that 9% of students were being bullied by 7% of students in schools (Olweus, 1993, p. 13). An American Psychological Association [APA] report suggests that as many as 80% of U.S. middle school students are involved in some form of bullying behavior, as victim, bully or bystander ("Bullying Widespread," 1999, np). Another study reports, "American schools harbor 2.1 million bullies and 2.7 million of their victims" (Fried & Fried, 1996, p. xi). A Midwestern study of students aged 12 to 18 found that 75% of students were bullied "at least once", and 7% "either perpetuated or suffered severe and repeated bullying" (Ma, 2002, p. 64).

No matter how many victims and bullies there are, almost all students in American schools will be witnesses to bullying acts and to the way in which

administration, teachers and society respond to those acts. What are we teaching those children? As one educational writer proclaimed, "Bullying is actually the most common form of violence in our society. It is at the core of domestic violence, child abuse, workplace violence, hate crimes and road rage. Bullying is everywhere and schools are a primary breeding ground" (Weinhold, 2000, p. 30).

Most recently, a National Crime Prevention Council [NCPC] survey found that 6 out of every 10 American teenagers witness bullying in school at least once a day and that bullying was more of a concern to teens than the fear of an external terrorist attack, even after September 11 (2003, para. 1).

James E. Copple, Vice President of Public Policy for NCPC, spoke about the results of their survey on bullying, saying,

The impact of bullying on a school climate can be toxic. Bullies and victims suffer well-documented damage, sometimes long-lasting. We've been overlooking the fact that bystanders experience fear, discomfort, guilt and helplessness that poison the learning atmosphere even more extensively. The level of bystander exposure is far beyond what many of us expected, especially in the upper grade levels, and its growth is nothing short of terrifying. (2003, para. 6)

Impact of Bullying on the School Community

The impact of bullying is not merely short term, nor only on the bully and victim. Research indicates that the impact extends over time to bystanders, teachers and administrators, and the larger community.

The Bully

Although the tendency may be to perceive the bully as merely an enemy in our anti-bullying strategy, he or she also suffers a tremendous potential negative impact from the act of bullying. For instance, consider what the bully learns when his or her

behavior is left unchecked and unchallenged by adults who may not understand the harm being done. The bully learns that such behavior is acceptable or even encouraged, that might does equal right. Moreover, if left unchecked, it may lead to their attempting greater crimes in the future. Bullies are four times more likely to be convicted criminals by the age of 24 (Aldrich, 2001, np). They are nearly three times more likely to carry weapons, even in school, and are three times more likely to fight and twice as likely to be injured in a fight (Viadero, 2003, p. 6). A Secret Service Threat Assessment Center study of school shootings between 1974 and 2000 found that bullying behaviors on the part of the victims or shooters had previously occurred in as many as two out of three of the cases (Dunn, 2001, p. 39). These statistics point to the possibility that bullying may be just the beginning of a career of violence with lifelong consequences for young bullies. Further, studies show that bullies are at an even greater risk of suicide than their targets (National Educational Association, 2002).

The Victim

For the victims of bullying, school life can be an emotionally and mentally damaging experience. Over 160,000 American children miss school each day in order to avoid bullying (Fried & Fried, 1996, p. xii). One Australian study that observed students over the course of several years showed that "in up to 30% of all students with incident symptoms of depression, the symptoms could be attributed to a history of victimization, after adjustment for other confounders" (Bond, Carling, Thomas, Rubin & Patton, 2001, p. 483). Victims tend to have low self-esteem and are more cautious and quiet than other students (Olweus, 1993, p. 32). This can have long-term effects on the students' ability to learn and achieve within the school community.

Victims of bullying may also resort to violence to solve problems. In a recent study, 36.4% of students who reported they were victims of bullying in school said that they carry weapons (Viadero, 2003, p.6).

The Bystander

In a study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], researchers found that half of ninth graders say they sometimes observe bullying, and 29% say they often see kids being bullied ("High School Freshmen", 2001, p. 4).

Bystanders generally report a feeling of powerlessness and a covert loss of self-respect associated with that powerlessness (Carney & Merrell, 2001, p. 365).

The U.S. Department of Education's Bullying Prevention Manual lists the following effects on bystanders:

They may [a] be afraid to associate with the victim for fear of lowering their own status or of retribution from the bully and becoming victims themselves; [b] fear reporting bullying incidents because they do not want to be called a "snitch", a "tattler" or an "informer"; [c] be drawn into bullying behavior by group pressure; [d] feel unsafe, unable to take action or a loss of control. ("Bullying: A Comprehensive Approach", 2000, np)

The majority of students in a school will fall into the category of bystander or witness rather than bully or victim, and yet it is the bystander who is most ignored in research and least addressed in anti-bullying programs. Consideration of these students is crucial to the development of a strong anti-bullying plan. In this study, bystander education was integrated into the school-wide approach of Williamstown Middle School as well as the classroom-wide approach at Williamstown High School.

Teachers/Administrators

Teachers and administrators, already overworked in other areas, may find that dealing with bullying issues creates an added daily burden. Perhaps this is why it has been historically easy for so many good teachers and administrators to become adult bystanders in many cases of childhood bullying.

Many teachers and administrators comply or acquiesce in the face of some common myths about bullying, like:

1. Bullying toughens a child up.
2. It's just a phase. They will grow out of it. Kids will be kids.
3. Bullying affects only the bully and the victim. (Sheras, 2002, p. 122)

Additionally, adults in the schools may not be aware of the extent of the problem. The culture of silence within schools is strong. Studies show that only 4% of bullying incidents are reported to teachers. Yet, 47% of those who did report said that "nothing changed" after, and 16% said things got worse ("High School Freshmen", 2001, p.4). One study showed that 85% of teachers surveyed believed they intervened "always" or "often" in cases of bullying, but only 35% of their students agreed (Yoon & Kerber, 2003, p. 28). These statistics present significant challenges to teachers and administrators in implementing an anti-bullying campaign that is effective.

The Larger Community

How does bullying affect the larger community? The answer lay in its effect on the free, public education we have come to rely on to develop future Americans.

According to an article in *On the Same Page*, a publication of the Educational Research Service,

Typically, bullies are characterized by aggressive behavior – both toward their peers and often toward adults. They have a more positive attitude toward violence than their peers, are impulsive, like to dominate others and have little empathy toward their victims, [and] may get satisfaction from inflicting suffering. Sometimes, otherwise “nice” children choose to take part in bullying when certain group mechanisms are in place or when their own inhibitions against aggression are weakened (which might occur if they see a bully is “rewarded” for bad behavior). (Shellard, 2003, para. 3)

If, as John Dewey suggested, the purpose of education is to create good citizens, surely these are not the characteristics we want to breed in the next generation of Americans. Nor do we want to encourage our students to be fearful, damaged victims or passive bystanders as wrongs go unchallenged. Changing the pattern of abusive, violent behavior in young people is the prelude to a more peaceful future for the nation. Conversely, to continue to ignore bullying is to endorse an increasingly violent tomorrow.

Treatment of Bullying

In theory and in practice, American public schools are etching out new strategies to treat bullying on a daily basis.

Growing up in the 1970’s, friends and I recall little anti-bullying efforts by our schools. Teachers and administrators generally had a reactive approach. If the bullying got bad enough, you punished the offender. In many schools, this is still the norm. One astute fourth grader confided in me, “Teachers don’t see it until someone is crying or bleeding, after that...someone is going to the office.” The disciplinary approach has proved largely ineffective in practice, as evidenced by the volume of research recommending other methods and the silence of research supporting it, and nationally public schools have begun an exodus toward other treatments.

Susan Limber, associate director of the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life, has done a great deal of research on bullying and believes that teachers and administrators often ignore the problem of bullying in this way because they believe students should work things out between themselves as part of their education:

I think, I hope, fewer and fewer educators, and hopefully adults in general, are espousing the view that "it's a part of growing up," "kids will be kids," "kids have to learn to deal with it on their own." But it's still a fairly prevalent view. As one child told a colleague of mine, "If I thought I could deal with this on my own, why would I come to you as an adult to help me?" I really believe strongly that it's adults' responsibility, not the responsibility of the victim certainly, and not just of the student body, to deal with bullying. It's an adult responsibility. (Chamberlain, 2003, p. 238)

Dan Olweus recommended a comprehensive approach to reducing bullying. His approach incorporated three kinds of measures: (a) measures at the school level, (b) measures at the classroom level, (c) measures at the individual level. School level measures include such things as conferences, increased supervision, and teacher and parent groups directed at solving bullying problems. Class level measures include such things as creating classroom rules against bullying, using cooperative learning strategies, and developing common positive class activities. Measures at the individual level include talking to bullies, victims, and their parents and involving neutral students in solving problems (Olweus, 1993, p. 64).

Within two years of instituting a national program against bullying based on the Olweus's comprehensive approach, Norwegian schools showed an awe-inspiring 50% drop in bullying incidents. The goal of his program was "to reduce as much as possible – ideally to eliminate completely – existing bully/victim problems in and out of the school setting and to prevent the development of new problems" (Olweus, 1993,

p.65). To achieve this lofty goal, administrators, teachers, parents, community and students were urged to develop “awareness and involvement” and suggested measures for putting that into practice were made across school levels, class levels and individual levels (p. 64). Susan Limber was the project director for a grant given to do the first expansive implementation of the Olweus approach in the United States. She sums up the approach as they applied it:

Bullying is a complex phenomenon. It's not something that will go away with an easy, one-shot solution. And I think we're mistaken if we believe that one school assembly is going to do the trick, and if the school does that, they can say, "Well, we dealt with bullying this year. Great, let's move on." In order to reduce bullying at a school requires a culture change at the school [sic], requires all the adults and the students together saying, "This is something that we don't accept, and we are going to look out for each other and report and talk about this as a form of peer abuse." And one doesn't get that climate or culture change overnight. So I think the most effective programs are those that are very comprehensive, that involve not just the students and a classroom teacher but every adult at a school. The bus drivers should feel they have a role in bullying prevention, a cafeteria worker, certainly the parents should feel they have a role in helping to create a bully-free atmosphere at the school. So I think the best programs out there, and the data I think would support this, are very comprehensive. (Chamberlain, 2003, p. 239)

Williamstown Middle School, the subject of the first study in this paper, is attempting to employ a comprehensive approach, which is detailed in the data analysis.

Another approach frequently used by educators is a strictly curricular approach, incorporating lessons about the issue of bullying into a character education module within the context of a school-wide or classroom curriculum. Dr. Spencer Kagan, whose work with multiple intelligences and using cooperative groups in the classroom is well known, suggests that how teachers teach is just as important as what they teach regarding character education, and that cooperative groups can make strides toward solving school bullying and violence:

The best way to prevent school violence is to replace disparagement with respect, exclusion with inclusion, and lonely isolation with collaborative community. When teachers use cooperative structures in daily instruction, students experience being cared for by peers and caring for others. They practice responsibility, fairness, tolerance, teamwork, understanding and respect for different points of view. They learn to help one another. As students work together in teams, the “us” and “them” of in-groups and out-groups become an inclusive “we.” The classroom becomes a respectful, inclusive community. No curriculum is more important. (Kagan, 2001, np)

Using cooperative groups, writing assignments, and a strategy of questioning students to discover their own approaches and solutions to bullying problems, I employed a curricular approach in Study II at Williamstown High School.

In this literature review it has been made clear that bullying is a pervasive problem in public schools with far-reaching effects on victim, bully, bystander, the school community and the larger community. There are a number of treatments that schools and teachers employ to reduce bullying, including the disciplinary, comprehensive, and curricular approaches.

The purpose of this paper is to explore, in two separate studies, the impact of one comprehensive treatment and one curricular treatment on bullying behaviors within the context of a southern New Jersey school district.

Research Questions

The two branches of this study, combined together, will address the following research questions:

1. Did a comprehensive, school-wide anti-bullying program, as instituted by Williamstown Middle School, create change in the number and character of bullying incidents reported by students?

2. Did a single classroom curriculum, as employed in a mixed-grade creative writing classroom at Williamstown High School, create change in the number and character of bullying incidents observed by the teacher?

CHAPTER 3

Study Methodology

If New Jersey public schools tackle the goal Olweus outlined, that is, “to reduce as much as possible – ideally to eliminate completely – existing bully/victim problems in and out of the school setting and to prevent the development of new problems” (Olweus, 1993, p. 65), then what methods should they use for maximum achievement? The Monroe Township School District, in Williamstown, New Jersey, grapples with just that question.

Description of Sites

Driving around Williamstown you will see trailer parks, farms, expensive suburban homes, storefronts and a variety of businesses all within a stone’s throw of one another. In Monroe Township, economic diversity combined with a growing population of 33,000 people in 46.5 square miles is a recipe for a complex community. Due, in part, to this representation of a diversity of student backgrounds, Williamstown Middle School and Williamstown High School were good choices for an exploratory study of this nature.

Williamstown Middle School is part of the Monroe Township School District in Gloucester County, New Jersey. The district includes a K-4 elementary school, three K-5 elementary schools, Williamstown Middle School servicing grades 6-8, and Williamstown High School.

Williamstown Middle School is currently in an older building that was formerly the high school. A referendum was recently passed to build a new middle school to

accommodate the number of students, which continues to grow year on year, but at this time the school suffers from overcrowding. In 2002-2003, there are 1280 students in a building originally built to house 700 students. Its faculty to student ratio is 12.5 to 1.

Williamstown High School is a much larger and newer building; 305,000 square feet of building space that houses over 1,400 students whose numbers grow annually. Its faculty to student ratio is 11.5 to 1.

Williamstown's racial makeup is 85% Caucasian, 11% African-American and a sprinkling of other minorities that make up the remaining 4%. The median household income is \$44,200 with 6% earning under \$10,000 and 9% earning over \$100,000 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000, np).

Study I

Administration of Surveys

In the first study, a survey (Appendix I) was administered to the 1280 students in all three grades (6-8) of Williamstown Middle School between October 1 and October 15, 2002 for the purposes of determining the expanse and type of bullying taking place as well as student reactions to it. This study was enacted in reaction to concerns about potentially unidentified bullying problems within the school. Language arts teachers had the task of distributing the survey to their classes. No instructions were given with the survey describing any particular curriculum that the teachers should teach prior to delivering it, although the subject was introduced as early as preservice meetings in September. Teachers were aware of the new anti-bullying campaigns, and many students had already received some level of instruction on it in their classes. Those who had not were sure to see the anti-bullying signs posted all over the school, including the large

anti-bullying banner that overhangs their entrance to the building each day. Therefore, students had already been given some information that might have raised their awareness, but as the survey was given merely one month into classes, students were still fairly fresh in their approach to the issue.

In May 2003, a follow-up survey (Appendix II) was administered, however in the follow-up survey, students were provided with forced choice, structured response (rather than open-ended) questions that were based on the responses that were provided in the initial survey. This facilitated the comparison of data between the two surveys.

Analysis of the survey

Of the 1280 surveys distributed to the students, 1006 surveys were returned and 24 of those had to be eliminated due to incompleteness and lack of demographic information. What remained were 982 surveys (77%) which, when separated across the grade levels, consisted of 381 surveys (39%) from sixth grade, 236 surveys (24%) from seventh grade and 365 surveys (37%) from eighth grade.

Once the data were collected, a 40% random sample was selected across each grade level. When the surveys were returned, they were grouped by class and teacher. In order to combat potential bias in the sample built in because of heterogeneous grouping in classes, surveys were shuffled together, creating a more random sample within grade levels. Given the high response rate and the relative distribution of response across grade level, no tests for non-response bias were conducted.

In reporting data, sections that required descriptive answers were divided into response groupings for the purpose of statistical analysis. Data analyses contain raw data as well as percentages of useable responses.

All data from the surveys were manually tabulated.

The assistant principal, who is responsible for developing and administering the school's anti-bullying campaign, was interviewed after the survey results were compiled and reported to her. She was interviewed again late in the Spring 2003 after the bullying program had been in effect at Williamstown Middle School for nearly a full academic year.

Results of the follow-up survey were analyzed in the same fashion as the first. Of the 1280 surveys distributed to the students in the follow-up, 845 surveys were returned and 19 of those had to be eliminated due to incompleteness and lack of demographic information. What remained were 826 surveys (65%) which, when separated across the grade levels, consisted of 354 surveys (43%) from sixth grade, 335 surveys (41%) from seventh grade and 137 surveys (17%) from eighth grade.

Study II

The second study was more qualitative in its approach. Its purpose was to test a curriculum approach that I developed that uses questioning strategies to develop inductive thinking in students on the subject of bullying and to help them develop their own solutions to the problem. The curriculum attempted to decrease bullying incidents by increasing student awareness, allowing for student discovery of more appropriate responses to bullying behavior, and developing their community-mindedness.

Collecting the Data

Students in a mixed grade creative writing class in Williamstown High School were chosen. For 10 class periods during Spring 2003, I recorded incidents of bullying, which included name calling, teasing, physical aggression, threats, use of racial or gender

slurs, intimidation, spreading rumors, or excluding other students from the group. I recorded this information on a data sheet (Appendix III), and I also kept a journal of the details of incidents.

After this recording, these students were taught a unit on bullying in which they were made aware of the problem and its components. Then they discussed it in class, and were given several writing and reading assignments related to it. For the 10 days following the unit, I recorded my observations of new incidents of bullying as well as any comments students made about the issue independent of the curriculum. The data were then compared to observations taken prior to the teaching of the unit and compared to determine if changes had occurred. Data analysis was conducted using the principles of grounded theory (Schloss & Smith, 1999).

Limitations of Study

There are a number of limitations that may make broad application of the results of this paper advisable only with cautious consideration.

Study I Limitations

In Study I, I did not assist in either the development or the selection of the survey. Rather, it was a survey designed for unknown original purposes by a social worker in the community that was incorporated in a packet of information a teacher had acquired at a seminar on bullying. It was adapted by Williamstown Middle School because of its easy availability. It was administered under loose conditions by various teachers who were not given the same instructions for using the instrument, who did not give students the same amount of time to complete the survey and who did not all insure anonymity to students filling out the survey. Many of the students commented in my presence that they feared

the school would “know somehow” who filled out each survey, and that they would be punished for honest responses. Although this was not the intent of the school, nor did they attempt such identifications, student perceptions may have biased the survey results. Another limitation was the significant difference in return from the first survey to the second survey. Although neither the school nor I could account for a specific reason for the lower participation of the eighth grade students, it might have been the result of teachers being less willing to take up “crunch time” in the last month of school for the survey.

Study II Limitations

In Study II, I was the only person responsible for monitoring student behavior in a busy classroom in which I was also teaching. Although I did try to structure lessons during my fact finding that would enable me the best view of student behavior (such as collaborative group work), it was not the ideal setting for concentrated observation. Further, students may have been disinclined to demonstrate their regular behavior during the first ten days, when I was a new teacher to them and they were unsure what protocols I would uphold in the classroom. My inability to be a completely withdrawn and impartial observer may have prejudiced the results. Also, bullying behaviors may have occurred at times, places and under circumstances when neither I nor any other adults were present.

Overall Limitations

Finally, in both studies, there is the underlying weakness of these results being from a single school district with its own unique character and makeup, thereby making its application to other districts quite limited.

CHAPTER 4

Study Findings and Discussion

Study I

Williamstown Middle School administrators decided early in the summer before the 2002-2003 school year began to focus their attention on reducing bullying in their school. An overcrowded school with 1280 students crammed into a building built to fit 700 certainly needs as much disciplinary order as possible, and preventing bullying incidents was one way to create that order.

As a member of their anti-bullying task force, I had the job of collating and interpreting a survey of the students meant to give an idea where the school was on the issue of bullying in October 2002. Later, in May 2003, the administration and I decided to proceed with a follow-up survey to determine what their efforts may have yielded.

Comprehensive Treatment Overview

The school chose a comprehensive approach to bullying, combining a variety of treatments meant to develop a school climate that simply squeezed bullying behavior out. The comprehensive intervention model, as proposed by Dan Olweus, includes three general actions. These are “measures at the school level” such as conferences, increased supervision, and teacher and parent groups directed at solving bullying problems; “measures at class level” such as creating classroom rules against bullying, using cooperative learning strategies and developing common positive class activities; and

“measures at the individual level” including talking to bullies and victims and their parents and involving neutral students in solving problems (Olweus, 1993, p. 64).

Measures at School Level

Williamstown Middle School put a great deal of its effort into this part of the treatment. Administrators and staff began by forming a teachers committee that then was supplemented by a parent task force and student task force, all of whom had as their goal the development of programs and procedures to eliminate bullying. They then had a number of assemblies with guest speakers such as Jennifer Caudle who was Miss Iowa, 1999; Derek “the Wiz” Murphy, a former Harlem Globetrotter; Congressman Robert Andrews; and Miss America 2003, Erika Harold. All of these speakers emphasized to the students that if they were being bullied there was still great hope for the future, and that if they were bullying that their behavior was not acceptable or “cool”, and that it would lead to an erosion of their future.

In addition to guest speakers and assemblies, the school purchased and distributed “bully-free” pamphlets, books, video materials and posters, which were visible throughout the building.

Measures at Class Level

At Williamstown Middle School, each grade is broken up into core groups. As part of their inter-class level effort, the school created a rewards program that gave quarterly rewards to the cores that showed the least bullying activity. The core that was most bully-free for the year actually received a year end party called “Fun in the Sun.”

In addition to this program, the administration emphasized to teachers in inservice programs the value of using cooperative groups and developing class rules and norms against bullying.

Measures at Individual Level

On the individual level, the school used peer mediation as well as guidance counselor involvement and parent-teacher meetings to assist individual students who were struggling with bullying. Students were encouraged, through curriculum and assemblies, to talk to a parent or teacher when bullying occurred and to get the help they may need. Further, students were taught strategies for intervention when they saw bullying taking place, empowering bystanders to take safe action to discourage bullying among their fellow students. Students who may have had tendencies to bully were sought out and given opportunities to lead anti-bullying activities, to put their strengths to better use.

Comparison of October Survey and May Survey

Sample

In October 2002, 1006 surveys were returned out of the 1280 distributed. Of those, 982 contained complete information. In the May 2003 survey, 845 surveys were returned and 826 were useable. For both surveys, a random sample of 40% was taken from each grade level for inclusion in the analysis.

Relevant Questions

The following data were taken from the 14 survey questions most relevant to this study that appeared in both surveys.

Has any student bullied you during the last school year?

This question asks for bullying incidents from last year, which in the case of the sixth graders would have placed them at a different school when responding in October 2002. Therefore, the reduction may be a result of a new school climate coming from the elementary into the middle school. The other grades were all reporting what they had seen within Williamstown Middle School the previous year. As the data show, seventh graders reported a decrease of 9% in bullying incidents, while eighth graders reported a 17% increase.

Table 1

Has any student bullied you during the last school year?

	AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES	
	October 2002	May 2003
Grade 6	43%	51%
Grade 7	50%	41%
Grade 8	43%	60%

How many times were you bullied in the last year?

The students who responded affirmatively to question 1 then responded to this question, while those who responded negatively went on to the next question that did not relate to an incident of bullying directed at them. The data in Table 2 suggest that (a) bullying continues to be a persistent problem in the middle school; (b) in sixth and seventh grade, the relative frequency of multiple instances of bullying has decreased; and

(c) in eighth grade, the relative frequency of multiple instances of bullying behavior has increased.

Table 2

How many times were you bullied in the last year?

OCTOBER RESULTS

	1-5 Times	6-10 Times	More than 10 Times
Grade 6	53%	1%	34%
Grade 7	59%	1%	40%
Grade 8	61%	13%	26%

MAY RESULTS

	1-5 Times	6-10 Times	More than 10 Times
Grade 6	68%	8%	18%
Grade 7	65%	28%	8%
Grade 8	30%	8%	63%

What happened when you were bullied?

Students uniformly reported similar types of bullying: name calling and teasing, physical aggression, threats, rumors about them, or exclusion from the group. Across the grade levels, students who said they had been bullied in the last year reported the following breakdown of events:

Table 3

What happened when you were bullied?

	<u>Name Calling/Teasing</u>	<u>Aggression</u>	<u>Threats</u>	<u>Rumors</u>	<u>Exclusion</u>
October 2003	63%	24%	5%	3%	4%
May 2003	43%	26%	13%	16%	0%

Did you tell a teacher?

The data in Table 4 show substantial decreases in sixth and eighth grade, while in seventh grade, the responses were fairly stable. Although students were encouraged to tell a teacher or parent as part of the strategy for dealing with bullying, one of the school's programs simultaneously discouraged telling, and that is clearly evidenced in these dramatic changes. Students were given incentives as a core group based on the number of reported incidents of bullying, therefore putting increasing peer pressure on students *not* to tell, even parents who might report the incident to the school.

Table 4

Did you tell a teacher?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	44%	15%
Grade 7	30%	31%
Grade 8	23%	15%

Did you tell a parent?

In Table 5, the data show substantial decreases in sixth and seventh grades, while reports to parents among eighth graders increased.

Table 5

Did you tell a parent?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	63%	27%
Grade 7	49%	31%
Grade 8	23%	37%

Do you tease other students?

Many students qualified their responses to this question and the next question stating that their teasing or name calling was “in fun” and not meant to cause harm. In any event, there were increases in these self-reports among sixth and eighth graders, while a decrease was noted among seventh graders. It is uncertain if the slight rise in sixth grade and eighth grade figures has to do with more of an awareness of what “teasing” might mean, based on the curriculum and programs to which students were exposed throughout the year.

Table 6

Do you tease other students?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	31%	40%
Grade 7	46%	40%
Grade 8	47%	56%

Do you call other students names?

In Table 7, there were increases noted among students in sixth and seventh grades and a slight decrease in eighth grade.

Table 7

Do you call other students names?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	47%	56%
Grade 7	44%	50%
Grade 8	53%	50%

Do you threaten other students?

Relatively speaking, the data in Table 8 suggest that this form of bullying is not as prevalent as other forms. Nevertheless, increases were noted in all grades.

Table 8

Do you threaten other students?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	8%	12%
Grade 7	5%	12%
Grade 8	15%	22%

Do you spread nasty rumors about other students?

Similarly, this form of bullying is not as prevalent as others, but again increases were noted in all grades.

Table 9

Do you spread nasty rumors about other students?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	3%	11%
Grade 7	6%	6%
Grade 8	4%	13%

Do you exclude others from the group?

The data in Table 10 show increases in this form of bullying behavior in all grades. The increase among eighth graders was substantial.

The rise in aggression, rumors, and exclusion from October to May might be a result of simple end of the year frustration, particularly in an overcrowded school. They may also be a response to a greater understanding of what these terms mean, or a feeling of greater safety in responding to this survey after the last survey showed no consequences for the respondents.

Table 10

Do you exclude others from the group?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	34%	43%
Grade 7	35%	37%
Grade 8	38%	49%

Do you laugh when someone is hurt, injured, or upset?

The data in Table 11 show increases in this reaction among students in response to others' injuries or anxieties in all grades.

Table 11

Do you laugh when someone is hurt, injured, or upset?

AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	15%	27%
Grade 7	19%	23%
Grade 8	26%	46%

Do you carry out physical aggression on others?

The data in Table 12 show a slight decrease among seventh graders, but increases among sixth and eighth graders. The increase among eighth graders was substantial.

Table 12

Do you carry out physical aggression on others?

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	21%	25%
Grade 7	22%	20%
Grade 8	21%	41%

Do you defend others who are being bullied?

Finally, slight decreases in defense against bullying was noted in all grades.

Students frequently would qualify their responses to this question with some variation of “yes, but only if they are my friends.”

Table 13

Do you defend others who are being bullied?

	<u>October 2002</u>	<u>May 2003</u>
Grade 6	83%	81%
Grade 7	68%	67%
Grade 8	68%	66%

What Changed This Year?

In the May survey, some new questions were introduced. Students were asked to analyze what changes took place this year after all of the anti-bullying efforts. The result is a surprising difference of opinion that seems to split the school in some cases nearly in half.

The data in Tables 14 and 15 seem to suggest that the atmosphere regarding bullying is polarized among the students. Nearly three quarters of the sixth graders and half of the seventh graders reported a perceived difference in bullying behavior at the middle school in the past year. The remaining students saw no difference. Among those who reported a difference, more than half generally reported less bullying, while the remainder reported more bullying.

Table 14

Do you see a difference in bullying from last year to this year?

	YES	NO
Grade 6	71%	29%
Grade 7	57%	43%
Grade 8	49%	51%

Table 15

What is that difference?

	LESS	MORE
Grade 6	55%	45%
Grade 7	63%	37%
Grade 8	58%	42%

Summary

As a result of surveys administered in the fall and spring of 2002-2003, the following summary findings were observed:

- Bullying seems to have increased slightly, at least in the sixth and eighth grades, and it continues to occur across all middle school grades.

- The frequency of multiple instances of bullying behavior has increased among eighth graders, but appears to have decreased among students in the other two grades.
- Name calling and teasing appears to be the most characteristic type of bullying behavior.
- Students generally tend not to report bullying behaviors; in fact, there are incentives in place among the middle school students that might serve as a deterrent to reporting incidents of bullying.
- Students generally self-reported more instances of bullying behavior at the conclusion of the study; however, this might not be a real increase, but rather a result of heightened sensibility to the fact that their behaviors might be construed as bullying.
- There appears to be some polarization among middle school students regarding their attitudes on the extent to which bullying behaviors have increased or decreased during the year of the study.

Analysis of Study II

Background

The creative writing class I taught was a mixture of eleventh and twelfth graders. The course is an elective which is taken for one half of the year. The students came in as a cohort who had just completed a course called *British and American Humor* for the first half of the year. The group consisted of 23 students, only 5 of whom were female and all of whom were Caucasian. This sort of homogeneity is not the norm within Williamstown

High School, and its existence allowed me to view ethnic perceptions in a cloistered environment, although it disallowed the observation of any direct ethnic-related bullying.

I had begun my student teaching experience at nearly the exact time they entered the creative writing class, so I was with them from the beginning, but not in a teaching capacity. My first weeks were spent in observation and co-teaching with my cooperating teacher before I took over the class completely. Some of my observations before the treatment were done as a co-teacher, giving me a bit more flexibility for collecting data.

This particular creative writing class was chosen for this study because the other classes at my disposal were already quite structured in terms of curriculum. Williamstown High School's curriculum guide for the creative writing class allows for a great deal of flexibility in teaching general principles to students, adhering to standards but without a prescriptive course of action.

Before the Treatment

In documenting bullying behaviors for the first ten days before applying treatment, I kept a data collection sheet (see Appendix III) and a journal of bullying behaviors observed in the classroom in the early part of February 2003.

Teasing

Teasing, for the purposes of this study, is defined as any general negative talk directed at a person and about that person. Common examples might be, "Yeah, whatever you say, stupid" or "You're so ugly you're mother diapered the wrong end." The calling of specific names was recorded separately.

In the pre-treatment observations, I recorded 22 incidents of teasing ranging from seemingly friendly banter to pointed character attacks.

It did not take long to discover how this classroom was divided. One female student, whom we shall refer to for this study as “Ann” (not her real name) was frequently at the apex of the teasing, along with many of the other bullying behaviors I observed. The classroom seemed divided down the middle...those who were friends, or perhaps even fans, of Ann, and those who were not. It was from the lips of Ann that the most angry taunts seemed to come as I wrote them into my journal. A few examples:

To a student who disagreed with something she said in class, she said, “Yeah, like you know anything. You’re so f***ing stupid and ugly I bet you need directions to go to the bathroom.”

To another student during a cooperative group activity, “Oh look, the a**hole is talking again.”

In 14 of the 22 incidents of teasing, Ann was either the one initiating the tease or was on the other end of it.

The other eight incidents revolved around another student, who for the purposes of this study we will call “Matthew” (not his real name). A group of the male members of the class were close friends and would often tease Matthew especially, but in a friendly manner. Matthew seemed to have a sense of humor about it, no matter how outrageous the teasing. For some reason, he appeared regularly as a character in a number of their stories, usually doing something ridiculous. I had spoken with him about this after class a few times to see if he was bothered, but he found it humorous and seemed to invite the attention.

Name Calling

Calling other students names was also a popular bullying activity in this class. In the pre-treatment observation I recorded 31 incidents of name calling ranging from obscene names like “a**hole” or “f***head” to sillier names like “dorkboy.”

As before, many of the name calling incidents revolved around Ann, who was the perpetrator in 19 of the 31 incidents. In six cases, the names were hurled at her, always some variation of “b*tch.” The remaining incidents were from one young man who liked to say “You idiot!” a lot to other students, but did so with friendly intentions and without causing observable distress.

Ethnic/Racial Slurs

Because of the homogeneity of the class, there really were few opportunities to observe ethnic or racial bullying, although I did record four ethnic jokes from various students in the pre-treatment observation.

Gender Slurs

I observed no specific gender slurs taking place in the pre-treatment observation.

Physical Threats

I recorded three threats of physical violence in the pre-treatment observation, all stemming from Ann who would threaten “beatings” on three occasions when students responded to her teasing with name calling.

Physical Aggression

For the purpose of this study, physical aggression is defined as any unwanted physical contact or approaching another student in an aggressive manner as if in preparation for physical attack. I recorded two incidents of physical aggression in the pre-

treatment observations. Both times, Ann punched another student in the arm in response to comments they made about her.

Rumors/Gossip

For the purpose of this study, rumors or gossip involve any observable behavior in which students discuss another student's personal life when that person is not present. I included rumors and gossip that did not involve students in this class. I recorded six instances of rumors and gossip in the pre-treatment observation, all of which were about students who were not in the class. Interestingly, Ann was responsible for none of these instances. Each came from a different student and, in all instances, the students responsible for the gossip/rumors were not observed participating in any other bullying behaviors in this study. Examples of the gossip/rumors were such things as talking about one young woman's pregnancy, about a fight between a couple at a party, and about a teacher's private life.

The Treatment

To treat the bullying in this classroom, I adapted lessons from a curriculum I had developed for a middle school language arts class that dealt exclusively with bullying. The curriculum was based on the Hilda Taba model, a model that promotes inductive thinking through turning the teacher into a facilitator that enables students to organize and interpret data on their own. In a creative writing class, organizing and interpreting data took the form of writing assignments developed from prompts.

The first such assignment involved developing a poem about a bully. We began by discussing what bullying is, and students were asked to create a definition as a class. They arrived at the conclusion that "Bullying is when one person with more power than

another person makes that person deliberately feel bad or injures them somehow.” Using their definition as a jumping off point, students were asked to develop a poem that could be from the point of view of the bully, the victim, or a bystander. In order to do so, students began by writing down all the characteristics of a bully that they had encountered in the course of their educational experience, some of which were shared in class. Students then incorporated these characteristics into describing the bully in their poem.

Next, students developed a deeper understanding of the bully by analyzing a short story to begin a unit in short fiction. The story was “Betty Ann” by Ina Hughes (see Appendix IV). It is the tale of a young woman who realizes too late the damage and consequences of the teasing she and her friends inflict on another student. After reading it in class, students were to discuss elements of the story such as character development, plot development, writing style and dialogue. They reacted negatively to the story in general, feeling that it was boring and poorly written, but in doing so they were able to pick out elements that might make a short story good, thereby creating a rubric upon which I would grade their own short stories. After reading and analyzing “Betty Ann”, students were given the assignment of creating a character. The character could have any personality or physical characteristics but they were required to make them a student in the Monroe Township School District at any grade level. Students were instructed not to use any real people upon which to base their character, but to generate their own and superimpose them into one of the Monroe Township schools. After spending a class period developing their characters, students were given the assignment to write a story beginning with their character sitting in the vice principal’s office after a bullying

incident had taken place. The character could have been bystander, bully, or victim, but the story must begin at that point.

In both the poem and short story assignment, we spent a great deal of time in class discussing bullying and its impact on students. I encouraged them to share personal stories, especially in relation to the bully that they remember from their educational experiences. When asked where they think the elementary school bully was now, several students agreed that the bully was probably in jail or dead from meeting a bigger bully. In the context of this discussion, I shared with them some of the statistics of what really does happen to bullies; for example, that they are four times as likely to become convicted criminals (Aldrich, 2001, np).

As I questioned them and got them to come up with deeper analysis of bullying from their own experiences and perspectives, I noticed many students becoming very impassioned about their own experiences. Although few would admit that they were the target of a bully, all were able to express the distress they had felt as a bystander, particularly in the younger grades, when bullying took place.

After the Treatment

After teaching the lessons on bullying, I spent 10 days recording the same types of incidents as I had before the lessons. Once again, I used a data collection sheet (Appendix III) and journal for detailed reports of behaviors observed.

Teasing

In the 10 days after teaching about bullying, I observed only eight incidents of teasing, in comparison to the 22 from before the lessons. One of the reasons for this is that during 5 of the 10 days, Ann was in out of school suspension, so her influence on the

results decreased significantly. During the days when she was present, she showed a marked decline in bullying behaviors, preferring instead to withdraw into herself. Her favorite means of acting out became sleeping in class rather than tormenting her classmates. Of the eight incidents I observed, four were from Ann. The other four came from four different students, and in all cases it was difficult to determine if the teasing was merely good-natured ribbing or had a more insidious purpose. For instance, in one case the teasing took the form of a response to another student's writing. All the students laughed, and it was hard to tell if the person was offended, as they chose to laugh as well.

Name Calling

Name calling remained the most popular bullying activity. I recorded 16 incidents, which is nevertheless a marked decline from 32 in pre-treatment observations. In the 16 incidents, Ann was the recipient of three verbal attacks, and in four cases she was the name caller. In all nine other incidents, various students hurled insults like "moron" or "a**hole" generally in a sarcastic fashion, perhaps meaning to be humorous rather than hurtful. As before, Matthew seemed to be at the center of this kind of attention. The tension that existed in the pre-treatment observations seemed to have dropped off significantly.

Ethnic/Racial Slurs

I observed no ethnic/racial slurs during post-treatment observation. This is a decline from four observances of ethnic/racial jokes in pre-treatment.

Gender Slurs

As during pre-treatment, I observed no gender slurs during post-treatment observation.

Physical Threats

I observed no physical threats during post-treatment observation. This is a decline from three observances in pre-treatment.

Physical Aggression

I observed no physical aggression during post-treatment observation. This is a decline from two incidents in pre-treatment. This was a decline from six instances observed in pre-treatment.

Rumors/Gossip

I tallied two incidents of rumors and gossip in post-treatment, neither of which directly involved students in this class. Both related to arguments among couples known to the two girls discussing them.

Summary

The lessons on bullying seemed to create change in the classroom, but other variables may have been at play. The obvious change in Ann's behavior from pre-treatment to post-treatment greatly alters the results of the observations, as she was the primary source of bullying behaviors. Did her change in behavior stem from what she learned during the bullying lessons? This is hard to say, as other events in Ann's life such as suspension, the potential that she may not graduate and problems at home were all at work. What is, perhaps, more discernable from the results is that behaviors not related to Ann did seem to decrease somewhat in frequency and severity. It is entirely possible that students simply became more adept at hiding bullying behaviors once they knew that it was a matter of concern to me, the teacher. It is also possible that students simply took the behaviors out of the classroom and into the halls or even outside the

school. Nevertheless, one eleventh grader told me, when asked about the change in the classroom climate, “I think it’s different, too. Before, I think we felt like it was okay to do that [bully], and now I know I sometimes stop and think, ya know, maybe this isn’t such a great idea.”

Discussion

From the data taken in Williamstown Middle School, bullying seems to have increased between fall of 2002 and spring of 2003 in grades 6 and 8, decreasing only in grade 7. It appears to be a persistent and pervasive problem across all three middle school grades, and the relative frequency of multiple instances of bullying seems to have decreased in grades 6 and 7 but increased in grade 8. Bullying instances manifest most frequently in the form of name calling and teasing and less frequently in the form or threat of physical aggression, rumors and exclusion from the group. Between fall and spring, name calling and teasing appears to have decreased while other forms of bullying behavior increased.

Generally, students were less likely, by the end of the year, to report incidents of bullying to teachers and to parents. In grade 8, the exception was that the students appeared more likely to reveal these incidents to their parents. This decrease of reporting was likely due to an incentive program that rewarded core groups with the least number of reported incidents.

Students self-reported various forms of bullying behavior with greater frequency in spring 2003 than in fall 2002 and seem to have defended others against bullying behavior with slightly less frequency over the same period.

These results notwithstanding, a slight majority of students in all middle school grades generally reported seeing less bullying incidents over the past year.

Williamstown Middle School's comprehensive approach may have raised awareness among students, but did not seem to have the overall effect of improving the rate or severity of bullying in the school. There are a number of possible reasons why survey results showed a trend toward an increase in bullying, including students being more aware of the finer points of the definition of bullying, students generally being more peaceable at the beginning of the school year rather than at the end, or student confidence in the anonymity of the surveys increasing.

Nonetheless, it seems evident that, at the minimum, the school did not experience a decrease in bullying, even if, with these factors aside, all things remained the same. The assistant vice principal responsible for directing their anti-bullying efforts responded to the results of the survey, saying, "I'm not discouraged. It is a major ordeal and any change does not happen overnight." Despite Olweus's results in Norwegian schools which showed a 50% drop in bullying within one year after instituting his comprehensive approach, it may be that the unique character of Norwegian school and society was just better suited to this sort of change. Similar comprehensive programs in English schools showed only 20% reduction. The greatest reductions seemed to occur in elementary schools with much smaller reductions in secondary schools, such as the ones discussed in this paper (Carey, 2003, p. 18).

In Study II, the curricular approach that I employed in the creative writing classroom seemed to create some change, but some circumstances, such as the presence of one student who displayed a great deal of bullying behavior and her subsequent

absence during the second data collection, had a profound effect on the consistency of the data. The students appear to have done some quality thinking on the subject of bullying and yielded some good discussion and writing about it. The climate of the classroom did seem to be altered by the end of my time there, but this may have been resulting more or as much from my intervention than from the curriculum. No data were collected supporting the idea that bullying is driven underground by the students' awareness that I, as their teacher, was likely to intervene and respond rather than ignore bullying behavior. Nevertheless, the possibility exists that this had an effect on the results, particularly since, on a number of occasions, I did attempt to stop potentially confrontational situations in order to maintain a classroom climate suitable to learning.

The most significant lesson to be learned from these studies is that there is no quick solution to bullying in the public schools, particularly at the secondary level.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of a comprehensive treatment and a curricular treatment on bullying in a southern New Jersey school district.

The administration of a comprehensive treatment by Williamstown Middle School, after the style of Olweus's method, did not yield a significant reduction in bullying behavior as reported in student surveys. In fact, there was an increase of students reporting that they were victims of bullying behavior in sixth and eighth grade with an 8% and 17% rise respectively. The seventh grade reported a reduction of 7.7%.

The curricular treatment as employed in a Williamstown High School mixed grade creative writing class had more successful results: a 35% reduction in total recorded incidents. Nevertheless, due to the presence of a particular student with strong bullying inclinations during the pre-treatment and her absence during much of the post-treatment observation, there may be difficulties regarding the reliability, and hence the validity, of the data.

In both studies, it is evident that change will take time, particularly in secondary schools. Research seems to indicate that starting in elementary school will have much more far-reaching affects (Carey, 2003, p. 18), but we cannot wait for better informed, better socialized elementary students to filter into the secondary schools to create change.

Dan Olweus wrote, “It all boils down, then, to a matter of will and involvement on the part of adults in deciding how much bullying should take place in our schools” (Olweus, 1993, p.128).

Schools, through trial and error, patience and perseverance, will discover solutions that combine established treatments and approaches such as the ones employed in these studies, as well as invent new ones. The most important thing is that the work occurs toward developing these treatments, because without them, bullying and violence in schools will continue to interrupt the main goal of a free, public education: to educate students.

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APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

Bullying Perspective Survey

Student Age _____

Student Grade _____

1. You now know what bullying is, has any student ever bullied you in school during the last year?

YES _____

NO _____

If no, please go to question #9.

2. How many times were you bullied in school last year?

3. What happened when you were bullied?

4. Where did it happen?

5. Did you tell a teacher?

YES _____

NO _____

If so, what did the teacher do?

6. Did you tell your parents?

YES _____

NO _____

If so, what did your parents do?

7. What will you do so you won't be bullied again?

8. Was the bully alone or in a group?

Alone _____

Group _____

9. Do you tease other students?

YES _____

NO _____

10. Do you call other students names?

YES _____

NO _____

11. Do you threaten other students?

YES _____

NO _____

12. Do you spread nasty rumors about other students?

YES _____

NO _____

13. Do you exclude others from the group?

YES _____

NO _____

14. Do you defend others who are being bullied?

YES _____

NO _____

15. Do you laugh while someone is hurt, injured or upset?

YES _____

NO _____

16. Do you carry out physical aggression on others (hitting, pushing, kicking)?

YES _____

NO _____

17. Do you find yourself angry a lot?

YES _____

NO _____

18. If so, why are you angry?

APPENDIX II

APPENDIX II

Bullying Perspective Survey II

Student Age _____

Student Grade _____

1. Has any student ever bullied you in school during this last year?

YES

NO

2. How Many Times Were You Bullied in School This Year?

None

1-5 Times

5-10 Times

10 or more Times

3. What happened when you were bullied?

Rumors

Not included

Name calling/Teasing

Physical Aggression

Threatened

4. Where did it happen?

Recess

Cafeteria

Bus

Home

In Class

Other (please separate out and note)

5. Did you tell a teacher?

YES

NO

5a. What did the teacher do?

Talked to Offender

Issued Detentions

Sent to Principal

Threatened Action

Nothing

6. Did you tell your parents?

YES

NO

6a. What did parents do?

Discussed it with student

Called other parent

Called the School

Ignored it

Suggested retaliation

Nothing

Other (note and separate)

7. What will you do so you wont be bullied again?

Ignore/Avoid

Retaliate

Defend self

Threaten

Tell Teacher

Call the Cops

Don't Know

Other (separate and note)

8. Was the bully alone or in a group?

ALONE

GROUP

9. Do you tease other students?

YES

NO

10. Do you call other students names?

YES

NO

11. Do you threaten other students?

YES

NO

12. Do you spread nasty rumors about other students?

YES

NO

13. Do you exclude others from the group?

YES

NO

14. Do you defend others who are being bullies?

YES

NO

15. Do you laugh when someone is hurt injured or upset?

YES

NO

16. Do you carry out physical aggression in others?

YES

NO

17. Do you find yourself angry a lot?

YES

NO

18. Why are you angry?

Hate Intimidation

Hate School

Hate siblings

Don't know/other (do not separate unless exceptional written response)

APPENDIX III

APPENDIX III

Data Sheet for Study II

<u>Action</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Teasing		
Name Calling		
Ethnic/Racial Slurs		
Gender Slurs		
Physical Threats		
Physical Aggressiveness		
Rumors/Gossip		

APPENDIX IV

APPENDIX IV

“Betty Ann” by Ina Hughes

BETTY ANN



Mistakes.

We all make them. Sometimes, if we're lucky, an eraser will do the trick, and we can rub it across the page, wipe away the dust, and all that's left of our careless mess is a hardly noticeable smudge.

But some mistakes can't be erased. No matter how old or young we are.

I was in the ninth grade the first time I really thought about all this. That year, I learned to diagram sentences on the blackboard, got my learner's permit, wore my first strapless bra, wrote poetry I never read to my parents—but, by far, the toughest lesson I learned was that life doesn't come with eras-

ers. I couldn't make something that had happened, not happen. Even imagination is powerless. There are no erasers. I was fourteen, and I wished then, and I wish now, that I could erase or imagine away what I did, what we all did, to Betty Ann.

She came to our school from Cleveland, Ohio, and to our ninth-grade class in Richmond, Virginia, Cleveland was on another planet.

"Oh, hi! Ohhoo . . ." whispered Margie under her breath as Mrs. Johnson introduced Betty Ann in her homeroom that first day. Margie could be real snooty sometimes. Nobody took her too seriously when she got into her rich-kid, old-money mood. She'd entertain us with cruise stories and New York gossip every afternoon as we sat on the front steps after lunch licking the icing off Oreos and begging quarters for a Dr Pepper from the drink machine in the gym. Margie would try to impress us, in her high-pitched, bragging voice, with the *Vogue* models she knew and how they shampooed their hair with beer, that people who ate their whole dinner with their salad fork were not the kind of people her family wanted her to marry into.

Actually, Margie was as insecure and as homely as the rest of us, and her life was about as exciting as the metric system, but we all knew Margie. We all knew everybody. Except Betty Ann. Most of us had been in the same class since kindergarten.

Then came Betty Ann of Cleveland, in her peasant blouses, rolled-down socks, and strange ideas.

If it had been just Margie who dug into Betty Ann, it wouldn't have turned out the way it did; she probably could have handled that. But we *all* were in on it.

I guess what started us off was when Betty Ann wrote a better English composition than Susan Henderson. Susan was the writer of the class, and we were very proud of her. Her weekly story was always so good, Miss Moon usually chose it to read aloud to the class every Friday. Susan would sit back in her desk, a pencil stuck behind her ear, looking to all of us just like a promising young literary genius we could say we once knew.

The Friday after Betty Ann arrived on the scene, Susan twirled her pencil, leaned back in her desk, and waited for the best composition of the week to be read.

Hers, of course.

Only it wasn't. It was Betty Ann's, and it was about a black poet named Langston Hughes and how he had become a spokesman for his people. Susan's stories were always about horse shows or opening nights.

We'd never heard of Langston Hughes. Besides, this was an all-white private school. Martin Luther King was being nailed by most of the adults we

knew. All in all, it was a real bomb to have Betty Ann go on about Langston Hughes's "Black Nativity" and his description of the "maple-sugar child" and how he thought Carl Sandburg's poems fall on the page like blood clots of song from the wounds of humanity.

In Susan's stories, the "telephone jangled" and "the rainbow painted the sky." Stuff like that. Betty Ann was writing about the civil war in Spain and the black ghettos of Harlem. Langston Hughes was from Cleveland. We might have guessed.

Mrs. Johnson came to the part in Betty Ann's composition where Langston Hughes writes a poem about how he likes watermelon so much that if he should meet the queen of England, he'd be proud to offer her a piece. That was when Agnes Matherson's eyes caught mine (or was it the other way around?) and we started imitating the queen of England eating a piece of watermelon. The whole class burst out laughing. The rest of the story was never read, and everybody but Betty Ann had to stay after school and clean blackboards. The next day at lunch, Betty Ann found a note under her lettuce saying we were sorry, but the cafeteria was sho' nuf out of watermelon.

After that, she became the class joke. What she wore, what she said, what she ate somehow always gave one of us an idea for a wisecrack. There was a kind of one-upmanship about getting Betty Ann that

had less to do with Betty Ann than with our own jungle mentality. I know that now, but I didn't think about it then. She became a pawn.


She started getting sick a lot. There'd be whole weeks when she'd miss school, but the Betty Ann stories went on even without her. She came to our school from another planet. She was our little moron, our Polack, our village idiot.

Then one day, Betty Ann and I were assigned a project together. Everyone had selected a partner, and I was out of town at a school swimming meet the day the assignment was given, so I got stuck with Betty Ann. Everyone kidded me, and I laughed with them. The day before the project was due, I had to go over to her house after school to work on it with her. Her mother fixed a plate of cookies and kept coming into the room to see if I wanted more Coke or anything. She said I was the only one of Betty Ann's friends who had come over after school, and was glad to meet me.

The phone rang while I was there, and it was for me. Betty Ann's mother was in the kitchen when I heard Margie giggling at the other end of the line: "Have you eaten any maple sugar candy or watermelon, kiddo?"

She waited for me to snicker an undercover laugh.

I saw Betty Ann's mother just standing in the kitchen with her back to me, pretending not to be



INA HUGH S

listening. It was as if she had heard everything. I hung up. I think it was at that moment when I began to see what we had been doing.

“Why don’t you girls like Betty Ann? She likes you . . .”

Nobody has ever asked me a question before or since that made me feel so stupid.

If kindness could kill, Betty Ann would have been dead in a week. But it was too late. Her parents moved her to another school, then we heard later that she’d had a nervous breakdown.

Once, years later when I was home from college, I saw Betty Ann in the doctor’s office. She didn’t even recognize me.

Sticks and stones only break bones. Words can shatter the soul. A little, quiet, picked-on ten-year-old runs away because kids on the bus laugh at him. A sensitive ninth grader flips out because a group of self-rising girls decide to throw her to the wolves. We tell ourselves it takes more than that to send someone over the edge. Maybe so. Maybe not.

But there are no erasers.