This study used content analysis to examine eight juvenile fiction novels about bullying. The purpose of this study was to examine how bullying and the role(s) teachers and administrators play in those bullying situations are portrayed in the literature available to students. Specifically, this paper focused on if and how teachers and administrators dealt with the bullying after it happened, and if they were proactive in addressing and talking about bullying before it happened. The selected novels were analyzed in depth using a checklist developed from reviewing the criteria outlined in the literature to identify the roles the teachers and administrators play in bullying. Also, the novels were examined, compared and discussed through the lens of the trends that emerged from a full read of each novel. Overall, the novels analyzed for this study showed very little to no teacher or administrator involvement in the bullying situations presented in the books.

Headings:

Juvenile Fiction

Bullying

Teachers and Administrators

Content Analysis
BULLYING SITUATIONS IN JUVENILE FICTION NOVELS: THE ROLE OF
TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

by
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Approved by

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Introduction

In the fall of 2013 I found myself standing in front of a class of 7th grade girls, poised to teach a lesson on cyber bullying. I was working in the media center at the school as an intern; I felt rather unqualified to teach these students about such an important and weighted issue—an issue I knew little about. Summoning my best confident-sounding speaking voice, I began maneuvering my way through the lesson I had carefully put together. I was unprepared for the honesty in which the girls answered the questions I asked—startled by the frank manner in which they spoke about bullying.

*Teachers don’t do anything about bullying, they don’t care and they don’t know what to do, and I would not go to one for help. It would just make things worse.* While not an exact quote, this idea portrayed in a comment from a student, that teachers are unaware, unwilling and unable to deal with bullying, stuck with me. I found it very unsettling that this student felt this way, and the more I delved into the issue, the more I found she was not alone in her sentiments.

There is no prescribed formula or set stereotype of what a bully looks like. Bullying is not something that should be overlooked or taken lightheartedly, especially by schoolteachers and administrators. However, it is a common conviction among students that “teachers frequently do little to intercede, and often completely ignore even blatant acts of bullying” (Quinn, Barone, Kearns, Stackhouse, and Zimmerman, 2003, p. 583). According to Atlas and Pelper (2003), “only 40% of students reported that teachers
take an active stand to prevent bullying in their schools” (p. 87). In spite of these statistics, students are often instructed to seek out the help of an adult if they are being bullied (Pytash, Morgan, Batchelor, 2013).

Pytash et al. (2013) states “teachers can be armed with facts about bullying, but they also need to notice the subtleties that often occur with these incidents” (p. 15). Teachers and administrators need to recognize that bullying can take multiple forms beyond physically hurting someone, that the “concepts of bullying extend beyond this very narrow” (Brank et al., 2012, p. 214) view of a complex issue. Literature is one vehicle for generating awareness. It presents the bullying situation in a different light and allows for teachers and educators to see things from the point of view of the adolescent, and “experience bullying as either a bully or as a victim through the characters” (Pytash et al., 2013, p. 19).

Fiction about bullying is also an excellent tool for exposing young people to a prevalent and serious topic. Through the lens of a realistic fiction novel students can gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies of various bullying situations, and also learn what to do in those bullying situations. If the roles of the teachers and administrators presented in these novels do not emulate positive behaviors and actions, and do not provide the support and help students are told will they provide, it can be a point of confusion for the reader. Youth in bullying situations need a proactive helpmate on their side, not one more silent observer.

The purpose of this study is to analyze current juvenile fiction novels that portray bullying in a school setting, specifically looking at how the teachers and administrators handle and deal with the bullying, with the goal of providing a comprehensive overview
of the novels that are useful not only to the students who read them, but to teachers as well. The goal of this paper is to present a focused study of one small piece of an involved and multifaceted issue: how the roles of teachers and administrators influence and play a part in the other aspects of bullying situations. Siebecker and Swearer (2010) assert that “the [bullying] problem does not simply lie within the child; rather it is the result of a number of factors…. An environment may contribute to incidence of bullying by harboring a climate where…. there is little supervision by adults, or a lack of adult intervention when bullying is observed or by ignoring victim reports of bullying” (Siebecker and Swearer, 2010, p. 173-4). This study addresses the adults, specifically the teachers and administrators in the novels to see what role they play in the bullying situations.

Originally, I planned to do this research study with young adult (YA) fiction novels; I carefully collected a stack of books and began working my way through them. The more books I read, the more worried I became—the overwhelming majority of the YA novels I had selected showed very little to no teacher or administrator support for the bullying situations presented in the books. A line from one of the YA novels, Until it Hurts to Stop, by Jennifer R. Hubbard stuck out to me and best exemplified this trend: “In highschool it’s not considered okay to beat up the losers so openly. It reeks of trying too hard, of having no life of your own” (24). This culture of closeted abuse is evident in all the YA books I initially read; the young adults portrayed in these novels have “moved on to subtler, more sophisticated, and more defended strategies” (Bott, 2004, p. 2) of bullying that teachers and administrators are depicted as either unaware of or simply unwilling to acknowledge. Also, the bullying situations in YA fiction novels are much
more complex and convoluted—while bullying may be the main topic of these books, many times the characters have several other things they are dealing with, as well. These intricate plot lines make it difficult to analyze the bullying situation apart from everything else that is happening. I decided not to look at YA fiction novels for this study because there was very little to evaluate; teachers and administrators simply are not shown as having any involvement, good or bad, in the bullying in these books.

Ultimately, analyzing Juvenile fiction proved to be the best approach for this study; also, I found it to be a more useful avenue to take, as elementary “teachers… are involved in most parts of their students lives…. With their enthusiasm and creativity, [they can] find many ways to integrate books with their class work” (Bott, 2004, p. 15), as opposed to middle and high school teachers, who are more restricted with curriculum standards. “Plus, the [elementary school] students who are targeted are not yet very skilled in hiding their hurt” (Bott, 2004, p.15), and will greatly benefit from both reading fiction about bullying on their own, as well as proactive and preventative lessons on bullying taught through the lens of a fiction book.
Literature Review

Bullying, Defined

Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher, is credited with developing the first large-scale scientific study of bullying in the 1970s. He is regarded as one of the Founding Fathers of bullying awareness and prevention research. His definition of bullying is the most commonly used definition by researchers in the field (Brank et al., 2012). Olweus’ definition of bullying is an important component for informing this study, as it provides a clear framework of what is and is not considered bullying.

This is significant for two reasons: first, because his definition has been universally adopted by researchers, it provides coherency and standardization by which to measure results. This allows for behaviors and ideas from various studies to be compared with some degree of reliability, as well as provides the ability to generalize results from multiple studies. Second, the Olweus definition of bullying provides a framework by which this study can draw grounded conclusions and make informed observations of the Juvenile fiction novels being examined.

The Olweus definition of bullying is as follows:

“A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons…. A negative action [is] when someone inflicts—or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort upon another. It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Negative actions can be carried out by words… [or by] physical contact. It is also possible to carry out negative actions without use of words or physical contact such as by making faces or dirty gestures, intentionally excluding someone from a group, or refusing to comply with another person’s wishes” (Olweus, 1993, p. 9).
Olweus goes on to stress that bullying is almost always something that happens repeatedly, and over a period of time. Isolated incidents of harassment are excluded from his definition in order to avoid confusing bullying with “occasional nonserious negative actions” (Olweus, 1993, p. 9). Olweus contends his definition of bullying should not be used to describe a pressure situation between two or more students who are equally matched. That is, two or more students who have the same physical or verbal strengths are not considered to be bullying one another when fighting or harassing each other (Olwues, 1993).

Those involved in bullying take on different roles: which include the bully, the victim, and the passive or active bystander (Siebecker and Swearer, 2010, p. 172). These roles are interchangeable, a bully can also be a victim, and a victim can turn into a bully with a single word. A passive bystander looks on silently and does not act or respond to a bullying situation, while an active bystander takes some action, either agreeing or disagreeing with the bully in a verbal or physical manner. Most bystanders are passive, unwilling to say or do anything to help a victim for fear that they will be the next target (Siebecker and Swearer, 2010).

Bullying falls into four categories: physical, verbal, relational [or social, which includes talking about someone behind their back, directly embarrassing someone in front of others, etc.], and cyber (Brank et al., 2012). Bullying in each of these four categories can occur directly or indirectly. Direct bullying is “overt physical and verbal aggression… which includes behaviors like hitting, kicking, and pushing and sexual aggression such a touching, pinching and groping. Direct verbal bullying includes behaviors such as name calling, teasing and threats of harm” (Dooboy and Clay, 2008, p.
Indirect bullying is “covert... social or relational bullying, which often has the goal of damaging the victim’s social relationships or reputation. Indirect bullying includes behaviors such as spreading rumors, social exclusion, friendship manipulation, and gossiping” (Dooboy and Clay, 2008, p. 56).

**Misconceptions About Bullying.** Bullying is a multifaceted issue, and recognizing bullying situations is not always a straightforward process. Girls are just as likely to play the role of a bully as boys; physical violence is only one way in which adolescents bully others. More often than not, bullies have been victims at one time too, or are still victims and are dealing with it by lashing out and bullying others. Also, many adults are under the delusion that bullying is not their problem; it is something students need to deal with on their own, without help (Cooper & Snell, 2003, p. 23).

Another big misconception is that bullying is something that “just happens”. Bullying should not be taken lightly, simply viewed as a right-of-passage, or as something adolescents will “get over” or “work through” (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, Bettencourt, and Lemme, 2006). It is essential that teachers and administrators learn how to look beyond the stereotypical depictions of bullying, as “there are still many teachers who are working with very limited conceptions of bullying” (Naylor et al., 2006, p. 573).

In their empirical study, Hazler and Miller (2001) asked 251 teachers and counselors to read and assess twenty-one scenarios and make a judgment on whether the scenarios portray bullying, or another form of conflict. The twenty-one scenarios included in the study are based on the Olweus definition of bullying and include “the presence or absence of three critical bullying situation characteristics: repeated bullying, harm done to the victim, and an unfair match” (Hazler and Miller, 2001, p. 136).
participants were also asked to judge the severity of the conflict presented. The results of the study showed that the educators viewed physical threat or abuse as more severe than verbal or social or emotional abuse. The educators also marked physical conflicts as bullying, “even when they did not fit the [Olweus] definition” (Hazler and Miller, 2001, p. 133) of bullying. This study is important, as it demonstrates the inability of “professional who work with children on a daily basis to differentiate between bullying and other forms of youthful play or fighting” (Hazler and Miller, 2001, p. 137).

In a similar study, Yoon (2004) presented hypothetical bullying situations to 98 elementary school teachers in order to examine their attitudes, actions, and involvement in the situations; “the purpose of the study was to explore three teacher characteristics (empathy, self-efficacy and perceived seriousness) that influence teacher responses to students’ bullying behaviors” (p. 42). Yoon (2004) had the teachers read six different hypothetical vignettes, all which displayed bullying situations in line with the Olweus definition (i.e. bullying was not an isolated incident, bullying happened between students who were not equally matched, etc.). Once the participants finished each vignette, they were directed to fill out a questionnaire and rate the bullying on a scale from one to five “in terms of seriousness” (p. 40) of the bullying, on how “sympathetic they would feel toward the victim, and on how likely they were to intervene when faced with bullying situations described in the vignettes” (p. 40). In addition, “teachers were asked to describe how they would respond to the perpetrators in each situation” (p. 40).

Yoon (2004) found that out of the three characteristics (empathy, self-efficacy and perceived seriousness) examined in the study, “the perceived seriousness of bullying situations was even more important than the others. It made the most contribution in
predicting the likelihood of teacher intervention in the presence of empathy and self-efficacy” (p. 42); therefore, educating teachers and administrators on the nuances of bullying, and “increasing awareness of negative outcomes associate with bullying behaviors” (p. 42) is the most effective way to raise awareness and understanding of a serious and widespread issue. Yoon’s (2004) study also stressed that the intentions of a teacher to intervene in bullying situations is not indicative of their actual behavior in reporting and dealing with the bullying: “teacher behavior is a product of complex processes that involve different individual and situational characteristics in certain organizational context” (Yoon, 2004, p. 42). Even if a teacher is inclined to report and/or handle a bullying situation, they are more likely to not do anything about the bullying if the school and administrative climate is not one of support, and fail to provide proper training, guidelines, and assistance for the teachers (and the school community as a whole). School environments that do not foster a zero tolerance approach to bullying lead to more lenient environments and attitudes of teachers and administrators; also, when a teacher is not equipped to deal with bullying they may react in a way students “perceive as threatening and damaging as bullying behaviors of [their fellow] students” (Yoon, 2004, p. 38).

**Responsibilities of Teachers and Administrators in Bullying Situations**

Even with their best efforts, teachers and administrators cannot completely eradicate bullying. Flasphohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, and Birchmeier (2009) state that “social [and emotional] support from teachers is a valuable resource that contributes to students’ academic and social success” (639). The role teachers and administrators can play in stopping the cycle of bullying and promoting a healthy and safe climate at school
is critical, as they “play an important part in preventing victimization [by providing] social support to buffer the negative consequences associated with bullying” (Flasphohler et al., 2009, 638). Policies, programs, and campaigns are only one piece of preventing and contending with bullying. Students need to feel like they can trust and talk to their teachers and administrator, and turn to them when they are being bullied. Alone, no policy can foster a sense of community, well-being and safety, and solidarity—only people can do that, and it starts with the teachers.

Overwhelmingly, the research available on bullying and how to handle bullying in a school setting points to the need for a dramatic change in perceptions and the actual knowledge of teachers and administrators (Kennedy et al., 2012), (Fekkes, et al., 2005), (Hazler, 1999), (Venter et al., 2012), (Brank et al., 2012), (Naylor et al., 2006), (Hazler et al., 2001). In addition to a widespread change in viewpoints, school policies on bullying need to be revisited, revised and comprehensibly implemented, as “establishing clear and consistent policies that help guide school official in addressing bullying behaviors is critical to preventing bullying (Kennedy et al., 2012, p. 9).

Teachers and administrators have the responsibility to understand what bullying is and what it is not. “All school staff must be adequately trained so that they may intervene in bully situations with confidence…. Effective policies rely on consistent implementation of, and training for, the procedures involved” (Kennedy et al., 2012, p. 2, 9). Bullying recognition and prevention should be an integral part of professional development of teachers and administrators.

The language teachers and administrators use to talk to each other and to students about bullying needs to be streamlined, and consistent guidelines and expectations need
to put into place. In their empirical study on the perceptions of bullying of teachers and administrators in schools, Kennedy et al. (2012) found that “teachers and administrators differ with regard to the size of the role that educators play in bullying prevention” (p. 9). If the role of teachers and administrators is not clear to them, it will not be clear to the students who are in need of assistance in a bullying situation. The literature on bullying suggests awareness of bullying and genuine support from friends, family, and educators is one of the best safeguards in helping students deal with bullying. Kennedy et al. (2012) and Brank et al. (2012) stress that teachers and administrators must put themselves in the position where they can act as the catalyst for generating various points of support.

**Juvenile Fiction Novels & Bullying**

Author Lourdes Lopez-Ropero (2012) presents an historical perspective on the tradition of bullying in literature written for youth by analyzing a range of novels that deal with the topic of bullying. In her study she explores the larger ideas that often lead to bullying, such as race, class, sexual orientation, appearance, etc. in a set of YA novels. Lourdes Lopez-Ropero’s (2012) study contends that “bullying novels transcend the confines of the single-issue problem novel, addressing matters of difference and bias in society” (p. 152) thus examining multifaceted subject matters that extend far beyond the bullying.

Throughout her discussion of the various novels Lopez-Ropero (2012) alludes to the authority figures in a few of the books. For example, when talking about the novel *Buddha Boy* by Kathe Koja she makes the remark that “school authorities… are certainly complicit in the bullying” (p. 151) taking place in the novel, but she does not go into any more detail than that. She also quotes this passage from the novel *The Chocolate War*:
“If teachers did this kind of thing, what kind of world could it be?” (p. 90). Lopez-Ropero (2012) goes on to say that this suggests, “the authority figures of the school were responsible, and, in this case, were failing their young charges” (p. 149). Lopez-Ropero (2012) argues, “bullying is no longer considered an unavoidable fact of life, but a behavior that needs to be prevented and amended” (p. 146). She argues that literature is a valuable and effective means to do so.

Lourdes Lopez-Ropero’s article informs the research questions and goals stated in this study because it stresses the importance and relevance of current fiction about bullying. Lopez-Ropero (2012) states that “even though fictional depictions of bullying are hardly new, it was in the decade of 2000-2010 that a significant number of adolescent novels appeared, especially in the USA, dealing with bullying in high school settings” (p. 146). Her article reinforces the need for researchers to take a fresh look at juvenile fiction, and to examine the actions of adults in novels about bullying for the purposes of using those novels to better inform educators and to better support students.

Authors Pytash et al. (2013) also focus on the use of fiction to inform educators about bullying. In their study, they asked pre-service English language arts teachers to select and read a YA fiction book that deals with bullying and then to participate in a voluntary discussion group. From their reading and subsequent conversations with the preservice teachers, “four findings emerged that speak to the possibilities literature can offer preservice… and inservice teachers in developing and awareness of and sensitivity to bullying in schools” (Pytash et al., 2013, p. 15-17). These findings are as follows:

1. Through the reading, the preservice teachers became aware of their preconceived stereotypical notions of what a bully victim looks like. “They came to realize
how a ‘popular student’ might also fall prey to bullying” (p. 17), that nobody is immune to bullying.

2. The preservice teachers learned to identify the more subtle forms of bullying, especially the types of bullying that slip under the radar of teachers. “Reading YA literature helped [them]… think about bullying through the characters’ eyes” (p. 17).

3. The preservice teachers began to recognize that teachers play a role in bullying, as well. After reading and discussing the books “they thoughtfully considered how their actions and words as teachers might affect students” (p. 18).

4. Lastly, after participating in the study, the “teachers believed they could make a difference by creating an open and low-risk environment in their classrooms, and they viewed YA literature as integral to this work” (p. 19).

Their research informs the goals and questions of the current study as it contends that 1) teachers do have misinformed perceptions on bullying in schools, and 2) that literature truly can be effective in addressing and informing complex issues. Pytash et al. (2013) argue that to combat the startling rise of bullying, “schools are implementing anti-bullying programs that often identify teachers as the first line of defense. But while students are instructed to seek out a teacher if bullying occurs” (p. 15), unfortunately, many teachers are blind to bullying situations and ill-equipped to help a student even if they do recognize what is happening.

**Bringing it all together.** In their empirical article, Quinn et al. (2003) provide meaningful statistics on bullying and the positive effects of using literature in the classroom, and then discuss a multitude of practical ways to use books about bullying in
the classroom. They present these suggestions through the framework of five-week literature-based curriculum unit study, conducted over the summer with twenty-four students from various middle and high school grades. Using the novel *Crash*, by Jerry Spinelli, the teachers (all certified and working on their Master’s degree with a reading specialization certification) divided the unit into three parts: 1) prereading, with “activities to connect prior knowledge and make predictions” (p. 585), (2) during-reading activities, such as “response journals, guided reading, literature circles, graphic organizer, and readers theatre” (p. 585), and (3) postreading activities including “role playing and creative arts” (p. 585).

Quinn et al. found that the discussions, lessons, and activities the students completed helped them “to become aware of their perceptions and to discover that they had many preconceptions on the subject of bullying” (Quinn et al., 2003, p. 586). Beyond that, the study challenged the way the students thought about bullying, and stretched them to view it as “something more personal and meaningful. [The] diverse group of adolescents, from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, found unity as they attempted to deal with a common issue that had affected all of their lives” (Quinn et al., 2003, p. 591).

The study and findings presented in this article underlie the foundation of the research goals and questions of the current study. Quinn et al. (2003) state “educators need to recognize the serious impact bullying can have on our youth and that it affects all concerned: the bully, the victim, and even the bystanders. Whether a school-wide program is implemented or not, the classroom teacher can address issues on a personal level” (p. 583). If teachers and administrators are actively and regularly talking about,
reading, and teaching literature that deals with bullying, they are not only creating awareness and continually reinforcing the idea that they are there to listen and to help, but they are also informing and reminding themselves of the role they should be playing.
Methodology

Research Design

The aim of this paper is to establish and explore the roles teachers and administrators play in juvenile fiction novels about bullying. A qualitative approach was deemed to be the suitable general approach, as the “data analysis inductively built from particulars to general themes, and the researcher made interpretations of the meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

Content analysis was determined to be the most appropriate research method for several reasons: “Content analysis is useful for identifying both conscious and unconscious messages communicated by text (i.e., what is stated explicitly as well as what is implied or revealed by the manner in which content is expressed)” (Dooboy and Clay, 200, p. 56). Additionally, content analysis is useful for assessing both manifest, “content [that] exists unambiguously in the message” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 289), as well as the “latent content of the communication: it’s underlying meaning” (Babbie, 2010, p. 338). The majority of the analysis in this study was latent analysis, as the study required conclusions to be drawn to elucidate on the behaviors of the teachers and administrators in the novels.

Selecting Texts

To determine the sample of novels a preliminary search was performed in NoveList Plus database, “an online readers’ advisory tool that helps readers find new fiction and non-fiction titles based on books they’ve already read or topics in which they’re interested” (UNC University Libraries, 2008). The keywords of “bullying” and “bullying and school” were searched, with the results limited to “Ages 9-12” and “Ages
0-8” and “Fiction.” The publication dates were limited to the years of 1974-2013. Initial results produced a list of over 850 potential titles. I narrowed those results to 50 possible titles by reading the descriptions listed for each book; once I reached 50 possible titles I stopped sifting through the results and moved on to inspecting the books more in-depth.

Each of the 50 novels was then thoroughly examined for evidence of some form of teacher and/or administrator presence and involvement in the bullying situation presented in the novel. This was done by reading summaries and reviews of each book provided on NoveList, consulting review sources such as Booklist, School Library Journal, and Kirkus Reviews. If the summaries and reviews did not reveal enough about a particular title, the title was physically inspected for evidence of teacher and/or administrator involvement. I narrowed my pool to a total of 20 titles, and upon full read, only 8 of the novels fit into the parameters set for this study and were chosen for analysis.

Table 1 provides an overview of the books that were examined for this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Published</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Number of Pages</th>
<th>Lexile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>The Hundred Dresses</td>
<td>Eleanor Estes</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again</td>
<td>Susan Shreve</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Song Lee and the ‘I Hate You’ Notes</td>
<td>Suzy Kline</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Cockroach Cooties</td>
<td>Laurence Yep</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Jake Drake Bully Buster</td>
<td>Andrew Clements</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Super Emma</td>
<td>Sally Warner</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Wonder</td>
<td>R. J. Palacio</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Runt</td>
<td>Nora Raleigh Baskin</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selected novels range from short transitional novels/early chapter books with illustrations, to longer, more developed narratives. The bullying situations in the novels
are just as diverse: ranging from less extreme instances, to more severe, longer-lasting cases. While all the books share the subject matter of bullying as a common theme, the novels embody a wide range of interests and appeal to both male and female students.

**Data Collection Methods & Analysis**

The data for this content analysis study was collected in two ways. First, a rubric was developed to ensure each novel was evaluated with consistency (see Appendix A). The rubric included information such as: Number of Incidents: Does the bullying happen more than once? Perspective: is the novel written from the perspective of the bully, the victim, or an outsider/bystander? Characteristics of the Victim(s): Is he/she quiet and reserved, outgoing, a loner, poor, rich, popular, etc.? Characteristics of Bully(s): Is/was he/she friends with the victim? Is he/she quiet and reserved, popular, a loner, poor, rich, outgoing, etc.? Bullying Location: Does the bullying take place in the classroom, in the hallway, on the playground, on the bus, the walk home, during extracurricular activities at school, etc.? Teacher/Administrator presence and or involvement: If different in each novel; describe.

Second, as the novels were read, a code developed organically from notes that were taken about the bullying situations in the novels (See Appendix B), including: Does the novel mention a school policy on bullying? In the specific bullying situation presented, does the teacher and/or administrator recognize the situation and address it appropriately? If not, do they ignore the situation? Do they contribute negatively in any way to the bullying? Are the students in the novel encouraged to approach a teacher and/or administrator for help? Does the teacher and/or administrator contact a parent or other adult, such as the principal? During the data analysis notes were compared and
analyzed for similarities and differences. Conclusions were derived using latent analysis to organize findings.
Findings and Results

Findings: Individual Books Described

Each novel presents a unique bullying situation that is highly dependent on the context in which the novel presents it; therefore, I will begin with an overview of each book individually before talking about the themes that emerged from the collection as a whole.

The Hundred Dresses

Author Eleanor Estes presents a timeless and poignant tale in her thought-provoking story The Hundred Dresses. The story is told from the perspectives of Peggy and Maddie, the two bullies in the story that pick mercilessly on their victim, Wanda Petronski. Peggy is described as “the most popular girl in school. She was pretty; she had many pretty clothes and her auburn hair was curly. Maddie was her closest friend” (5). However, Peggy is depicted as being oblivious to her actions: “If anybody had said to her, ‘Don’t you know that is a cruel way to treat Wanda?’ she would have been very surprised” (16). In contrast, Wanda is poor, “she lived way up on Boggins Heights, and Boggins Heights was not the place to live” (9) and rather reticent, “… she was very quiet and rarely said anything at all” (3); however, despite the fact “she didn’t have any friends… a lot of girls talked to her” (12).

At first Peggy and Maddie teased Wanda because her name was so different: “Wanda Petronski. Most of the children… didn’t have names like that. They had names easy to say, like Tomas, Smith, or Allen” (10). But one morning, when Wanda excitedly tells the girls at school she has a hundred different dresses in her closet, Peggy and Maddie do not believe her because she “wore a faded blue dress” (11-12) every day.
They use Wanda’s adamant proclamations against her with repeated direct verbal and social bullying outside of the classroom: “…No one really thought much about Wanda Petronski once she was in the classroom. The time they thought about her was outside of school hours, at noontime when they were coming back to school, or in the morning early before school began….” (4).

There is only one instance of teacher involvement in the bullying in the book, and it takes place after Wanda, her brother and her father abruptly move out of town. Wanda’s father sends a note to her teacher, Miss Mason, explaining they are going somewhere where nobody will make fun of their name. While the teacher does not directly address the endless teasing about the hundred dresses (teasing Miss Mason very well may not have known anything about since it happened outside of her classroom); she does directly speak to the name calling:

“Miss Mason stood there a moment and the silence in the room grew tense and expectant…. Her manner indicated that what was coming… was a matter of great importance” (46-7). She says to her class: “‘I am sure none of my boys and girls in Room 13 would purposely and deliberately hurt anyone’s feelings…. I prefer to think that what was said was said in thoughtlessness. I know that all of you feel the way I do, that this is a very unfortunate thing to have happen. Unfortunate and sad, both. And I want you all to think about it’” (48).

There is minimal teacher/administrator involvement in The Hundred Dresses, but the one instance where the teacher addresses the bullying provokes a visible and thoughtful change in Maddie, a bully and bystander; after a sleepless night “she reached an important conclusion. She was never going to stand by and say nothing again” (63). Peggy is similarly affected; even though her inner thought processes about Wanda are not present in the text, Maddie is relieved to find that Peggy feels the same way as she does about the way they treated Wanda: “Maddie glowed. Peggy was really all right… Peg
was really all right. She was okay” (50). Early on in the story, before everyone knows
Wanda has moved away permanently, Maddie feels bad for Wanda and wants to stop
picking on her. However, she pictures herself as a potential target of Peggy’s taunting, as
“Maddie was poor herself” (17). Her fear keeps her from speaking up, and even though
she was not always guilty of saying nasty things, she realizes that “… she had stood by
silently, and that was just as bad as what Peggy had done. Worse. She was a coward. At
least Peggy hadn’t considered they were being mean, but she, Maddie, had thought they
were doing wrong” (49). It is not until Miss Mason speaks to her students that Maggie is
able to acknowledge her feelings of discomfort, come to the conclusion that “if she ever
heard anybody picking on someone because they were funny looking or because they had
strange names, she’d speak up. Even if it meant losing Peggy’s friendship. She had no
way of making thinks right with Wanda, but from now on she would never make
anybody else so unhappy again” (63).

Song Lee and the “I Hate You” Notes

This early chapter book is the shortest of the novels analyzed, but it present a
succinct and viable representation of a bullying situation with beneficial teacher
involvement. The story is told through the perspective of Doug, a bystander to the
bullying that is happening between two other students in his third grade classroom. Doug
and his friend Harry observe Mary, who is grumpy and sleep-deprived (because she had
not being going to bed when told) indirectly bullying Song Lee by writing her hateful,
anonymous notes. Mary’s ugly notes to Song Lee reflect her frustration with her over a
variety of inane things, like giggling when Mary slipped and fell during a kickball game
and getting the right answer to a question in class.
Song Lee is portrayed as quiet but very friendly, and is rather unwilling to tell anyone about receiving the notes. “Song Lee unfolded it [the note] and read it. Harry and I watched her crumple it up, walk over to the wastepaper basket and drop it in. When Song Lee took out her cherry blossom handkerchief, and wiped her eyes with it, we knew the note was deadly” (20-21). The second note is left on her desk a bit later in the day, and after reading it Song Lee puts her head down on her desk, visibly shutting down emotionally. “I bet she asks to go home,’ I [Doug] moaned” (33).

Doug and Harry both are reluctant to say or do anything about what they have observed:

“‘So what do we do?’ I [Doug] asked. ‘Tell the teacher?’”

“‘No way!’ Harry refused. ‘I’ve never tattled in my life. I don’t rat on people’”(31-2).

Doug and Harry’s hesitance to say or do anything in regards to Mary’s not so nicely worded notes to Song Lee is typical bystander behavior—especially Harry’s desire to not be a tattletale.

Fortunately, their teacher Miss Mackle is very present and involved in her classroom. In the story, even before she is aware of the bullying that is occurring she proactively speaks to her students about bullying by using literature, specifically the book *Ramona the Pest*, by Beverly Cleary. Later in the day, after Mary leaves the second of the two notes on Song Lee’s desk, and Doug and Harry watch her put “her head down on her desk” (32), Harry decides he can’t sit idly by anymore:

“Then he [Harry] looked me [Doug] square in the eye. ‘I’m doing it!’
‘What?’ I asked.
‘You’ll see.’
Harry tiptoed up to the teacher and tattled” (33-34).
Miss Mackle deals with the situation immediately: “Boys and girls,” Miss Mackle called. “Please come over to the library corner and sit down. I have a special story to read” (36). She chooses to read and discuss a picture book with her students that depicted a bullying situation closely mimicking the one actually taking place in the classroom. When she is done reading the book, Miss Mackle delicately discusses the story without putting anyone in the class on the spot. The only thing she says directly about the bullying, is: “I hope I never see another ‘I hate you note in my class” (41). Mary is visibly upset during the read-a-loud, she: “closed her eyes, and plugged her ears” (39), as the story obviously hit too close to home.

Song Lee ends up standing up for herself—she writes a note to Mary asking her not to “send any more ‘I hate you’ notes. [Because] It’s mean” (47). Song Lee emphasizes her point by taping dead flies to the note. When Mary throws a fit about receiving a note with dead flies taped to it, Miss Mackle steps in, and instead of “taking sides”, she simply asks: “‘Why would someone tell you not to write ‘I Hate You’ notes?’” (48). By standing up for herself and addressing Mary directly, Song Lee diffuses the situation, and with the support of Miss Mackle, the story ends on a positive note—Mary eventually apologizes to Song Lee, and all is well in the classroom again.

_**Jake Drake Bully Buster**_

_**Jake Drake Bully Buster** is told from the perspective of Jake Drake, the victim, who describes himself as a “bully magnet” (7). Jake has dealt with bullies since he was in nursery school: “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? How come when it comes to bullies, kids are mostly on their own? Because every year, it’s the same thing. Bullies”_
(4). Jake describes himself a “the perfect kid to pick on” (7); he is just the right size, not too big to make someone think twice about bullying him, but not too small for bullies to pass over because the “bullying is too easy” (7) when you’re really small. Also, Jake describes himself as the type of kid who doesn’t “run to the teacher with all [his] problems. Whiny tattletales make bad bully-bait” (9).

The new kid in town, Link Baxter also is the newest bully in Jake’s life. Jake is dismayed when his teacher, Mrs. Brattle, puts Link at a desk next to him. Link preys on Jake, teasing him on the bus, during recesses, in the bathroom, cafeteria, as well as in the classroom: “Link was no ordinary bully. Any big kid can push a little kid around. That’s one kind of bullying. But this was different. Link Baxter, well… he got inside my [Jake’s] head—and it only took him twenty minutes... No doubt about it. This was a bully with real talent” (16). Jake tries a number of things to dissuade Link from bullying him, like ignoring him and laughing along with him when Link calls him names, but nothing works. At one point in the story Jake contemplates telling Mrs. Brattle about Link, wanting to shout out to her: ““Don’t you know there’s a SuperBully loose in your classroom?”” (17), but he does not involve his teacher because he believes that “the second rule about bullies is that if you tattle to the teacher, things might get a lot worse” (17).

There is a strong message that telling the teacher equals tattling throughout the novel, and because Jake truly believes this a teacher and administrator do not get involved in the bullying between Jake and Link until it turns physically violent. After several instances of being provoked and teased and bullied by Link in a day, Jake loses his cool in the classroom and punches Link. “Mrs. Brattle was there in one second flat.
‘Jake! I am ashamed of you!’” (37), she says; clearly unaware of the bullying going on, she sends Jake to see Mrs. Karp, the principal.

Mrs. Karp is kind to Jake, but she also fails to see beyond the immediate situation at hand. She asks Jake why he hit Link, and he struggles with what to tell her: “This was the tricky part. If I told about Link being a bully, then I would be a tattletale. But if I didn’t say something, then would think I was some crazy hitter” (40). Instead of feeling like he could bring up the bigger bullying situation, Jake lies, covering for Link and diminishing the circumstances greatly. “So Mrs. Karp sent me back to my classroom. She didn’t even call my mom. As she opened the door to her office for me she said, ‘I’m sure you’ve learned your lesson, haven’t you, Jake? And I said, ‘Yes, Mrs. Karp.’ Only I didn’t know if we were talking about the same lesson.” (42). Ultimately, Mrs. Karp loses a valuable opportunity to talk with a student in private, and to be an advocate for Jake. She fails to question what is going on, choosing to only deal with what she thinks happened.

Jake ends up resolving his issues with Link on his own, without the help of his teacher or the principal. However, he says: “it’s not like Link stopped being a bully. But he did stop being a SuperBully. And he never bullied me again. Ever” (67). While Jake was able to work through his struggles with Link without the help of a teacher or administrator, he makes it clear that Link moved on to bully others; in the end, by failing to recognize what was really happening, Mrs. Karp and Mrs. Brattle fail to truly help Jake, Link, and all the other students who become a victim of Link’s bullying.

*Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again*
In *Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again*, author Susan Shreve presents a story about a young boy, Joshua T. Bates, who is trying to find his place in the 4th grade. Told from the perspective of Joshua, the victim, the novel covers the first week of 4th grade for Joshua, which happens bit later for him than the other 4th graders—as Joshua had flunked third grade. “And so during the month of September of his second year in third grade, Joshua Bates almost died of humiliation. He was ridiculed by Tommy Wilhelm and the fourth-grade boys, teased by his sister Amanda, and left out of games” (5). After putting in many extra hours of hard work, he is promoted, and moves to the 4th grade right after Thanksgiving. There he finds a whole new slew of problems, one big one being bully Tommy Wilhelm, who had been tormenting Joshua for years. “Tommy Wilhelm had been Joshua’s enemy in first grade when he poured tomato juice in Joshua’s milk thermos, and in second grade when he put worms in the pocket of Joshua’s gym shorts, but especially lately” (12).

Tommy, who is described as “taller than Joshua” (13), taunts him not only at school, but also on the way to school and on the playground, as well. Despite Joshua’s aversion to Tommy, Joshua also tries to emulate him, fixing his hair so it “would stand up straight like the hair of his archenemy” (2), and by dressing a certain way so he would look like Tommy and all the other boys who also dress like him.

In a desperate effort to fit in and earn the respect and friendship of Tommy and his other new classmates, Joshua steals his father’s pocketknife and brings it to school. He ends up losing it on the playground after showing it off, and when another student turns it [and Joshua] into the office, Joshua knows he is in trouble. “Mr. Barnes [the principal] spoke to [Joshua] about knives and their great danger to children, about
obedience and rules, about social adjustment and good schools and disciplined behavior. Joshua sat on the couch with his arms folded across his chest and would not speak” (75). Joshua, who had never been in trouble before, suddenly finds himself in an unfamiliar position and refuses to talk. Mr. Barnes is unable to look past the situation and see if there is anything else going on that prompted Joshua to lash out and do something rash, like bring a knife to school. Mr. Barnes misses a valuable moment with Joshua by failing to dig into the incident, and see what is below the surface. Bringing a weapon to school is a serious offence, one that needs to be dealt with, but because of his inability to look at every angle of the situation, Mr. Barnes fails to truly address what is going on.

Joshua was very close with the third grade teacher who worked extra hours with him to help get him promoted to the 4th grade. Joshua “had never particularly liked teachers until he had Mrs. Goodwin. Teachers had seemed to be a necessary and unpleasant part of going to school…. But Mrs. Goodwin was different” (19). Unfortunately, when Mrs. Goodwin learns about Joshua’s troubles, she does not probe the situation either. Mrs. Goodwin has earned Joshua’s trust and respect: “He liked that Mrs. Goodwin listened to him intently…. He liked especially that she didn’t criticize. Which is not to say she thought everything that Joshua did or said was right. But she didn’t tell him he was wrong” (68). In spite of this, she fails to reach out to Joshua and involve herself when it counted the most.

_Cockroach Cooties_

Told from the perspective of victim Teddy, _Cockroach Cooties_ is the story of two Chinese-American boys who are doing their best to cope with the bully, Arnie, in their private school. Teddy usually steers clear of Arnie, but when Teddy’s brother Bobby
decides to provoke Arnie on the playground one day, Teddy has no choice but to get involved in the situation. Arnie had been held back a year: “this would be his second year in the second grade” (3), and he was much bigger than Bobby; “Arnie could have made three of him” (3). Teddy contemplates getting help from the nun in charge when he sees Arnie assaulting his brother, but “she was busy helping some first graders jump rope. She wouldn’t have heard World War Two if it happened in the school yard. I [Teddy] suppose I could have gotten her, but then I would be tattling. And I was no tattler” (5). Teddy runs over to Arnie, who was “busy trying to press Bobby flat as a sheet against a brick wall” (5), and kicks him in the knees, starting a bloody fistfight between the two of them. Eventually, the Sister who is on playground duty makes her way over to the fight and hauls Arnie off to Sister Principal. Arnie’s meeting with the principal is not presented in the text, but his behaviors do not change going forward; it does not appear that his chat with the principal did anything but fuel Arnie’s rage. The fight was over, but it was only the beginning of an all out war: Arnie versus Teddy and Bobby. “‘You’re the one who got me dragged in front of Sister Principal,’’ Arnie said. ‘I’m going to pound you tomorrow and every day after that.’”

The day after their fight, Arnie was waiting for Teddy and Bobby at school under the stairs: “just like a troll” (25). Arnie chased them both down when they ran from him, but Teddy runs toward a teacher, Sister Ann, and makes up a lie to get her to keep Arnie from attacking them. “Bobby and Arnie are a little shy. They’re having a problem with their math homework. But they’re afraid to ask” (26). Sister Ann sees right through Teddy, and murmurs to him “Next time Arnie picks on someone, just come to me. No one will think you’re a tattletale” (26). Although she assures Teddy that she wants to
help, he still does not see her as a viable option for assistance with Arnie: “There was still a code in the playground. I was no rat” (27). Despite Teddy’s aversion to telling a nun about his problem with Arnie, he still sees them as a point of safety: “the rest of the day I dodged Arnie. Most of the time I stayed glued to a nun” (28).

Arnie continues to threaten Teddy and Bobby throughout the course of the story, and they continue to avoid him without any real clue of how to handle him: “The only trouble was that I didn’t have any solution to the Arnie problem. I tossed and turned all night. Arnie was going to demolish me” (105). After several days of dodging him at school and on the streets, Bobby comes up with a plan to outsmart Arnie. At one point in the story Arnie show the brothers how fearful he is of bugs. Bobby decides to prey on this fear, and tricks Arnie into eating cookies his entomologist neighbor gave him—cookies baked with little piece of bugs. His plan works, and Arnie is thoroughly disgusted and scared: “Arnie stretched his mouth wide. I thought he was going to scream. However, his chest began to move in and out, and all that came out wee little sobs. It sounded like there was a tiny baby lost inside of his big body” (123). Arnie ends up making a truce with Teddy and Bobby:

“‘We just want you to stop picking on us.’ Bobby said.
‘Is that all?’ Arnie asked.
‘Just leave us alone,’ I said.
‘And you’ll keep your mouths shut about this?’ Arnie asked hopefully.
‘You’ve got our word,’ Teddy promised. ‘So do we have a peace treaty?’
Arnie stuck out a paw. ‘Yeah’” (127-128).

The minimal teacher/administrator involvement in this novel is mentioned early on in the story, and there is no presence of teachers or administrators in the latter half of the book. Unfortunately, Teddy makes it clear early on that seeking the help of an adult
at school is not an option—that he and his brother are on their own when it comes to Arnie. The three of them eventually work things out, once again, this story is reinforcing the idea that it is best to deal with a bully on your own and get him off your back at all costs, even if the bully continues harassing other people. Arnie ultimately stops messing with Teddy and Bobby, but he only stops because he is scared that they will tell the other kids in school he was so upset after eating the bug cookies. He says to them, “‘The kids would have made fun of me. No one would have been scared of me anymore…. I’d get my reputation back.’ He held up his fists. ‘I still got these’” (127).

Super Emma

In Super Emma, Sally Warner presents the story through the eyes of Emma, who is initially a bystander to bullying between two of her classmates, EllRay and Jared Matthews. One day on the playground, Emma stands up for the EllRay, unable to stand silently by when Jared Matthews steals EllRay’s toy and taunts him. “Suddenly, from out of nowhere, someone jumps out of the crowd and grabs the toy—right out Jared Matthews’s hand. ‘Quit it, you big bully,’ that person yells. Hey, it’s me Emma McGraw!” (7-10). After that, Emma unexpectedly finds herself the new victim of Jared Matthew’s bullying.

Emma describes herself as small and shy: “EllRay…. is the first littlest kid in the third grade, and I am the second littlest. Also, I am the second shyest, after Fiona” (2). Jared is portrayed not only as “the biggest and strongest kid in the third grade” (36), but also as “a kid who likes to do mean things for no reason” (36), who has a long history of bullying his classmates. Emma states, “It’s as though Jared thinks that other kids are just
there for him to have fun with. As if we’re not real or something” (36). All of Emma’s
classmates are scared of Jared Matthews.

Jared Matthews begins threatening Emma for getting involved with EllRay,
calling her “Super Emma” for swooping in and “saving” EllRay, as well as saying
menacing things to her in the classroom, the playground, and in the cloakroom. Mostly,
he bothers her outside during lunch, and on the playground during recess. At one point
the teacher/lunchtime monitor notices Jared harassing Emma, “just as he [Jared] is about
to speak, a teacher who in one of the lunchtime monitors appears, his big face gleaming.
‘Is there a problem here?’ he asks Jared. The teacher is really saying, ‘There had better
not be.’” (39-40). The teacher monitor is portrayed as unwilling to get involved in the
situation, which allows Jared to keep the upper hand and continue bullying Emma.

Eventually, someone in Emma’s classroom vaguely mentions to their teacher Ms.
Sanchez that there has been bullying between the students, and she addresses the situation
right away:

“‘It has come to my attention that there have been certain threats floating around
this classroom,’ Ms Sanchez says. ‘A little bird told me,’ she adds, as if this is an
interesting scientific fact. (58-59).
‘Well, I’ll have no bullying in this classroom,’ she snaps. ‘I don’t care what
squabbles are going on in here, I’m not going to allow you children to use
violence to straighten things out.’… ‘Do you have… that… straight?’ she asks us.
‘Yeah,’ we all mumble.
‘I want you to say ‘Yes, Ms. Sanchez,’” she instructs us, hands on her hips. ‘And I
want you to mean it.’ We say it, and some of us might really mean it. But living
it is another question, when there are kids like Jared in your class” (60-61).

However, her speech does not do much good; Jared continues to bully Emma,
which culminates in a meeting on the playground where he picks her up and tries to stuff
her in a trashcan. In a role reversal, EllRay comes to Emma’s rescue and starts punching
Jared, which prompts Emma to physically assault Jared, as well. The principal ends up breaking up the fight, pulling EllRay off Jared, “It’s the principal! The principal is holding EllRay Jakes up high in the air [saying], ‘There’s not going to be any whomping on my playground,’” (76).

Emma and EllRay find themselves in the principal’s office where they get reprimanded for fighting. EllRay tries to explain the situation, but the principal cuts him off: “‘There’s no excuse, period,’” (81) he says, interrupting EllRay. The principal tells EllRay and Emma they should have told their teacher about Jared’s threats, and then tells him he does not want any more trouble. But he lets it go at that, and sends them back to their teacher. Upon return to their classroom, Ms. Sanchez has the class go around and give examples of ways to solve problems without hitting, but that is the extent of her involvement in the situation. Emma, EllRay, and Jared Matthews, as well as all the other students that witnessed what went on between the three of them could have greatly benefited from teacher involvement early on. Although Ms. Sanchez is portrayed as somewhat aware or what is happening in her classroom, she does nothing proactive to combat the bullying.

Wonder

Wonder, by R. J. Palacio, is the story of August (Auggie), who, navigating the hallways and social situations of a school for the first time, learns firsthand how cruel other children can be. Auggie was born with a facial deformity that has previously kept him from attending school: “people think I [Auggie] haven’t gone to school because of the way I look, but it’s not that. It’s because of all the surgeries I’ve had. Twenty-seven since I was born” (4). Auggie is used to people looking at him funny, and looking
horrified when they first see him: “I know how to pretend I don’t see the faces people make. Rat boy. Freak. Monster. Freddy Krueger. E.T. Gross-out. Lizard face. Mutant. I know the names they call me” (3, 79). When his parents decide it may be time for him to venture out and attend a public school, he reluctantly agrees.

*Wonder* chronicles Auggies’ entire school year from start to finish, and over the duration of the novel, his relationships with the people at school evolve and change. Some for the better, some for the worse. Before school starts, Mr. Tushman, the principal, invites Auggie to take a tour of the school—a tour led by a few of the kids that will be in his homeroom. It is on this tour that one of them, Julian, first begins to bully Auggie. “Julian cut right in front of me [Auggie], which actually made me stumble backward. ‘Oops, sorry about that!’ said Julian. But I could tell from the way he looked at me that he wasn’t really sorry at all” (30).

On the first day of school Julian asks Auggie if he likes Darth Sidious from *Star Wars*, which means nothing to everyone else, but Auggie knows *Star Wars* well, and Julian’s comment stings: “In *Star Wars*… Darth Sidious’s face gets burned… and becomes totally deformed. His skin gets all shriveled up and his whole face just kind of melts” (44). Auggie tries to give Julian the benefit of the doubt, but he quickly realizes that Julian is being mean on purpose: “maybe Julian didn’t mean anything at all. I peeked at Julian and he was looking at me. Yeah, he knew what he was saying” (44). This marks the beginning of Julian’s bullying behaviors toward Auggie.

Later in the school year, around Halloween, Auggie overhears Julian talking to some other kids in his class, “‘If I looked like that,’ said Julian, kind of laughing, ‘I swear to God, I’d put a hood over my face every day’” (77). Like this example, most of
Julian’s bullying behavior toward Auggie is verbal: both direct and indirect. Julian starts an all out war against Auggie by harassing one of Auggie’s best friends, Jack, telling all the boys at school that Jack’s friendship with Auggie is “bringing Jack down… and if he starts losing all his old friends, it’ll be like a big wake-up call” (117). Julian manages to convince the majority of the boys in their grade to stop speaking to Jack, and he also “started leaving notes in [Auggie and Jack’s] lockers. The notes to Jack were stupid, like: You stink, big cheese! And Nobody like you anymore!” (208) However, Auggie received much meaner notes, “like Freak! And another that said: Get out of our school, orc!” (208). One of Auggie and Jack’s few friends suggests they “report the notes to Ms. Rubin, who was the middle-school dean, or even Mr. Tushman, but we thought that would be like snitching” (208). Even in a school that has a present and caring administrator, the students still feel like “tattling” is a major offense. Eventually, a few months later, the bulk of the students were getting tired of participating in Julian’s “war”; “it was starting to feel like the majority of boys weren’t buying into Julian anymore” (209).

Overall, Wonder has a good example of a caring administrator— Mr. Tushman, the principal, is very much present and in control of what is happening at his school. It is evident in the book that Mr. Tushman is advocating for Auggie; he is portrayed as a caring and aware adult figure, and he deals with some of the bullying situations in the novel with fairness and an open mind. While Mr. Tushman does not directly handle any of the bullying toward Auggie, he does deal with another situation in the book: when Jack punched Julian in the mouth for badmouthing Auggie (which was the catalyst for the “War” Julian wages on Jack), Mr. Tushman is portrayed as successfully handling the
situation. He regularly refers to the school policy on bullying, and he deals with everyone involved in a way that does not put anyone involved on the spot; he effectively handles the direct bullying, and addresses as much of the indirect bullying as he can.

*Runt*

Told from the perspective of multiple voices, *Runt*, by Nora Raleigh Baskin, chronicles the experiences of a class of students who are learning the delicate balance of friendships, enemies, and “fitting in”, while navigating each other and a new school year. There is not a defined bully/victim relationship between just two students in the novel, each of the students feels bullied or like an outcast in some form or another. There is a general feeling running through the text of the lack of support from the teachers and administration, as well: “Why are teachers so stupid they can’t see what’s going on? It’s not fair. It’s so unfair” (5). “You working on the paper, Ethan?” We don’t even have a school paper. You think the assistant principal would know that “ (57)

One main bullying situation at school arises in the text, and the reader is given a disjointed view of the bullying, as the circumstances are revealed one chapter at a time and from the different perspectives of those involved.

The situation is between two boys, Stewart and Matthew. Later in the story we learn how Stewart has been terrorizing people for years: “Dude, he’s been taking your math homework every day for the last three years and turning it in as his own… or the time that he pulled your chair out from under you in class and smacked your face on the desk and then told the teacher you had ‘tripped’… or that he used to throw out Jake’s lunch every day because he needed to shed a few pound to get quicker on the court…” (161). Stewart picks Matthew as his new target, and harasses him mercilessly. One day
at school, Stewart starts bullying Matthew in the bathroom, and does the unthinkable:

“He [Steward] then pivoted toward me, looked me [Matthew] directly in the eye, flashed a sadistic smirk, and proceeded to urinate all over my shoes and legs. Then he laughed and turned back into the urinal” (89). It takes Matthew a few minutes to react, but he lashes out at Stewart:

“I looked down for a second. My lower body basted in another man’s liquid excretion. I looked up. I thought about what had just happened. I looked down again. I looked at Stewart. Still laughing. I looked at Scott. He was silent and didn’t return my stare. I looked down again” (89). I turned to Stewart. I did not say anything. I looked him right in the eyes. He was still smiling. Then I looked down again, made sure he saw me look down. Then I looked back up and punched him as hard as I could right in the face” (90).

Matthew is sent to the principal Mrs. Meadhall, where he tries to tell his side of the story. Unfortunately, she is unwilling to listen to him:

“‘Have you ever been peed on before, ma’am?’
That’s what I said, word for word. Not that bad, right? Well at least I didn’t think so. But judging by her reaction you would have thought I had just told her that she looked old or that her office smelled like a weird combination of Lysol and cheeseburgers.
‘WHAT did you say to me, young man? Oh, the insolence! You better watch your mouth in my offices. You are this close from being suspended from this school.’
Unfortunately, Ms. Meadhall is obtuse in all sense of the word, and that bring us to the biggest predicament in my tale: The woman refuses to listen to a single world I, or really anyone, says” (77-78).

In the end, Matthew is suspended “based solely on empirical evidence, without any consideration of the situation or the backstory of the people involved… [but rather], based on preconceived notions and hearsay” (141). The principal is portrayed as indisposed to get the full story and truly address the situation.

After the bullying has come to a head, the “Director of Guidance” implements a bully box—a box that sits by the main office for students to put “bully box forms” in—
forms for the students to fill out to report bullying. “All valid complaints will be

carefully attended to, but remember, there is a distinction between telling and tattling. To
clarify: Tattling is about wanting to get someone in trouble, whereas telling is about
doing the right thing” (71). However, none of the students actually use the bully box, or
see it as a viable option for help with bullying. In a chapter titled: “Found in Middle
School Dumpster and Partially Eaten by a Rat”, one student had filled out the bully form:
“Steward Gunderson picked on Matthew Berry like he picks on everyone all the time and
Matthew couldn’t take it anymore. All he did was stand up for himself. No one is saying
punching someone is a good thing, but punishing Matthew is not the right thing either”
(103), but (surmised from the title of the chapter) it did not make it into the hands of the
administration.
Discussion

Overwhelmingly, the novels analyzed for this study showed very little to no teacher or administrator involvement in the bullying situations presented in the books. Only one book, *Song Lee and the “I Hate You” Notes* had evidence of a teacher taking proactive measures and teaching her students about bullying before an incident occurs. *Wonder* and *Runt* are the only two novels that mentioned any indication of a school policy on bullying; however, the policies referred to in *Runt* were put in place after several instances of bullying are brought to the attention of the administration.

With the exception of *The Hundred Dresses*, *Song Lee and the “I Hate You” Notes*, and *Wonder*, the teacher and administrator involvement in the bullying situations did nothing to address the actual bullying happening; in fact, the victim was often the one to get in trouble and/or disciplined for lashing out at the person bullying him or her. In *Super Emma*, *Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again*, *Wonder*, *Jake Drake Bully Buster*, and *Runt*, the victims are sent to the principal’s office as a result of a physical or verbal negative response to the bully. *Wonder* is the only novel out of the eight analyzed in which the principal looks past the immediate situation at hand, and realizes that there are other things going on beyond the one incident that landed the victim in their office.

Finally, in all of the novels examined, seeking help from a teacher was either not mentioned or considered as an option, or it was explicitly seen as something only “tattletales” do, and none of the victims were willing to be labeled as such. As a whole, the overriding message the novels conveyed was grim: teachers are not on your side, and telling one about bullying will only turn you into a tattletale and make things worse. Also, several of the novels portrayed victims “conquering” their bully on their own,
which is simply not accurate. While the general message is positive, the stories also promote a false sense of power and autonomy in situations that, realistically, the victim most likely would have neither of those things.

Although I was exclusively focusing on the teacher and administrators in the novels, it is almost impossible to evaluate this facet of bullying without making note of some of the other factors at work in the bullying situations. More specifically, it is interesting how home life/parental relationships and physical attributes did not impact whether or not a child was bullied. That is, having supportive parents/guardians at home did not mean a child was bullied less, or that they were able to deal with the situation on their own without seeking help from an authority figure at school. Also, there was no stereotype or one particular way of “being/acting” or looking that set someone apart as a victim.

Home Life:

In the novels that depicted home life and parents/other guardian figures, I was pleasantly surprised to find that there was a wide variety of home lives and various levels of parental support displayed. The victims were bullied no matter if they had one or two supportive parents/guardians at home, aloof parents/guardians, abusive parents/guardians, or if the parents/guardians were not mentioned at all.

However, with the exception of Cockroach Cooties (the parents knew nothing of the trouble their boy’s were having with bullies), in the novels that delved into the home life of the child: Wonder, Joshua T. Bates in Trouble Again, Super Emma, My Last Best Friend, and Runt the parents/guardians were very concerned about their child’s troubles at school and urged and encouraged them to tell their teacher about the bullying. Again,
as a whole, the children were very reluctant to tell any adult figures at school about the bullying, and they did not want their teachers involved.

*Physical Attributes:*

There was not one stereotypical depiction of a victim across the novels. That is, the bully and victim relationships in the novels analyzed put relatively little emphasis on physical characteristics. That being said, all of the victims portrayed in the novels had some attribute, predominantly physical (whether they were much of smaller stature, “different” (i.e. foreign, unattractive) looking, birth defects, etc.), that set them apart from the bigger, stronger bullies portrayed, and, as Olweus contends in his definition, helped determine the situation as a bullying situation because the two adolescents were not equally matched.
Limitations

There were several limitations I encountered while completing this study. One big limitation was the short length of the majority of the novels. As a whole, the books were targeted at a younger audience, and even the lengthier novels still focused their narratives in a way that will appeal to older elementary students. The bullying situations in the novels were not as evolved or complex as they might have been if written for an older audience, as it was not feasible (due to the target audience) for the authors to fully develop the details of the overall plot and specific bullying situations. This made it difficult to assess the bullying in the novels, as there was simply not much material to evaluate.

Another limitation came with the task of defining and identifying bullying. While “most researchers employ the standard Olweus definition of bullying… measuring the presence and occurrence of bullying can still be problematic due to the different perspective of those doing the reporting and the inevitable subjectivity of that reporting” (Brank et al., 2012, p. 214). That is, many times, those involved in the bullying situation do not fall clearly into a defined role. While helpful, the “Olweus definition is general” (Brank et al., 2012, p. 213), and provides less of definite structure to use when coding. Also, appropriate handling of bullying is usually rather dependent on the situation, as well as the policies of the school—many times, teachers and administrators do not understand what bullying is, much less how to deal with it. This ignorance is evident in many of the books I reviewed for this study; making it unfeasible to evaluate them without inserting much of my own guided discretion into the process.
However, when using latent analysis, as in any situation where conclusions are drawn, personal biases and opinions can influence the results. In this particular study, it was important that I avoided labeling behaviors as bullying that did not adhere to the established definition of bullying. Also, it was important that care was taken to ensure that every theme, situation and idea pulled from the novels was coded uniformly. This helped keep the coding results as unbiased as possible, and allowed for general conclusions to be drawn from the coding.

Another limitation of this study is that the books selected do not show much diversity. With the exception of Song Lee and the “I Hate You” Notes and Cockroach Cooties, which both portray an Asian child as a prominent character, Runt, in which one of the students in one of the perspectives from which the story is told is an African American, and The Hundred Dresses, in where the victim is a girl with a “funny” (foreign) name, the rest of the novels are about Caucasian middle-class boys and girls.
Conclusion

Though the novels analyzed in this study embrace a range of reading levels, and speak to a wide array of reading interests for both girls and boys, they all fall short in regards to their presentation of the roles teachers and administrators play in bullying situations. Even the novels that, at first glance, depict teachers and administrators dealing with the bullying in what appears to be a promising and effective manner, upon closer examination, those instances are sadly lacking. All the novels reviewed for this study would be useful in the classroom in large/small group discussions, as they all provide teaching moments—the shortcomings of the books are ideal for generating the types of conversations teachers and administrators should be having with their students about the facets of bullying. Also, allowing “students to talk out the incidents [in the novels] at a safe, objective level lets them form and practice their beliefs and morals before they are called into action. After such a dialogue, ignoring the bully will never be as easy. Students and adults need to be aware of the responsibility that comes with their choice of action or silence” (Bott, 2004, p. 5).

A student who turns to one of these novels for clues to how to deal with bullying, whether they are a bully, a victim, or a bystander, will most likely come away with a distorted view and a lack of understanding of the support and guidance they should be receiving from teachers and administrators. However, students should not be discouraged from reading these novels. All the books reviewed in this study end on a hopeful note—the characters are generally remorseful and aware of their behaviors. Literature is a valuable tool for helping adolescents navigate their world and relationships, and it is unfair to say whether or not a book is “wrong” or “right” simply
because it does not meet a certain standard. The novels analyzed for this study demonstrate that adolescence is wrought with discovery, insecurity, new friendships, loss of friendships, mistreatment, etc. The characters in the books are relatable, and the overall outcomes of the bullying situations are positive, despite the lack of teacher and administrator involvement.

Ultimately, bullying—and how it is handled, should be looked at on a case-by-case basis as there is no blanket fix for this issue. However, “teachers’ roles may be critical with respect to bullying experiences and perception of school climate, particularly in elementary schools where students’ social networks are relatively small and often confined to a class” (Yoon, 2004, p. 43). Uniform policies and standards should be in place, teachers and administrators educated and armed with the necessary knowledge and tools to not only address bullying when it happens, but be proactive helpmates for the bullies, the bystanders, and the victims.
References


Novels Studied:


Appendix A:

General Book Info:
Title: 
Author: 
Publication Date: 
Publisher: 
Lexile: 
Number of Pages: 

Context of Bullying in Novels:
Time span bullying occurs: is it a single incident, random occurrence, or something that happens regularly, etc.?:
How many people are involved in the bullying?:
Point of view: how is the bullying situation presented?:
Type of bullying: verbal, physical, emotional?:
Severity of bullying: Does the bullying in the novel result in any damage, physical, emotional, etc. of the person being bullied? How does the person being bullied react?
Is there evidence of a school policy on bullying?:
Consequences of bullying: Is the bully punished or reprimanded?:
Do the teachers/administrators figure out a healthy, productive way to deal with the bullying?:
Appendix B:

Presentation of Bullying Situations:

Setting in which Bullying Occurs: i.e. the hallway, the classroom, the bathroom, etc.:  
Is the protagonist the one being bullied, or the one doing the bullying?:  
Age of protagonist/person being bullied?:  
Age of the protagonist/people doing the bullying: are they older, younger, or the same age?:  
Instances of teacher/administrator involvement in bullying situation presented: What specifically, do they do or say to involve themselves in the bullying?:  
If they do not do or say anything, what are their actions toward the bullying situation?  
Nature of protagonist’s relationships with friends and family?:  
Perceptions of the person being bullied of the adults (ie the teachers/administrators) and their involvement or lack thereof in the bullying situation.:
Character traits: How do physical attributes contribute, etc. to the bullying?:  
Tattling: Does the victim think he/she is tattling if he/she asks for help from a teacher?: