

**RESEARCH ARTICLE****Reducing Violence and Prejudice in a Jamaican All Age School  
Using Attachment & Mentalization Theory**

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**ABSTRACT**

A study is reported of a psychoanalytic intervention in a very violent and prejudiced Jamaican school with disenfranchised children 7-9 grades who had failed academic streaming examinations. Over the period of 3 years of the intervention using mentalization and power issues approaches grounded in attachment theory, children were assisted to feel connected and valued by their school. There were striking improvements in academic performance, decreased victimization and increased helpfulness especially in boys including significant trickle down effects to grades 1-6. Overall, the school became a place teachers wanted to join and the Jamaican government recognized their success and have built a new school for them in a better location.

**KEY WORDS:** schools, trauma, bullying, Jamaica, attachment, mentalization, power issues

Community Psychologists and Psychoanalysts in many parts of the world have encouraged applications of psychodynamic concepts to social problems (Sklarew, Twemlow & Wilkinson, 2004; Sacco & Twemlow, 1997).

Psychodynamic Systems Theory based on attachment configurations was used in this study and is elaborated in several papers (Twemlow, Sacco & Williams, 1996; Twemlow, 2000; Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2002; Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2005). Our goal with this model school study was to determine whether a highly insecure and disadvantaged school could be stabilized by promoting an understanding and practice of mentalization.. We hoped that this effect would draw in the surrounding community of parents and others interested in the school

. What does mentalizing mean in this context? Fonagy, et. al. (2002) provides us with a modern conceptualization of the term, as the capacity to see human relationships in terms of ideas beliefs and feelings that are personal, and provide a bridge to communication with others. A mentalizing individual thus will reflect, empathize with self & others, modulate affect storms, set boundaries and become self agent (initiating). This same principle can be applied to social groups. Dysfunctional social systems, such as exist in the experimental school described, cause the collapse of mentalizing and the predominance of self preservative reactive bullying defensiveness (power issues) that frequently resulted in overt violence. In other work we have used attachment pattern analogies to characterize problems in violent schools (Twemlow, et al , 2003). A dismissive-avoidant pattern is seen in schools that are too large and where staff does not know each other and deny problems, as in a number of the US schools

where homicides have occurred. A fearful-avoidant school is one where chaos is ongoing and interventions rarely work. Bullies rule both teacher and student groups with high staff turnover and high day-to-day anxiety. This Jamaican school seemed fearful-avoidant with bullying intrusiveness everywhere. The adults in charge were overwhelmed; there was much paranoia and suspiciousness of the motives of others, and little hope for the success of the older students in grades 7-9. Softer feelings, like helpfulness were suppressed and were considered weak. Power dynamics are described in detail in (Twemlow & Harvey, 2010) and reflects an approach to interpersonal power issues that places responsibility on the bystanding group ( those not directly involved in the bullying process including adults ) to intervene early on in a disagreement, to discourage the bullying group dynamic that clearly dominated this school.

### **Education in Jamaica and a Typical School Day**

There was a clearly noticeable social value placed by the Jamaican society on education and achievement. Education, language skills, debate, competitive spelling, and marching band are very highly respected by all classes. Jamaican parents, value their childrens' succeeding at school as a way to a better future. While this social value is not reflected in the adequate societal funding of education, there is little doubt that education is seen everywhere as a much respected social process and the educational process is supported by parents in stark contrast to the parent teacher conflict often seen in the USA. In Jamaica, there is a major difference in just who is responsible for what part of

education. In the US, for example, the federal government guaranteed a FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education). In Jamaica, the parents are responsible for transportation, supplies, and a bulk of food and snacks. There are no complicated helping systems for children with learning or emotional problems in Jamaican public education. Parents have to work to insure that their children get to school often having to rely on “route taxis” for children to get rides to school. Many children came to school and stayed in school hungry. Some were well cared for, groomed and had proper food and supplies, while others were very obviously traumatized and uncared for at home and it showed starkly at school.

A day at a Jamaican public elementary school begins with a formal convocation with the principal and teachers’ gathering with all students for a prayer (public schools do not insist on separation of religion from education), announcements, and then everyone goes to their open classrooms. Class sizes are overwhelming with children sharing very small learning spaces cramped with up to four kids to a desk and usually without classroom fans, let alone air conditioning. Teachers teach over the overall buzz of hundreds of children in open classes. Often teachers have to rely on their own equipment to teach.

Corporal punishment is still permitted and public strapping of children is common and have been observed by the interventionists. The older students were managed by an Assistant Principal and the younger children in grades 1-6 were clearly the favored group. The older children were seen as hopeless, many of the children suffered from pervasive developmental disorders, undiagnosed

learning disabilities, and many were from very toxic homes with little caretaking and frequent exposure to violence at home. There were weekly fighting incidents, periodic stabbings, and constant bullying of the younger children by the older ones.

Recess and lunch were combined with one and a half hours of free time at school. The older children were often engaged in ongoing feuds that would build up and result in violent outbursts during and after school. The surrounding community often helped the school (assisted in the construction of the projects craft center) or periodically would be the source of aggression towards teachers and children. Older youth from the community would steal money from younger children and threaten them. Most teachers taught in a dedicated fashion despite the crowded, noisy conditions. One approaches the experimental school through a poorly managed track rather than a road, entering into a school yard that is a rough mixture of gravel and dirt. When we first arrived we were greeted with a very busy and loud school environment; the school was like an overheated beehive, with children buzzing. The classrooms were overfull, with barely enough room for a teacher to stand up in front of the class. All the classrooms were open to promote free flow of air in the tropical climate. Teachers used whiteboard to avoid inhaling chalk dust from blackboards that were pressed virtually against the face of the teacher in the unbearably cramped and hot classrooms. The office of the school's head mistress was located in a small un-air conditioned room piled with books and other items. She was working to manage children under the most trying of environments possible for an educator.

## **A Brief Digression into the Post Colonial and Modern Social Background of Jamaica**

The Jamaican culture is a reflection of the post colonial evolution that has been researched by Fanon (1965,1952), who sees violence as part of the separation struggle. Young men taking up arms against the colonial ruler were starkly different from the more passive fathers who went along with the oppression of colonialism.

Ledgister (1998) traces the struggles and associated violence in Jamaica after the abolition of slavery in 1834. There was a mass influx of “indentured workers from east India, China, and Germany” (p. 63.) There was a class system based on color with white being the elite, brown the middle, and dark as the lower classes. This post slavery period of colonialism had many oppressive forces that percolated violence. Slaves turned into indentured workers up to the 1940’s. Manley (1975) in his Preface to a revision of his book on the evolution of the political parties and the plight of the Jamaican plantation worker captured the impact of post colonialism on Jamaica:

“The interaction between class attitudes and the worker’s movement within a colonial and immediate post-colonial framework is basic to the understanding of modern Jamaican and probably Caribbean, development. Political , social and economic institutions have all been influenced by the, as yet, unresolved tensions of the class structures which were bequeathed to us by

the kind of bastard capitalist system which was peculiar creation of nineteenth and twentieth century colonialism.” Preface.

Manley describes the plight of the Jamaican worker and traces the evolution of Labor Unions and the two main parties JLP (Jamaican Labour Party) and the PNP (People’s National Party). Mr. Manley was elected Prime Minister of Jamaica in the late 1980’s. The violence that builds up in the society in a post colonial country has some instrumental value. It drives the culture to freedom, Michael Manley felt, primarily through strong workers movements . Although Jamaica retains its violence from that era, it has become consumed with a self destructive and corrupt power dynamic in the past several decades reflected in homicides that come primarily from personal grudges rather than organized crime and drug dealing.. It now ranks as third in the world for per capita murder rates. The violence is self directed, not at the power elite, but is misdirected at each other in a desperate struggle to survive. Manley (1975) describes the bottom line that appears to remain true today in Jamaica:

“However, when all is said and done, the worker remains a servant...he is a servant who can bring up his children in a comfortable home and enjoy the material benefits of life.” (p.218)

Well for some perhaps, who make the sacrifice of self respect ?

### **Modern Jamaica**

Perhaps more than any other cultural product, music has defined modern Jamaica, both internationally and to its own people, it’s most famous performer,

Bob Marley put the country on the map, singing, as he did in “Positive Vibrations,” of “Rasta man vibration yeah! Positive.... Say, you just can’t live that negative way.” Like Marley, Peter Tosh, a less well known but highly idealized singer who was murdered early in his career, used music to communicate a strong social message. Tosh was much more directly activist for Jamaicans, as revealed in the titles of some of his songs: “No Nuclear War,” “Nah Goah Jail” and “Fight Apartheid”. There has been a shift from the traditional agrarian (somewhat self-sustaining) economy supported by crops such as rice, bananas and the fabulous Blue Mountain Coffee, to the current economic model: in recent years Jamaica has become almost entirely dependent on the multi-billion dollar tourism industry, obviously seriously compromised by the outbreaks of violence.

Today, violence and prejudice have increased significantly and have come to dominate Jamaican life. Some examples include: a) Incest being considered by some as a just reward for caretaking; b) the acceptability of domestic violence as a way to resolve family conflict; c) anti-gay extremism, which has lead to ostracizing of the Jamaica entertainment industry from the rest of the entertainment world; d) infidelity is accepted and valued as part of a powerful male social identity; e) corporal punishment in schools. The country is full of contrasts: there is a violent prejudiced form of extremism that stands in stark contrast to the essential Jamaican temperament which is fun loving, artistic, humanitarian, peace loving and creative. It is as if this current phase in Jamaican history some 40 years into its life as a young democracy is the working through of displaced rage at racial domination with the hope that the country will



eventually evolve beyond this maturational step into an actualization of a peace loving people. Jamaica is a country with many churches (reportedly one of the highest per capita number of churches in the world), mostly Christian. The tiny Roman Catholic minority, 4-6% of the church going population, dominates decision making alongside wealthy British Jamaicans, miming the eternal battle of the haves and the have-nots, reminiscent of a slavery mentality. It should be noted, however, that in Jamaica, violence is less affiliated with drugs and more aligned with economic disparities ingrained in most aspects of day-to-day life, especially for women and children.

Although an independent nation, Jamaica still retains the political and educational infrastructures of the United Kingdom and has a Governor General liaison. Jamaica uses the Queen's English and has a similar educational process requiring streaming national grading examinations.

For a look at current attitudes toward children in Jamaica we turn to a variety of addresses by Jamaicans (Donn 2007). This set of essays although religiously influenced, represents to us a way of thinking about Jamaica that is indigenous. The essays have a passion about them and an involvement markedly different than more academic sociological studies, of which there are many. In Donn's volume one essay by a children's rights expert, Alison Anderson (pp 201-226), concerns the emancipation experience for children. This lecture, given in 2006, began by recording how focused Jamaicans are on the welfare of children. A common question between strangers would be, "How are the children?" A typical response would be, "Lawd missis, dem betta dan me." Yet she suggests that if

you are under 18 years of age in Jamaica in you are in the company of about one million children, almost half of the nation's population. Yet in spite of this child focus, if you are in this age group, you have a 1 in 6 chance of being an underage parent; you are one of 21% of the population who live in poverty; HIV /AIDS is the second leading cause of death in the 1 to 4 year old category, you are likely to contract HIV if you are adolescent and a girl between age 10 and 14, three times as often as your male counterpart. Only 35% of such children live with both parents. Between 11 and 14 years of age, 58% of this group would be sexually active, with the average age of first intercourse being 11.3 years for girls and for boys even younger. One in five adolescents consumes alcohol more than twice a month and one in five households live without either parent. In other words, children in Jamaica do not have a secure attachment base, which clearly supports rampant violence and prejudice. There many prevalent attitudes that encourage the abuse of children, including flexible family structures, social acceptance of early motherhood, the wide spread use and social acceptance of physical punishment including use of it in schools and traditional low age limits for school leaving, work, marriage and criminal responsibility (the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 12). Children in Jamaica have been anthropomorphized psychologically. In many ways they have been forced by social sanctions to adapt autonomous roles at a young age and before they are developmentally ready.

## **A Cross-cultural Comparison of Current Prejudices in Young Children**

The hallmark of Allport's (1954) benchmark definition of prejudice—prejudgement, hastiness and undervaluing of others—develops very early in Jamaican children. Our theory of prejudice (Twemlow & Sacco, 2007; Fonagy & Higgett, 2007), suggests that managing power dynamics and power struggles creates a mentalizing social situation where hatred and stereotyping common to all prejudices is ameliorated. One such example was the marked reduction in racial tension in a U.S. elementary school after the school became less violent without specific reference to race, but instead to managing power issues (Twemlow & Sacco, 2007).

Table 1 represents a comparison of Jamaican (201 children), Brazilian (295 children) and American (97 children) all in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. It is clear that Jamaican children have a much greater propensity for extremism in relation to race (skin color, clothing and weight). It was from this and other observations that we decided to intervene to see if we could affect prejudice and other violence in a model Jamaican school.

#### **Table 1 about here**

We should mention that in the early 1990s we engaged in a successful project in Montego Bay to reduce the homicide rate through retraining of teachers and policemen (Twemlow & Sacco, 1996), and we've kept in touch with Jamaica ever since. We had helped the city through interventions targeting the police and supporting their efforts to reduce violence in schools. Our project then was a three year plan to help Jamaican police and school teachers learn to distinguish harm (violence) from aggression (forcefulness) and to see prejudice for what it is:

self harming action that endangers the self and others, and to understand how prejudice is a displacement of feelings of being endangered. It was considered successful

## Method

The Peer Experiences Questionnaire (Vernberg, 1999) was used to obtain self-reports of children's experiences **as targets**: A kid teased or made fun of me in a mean way, A kid ignored me just to hurt my feelings and perpetrators of aggression, **as bullies** : I threatened to hurt or beat up another kid, I chased a kid to try to hurt him or her, **concern for victims' experience**: I get a thrill when I see a kid bullied or picked on and When two kids are fighting , other kids should stop them, It makes a kid feel big and tough to be a bully. Finally **safety questions** like I got hurt in a fight at school, , I took a gun knife or other weapon to school and questions assessing childrens **capacity to mentalize** Teachers listen to the student's side of the story, It is easy to be friends at school with kids of other colors or races. 4-point Likert scales were used ranging from almost never to always and 1 don't agree at all to I completely agree.. All scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency ( $\alpha > .65$ ). This questionnaire has been widely validated on student populations in several countries, including our own cluster randomized trial involving 3-4 thousand students (Fonagy et al, 2009)

All children from the experimental school were compared to the control school during the same time period each year, for three consecutive year. There was a

mean of 61% return rate for the anonymous questionnaires, at both schools. The questionnaires were read out in the patois dialect appropriate for the children, and childrens' anonymity was protected with a box being provided for anonymous deposit of the questionnaires.

Both schools take children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9th grade and are similarly matched for age , gender, social economic status and academic performance. The experimental school accepts children who had failed the 6<sup>th</sup> grade streaming entrance examination. Six schools contributed 7<sup>th</sup> graders to this school. Children in the 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade were drawn from the surrounding community. The “humiliation pressure point” was immediately identified since the 7<sup>th</sup> graders who came into the school were already socially humiliated. These children were given another way to manage their narcissistic injury from social rejection. We knew that it was not merely raising self-esteem since research (Twenge & Campbell, 2003), has already suggested that narcissistically damaging social rejection in vulnerable people is not closely related to self-esteem. The narcissistically vulnerable individual creates his/er self esteem through a grandiosely inflated self-image. Thus we knew that we needed to help such children recreate an image of themselves that was not so grandiose and thin skinned, i.e. basically giving them reasons to manage their narcissistic vulnerability in the form of helpful activities, and social acceptance rather than rejection.

The design of the program was to mentor 7-9 Grade students through a mentalization/power dynamics focused activity with a chance of creating a secure

attachment system in the school, through trickle down to the 1-6 graders, who were being cared for and made to feel secure by the transformed bullies, who themselves were more securely attached.

Bead making was an activity that had minimal materials, was easy to supervise, and could be done in limited space on pieces of cloth spread on a desk. The 2 program staff was a male and female who acted as role models and insisted on positive reflective behavior. The community eventually built a small workshop on the school grounds entitled "Positive Vibrations for Peace", and dedicated the workshop to a local character who loved and helped many children. There was a simple message, solid safe and predictable role models, a community orientation, and a way for children to feel valued.

We focused our attention on these older children to see if they could become more mind minded (i.e. start to mentalize themselves and others), and thus be better able to seek peaceful solutions to problems rather than ones that emphasize their strength and physical superiority. We also knew that many of the children had a variety of cognitive disabilities that made it hard for them to learn. Whether these problems were based on starvation/ neglect, learning disabilities or a directly psychologically traumatic environment, was not clear. What was clear was that none of the children were learning a great deal, since they were extremely anxious, situated in horrible environments and doing something distracting (such as bead making) was considered by teachers to likely be very helpful. The students didn't have a great deal to give each other so the idea that they could have something that they made physically would give them social

status, heal social rejection and foster a certain amount of personal power by giving rather than fighting. Thus, we created a gathering place in the school environment where students were valued and would seek collaborative solutions rather than being pitted against each other with limited available resources, moving the school towards a secure attachment system. This gathering place was a symbol of that concept. We realized that we should provide a means by which children could manage each other respectfully in a disciplined, non-violent way; that is, seeking means other than force to resolve conflict. The individuals who managed the children—one adult female caregiver and one adult male caregiver—would choose the times when these messages were introduced. Guidelines included learning to work together and to empathize each other's strengths and weaknesses in a respectful fashion, learning to resolve conflict using an understanding of power dynamics, i.e. if the co-created roles of bully, victim and bystander. The intervention anticipated the role of the older children as bullies and the vicious cycle was broken and the intervention used in the study offered students alternative constructive and more pleasant solutions (Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2004). The intervention stressed respecting each other's "space" and materials when doing activities in the workshop, learning to protect and respect each other on and off school grounds and to trying to prevent fights using a variety of techniques taught them, other than by use of physical force. The net result was the creation of a peaceful sanctuary respected by children and adults alike. Although these techniques were established by instruction in the original USA Peaceful Schools Project (befriend the bully, use

humor, act unexpectedly, walk away, seek help from an adult, help rather than hurt), all of these issues were introduced into the school at the behest of those teaching bead making, i.e. at appropriate teaching moments (rather than being introduced through formal class activities). The conceptual basis for the teaching moment was to choose the optimal moment for mentalizing to occur. For example on one occasion a child was asked to go outside and read the name on the arts and crafts center. As he left the center another child said, "I need to go out and help him." This child and the female care giver accompanied the boy outside. When the boy returned he proudly recited the title of the school correctly; his peers applauded. In this case, there was a collaboration between adults and children to help a child who couldn't read not be socially humiliated by exposure of his learning problem in front of us. Even though the peers themselves knew about it, it was taken into account that this was a boy needing some help and not humiliation in front of outsiders. By this time a complex mentalizing interaction had already occurred : Children had learned that to have a useful peaceful interaction they had to understand the reasons for each others mental states. This boy had angrily and aggressively dominated others through physical strength to hide his intellectual problems. With the help of both instructors he learned to speak about it sorrowfully and less defensively and other students were able to realize why he was so aggressive by empathizing with him. This empathy created a two fold gathering of the clan around him. One was to catch him up intellectually and the other was to protect him from social humiliation. Lunch was usually provided by street vendors, and would become a center for



bullying and jockeying for position in the lines. As the attachment process changed, it was not uncommon for a child in a hurry to be given a place in line after his/her needs were discussed and a group decision made, a good example of mentalization in action.

One primary care giver was a well educated Jamaican woman with a conservative set of values that were contrary to the more aggressive norms developed for women over the past several decades in Jamaica. The other was a local artisan who sold crafts on the beach but came up to the school several times each week to help children with bead making. He used the patois dialect to communicate with the children and was very busy and productive both in terms of bead making but also making clear that bullying behavior was unacceptable. He would gently but firmly direct children back to the activity when they were distracted by conflict rather than berate or humiliate them. The female caregiver modeled respectful mentalized management of power issues and the male redirected children to physical activity rather than on-going arguing. A number of children were starving when they came to school and our caregivers would give them money so that the children could eat something during school lunch. Each session with bead making concluded with food for the children. The center became a gathering place where people would be fed and would feel calmed, would learn to work together respectfully, help each other out in mutually difficult physical projects and gain from it a status within the school that they were peaceful and that quality of a relationship was valued. As children began to mentalize each other, they being more positively connected. So a student who

was hungry got food from others without a fight. We added painting to the activities list, and will later add basket weaving, a Jamaican folk specialty, and embroidery to attract different sorts of children.

Compared to the first year of the project the buy-in from teachers progressed as the program became more effective. By year two teachers wanted the program since their personal environment had improved enormously. In twice yearly one-week visits we brought certain materials the school needed, such as dry erasers and exercise books where children could record their lessons. Our role as facilitators was not to introduce teachers to new teaching methods but to encourage teachers to use less punitive ways to manage bullying and disciplinary disruptions and to help children by example rather than by force and instruction. The sadistic teachers voluntarily left the employ of the school as their services were neither needed nor appreciated.

In summary, we learned from this methodology that if the setting with the problem creates the solution and gets on board with it, the likelihood of it becoming self sustaining is much greater than if experts define the solution. We were able to translate the strengths of the Peaceful Schools Project developed in Midwest America into something of use in a very different country, adapted to an environment in which children were highly traumatized and starving. The school and intervention created an environment in which the children felt attached to a community that valued them and individuals that loved and cared for them. This created a secure attachment base allowing the child to process power issues and power struggles and to mentalize themselves so that they were eventually

individually able to help others with their own actions (i.e. intend their actions) to create a peaceful environment. A comparison of principles with the Midwest USA CAPSLE project is given in Table 2.

**Table 2 about here**

**Results**

The vice principal of the school gave an enthusiastic summary of some of her impressions in a 2009 visit. She had noticed that some of the most bullying boys had become Gentle Warriors in Nietzsche's sense that they were like Roman Caesars with Christ's soul, in miniature i.e. tough but kind and helpful. They protected younger kids, intervened in their fights and took care of them after school, watching out that they were not bullied and hurt by other children. PTO support increased to 100-200 parents attending with strengthening of support of teachers' actions by parents. Teachers commented that "children are more lovable and more appreciative of us caring for them." The closer and more trusting relationship between teachers and children was also indicated by increasing discussion of issues like sexuality and home visits by teachers to check on children and mediate home disputes.

The results suggest a significant change occurred in the school over the three years of the intervention, including trickle down effects to 1-6 graders, who

were not involved directly in the bead warrior project. Teachers became much more comfortable in the school. In fact, by the end of the study, there were many parents who wanted to enroll their children, because the atmosphere was more pleasant and conducive to work. The teacher bullies who had made their name through cruel and controlling behavior toward children had already left the school, and the number of serious dangerous fights had decreased from eighteen to three per year. Our research (Twemlow et al 2005 , Twemlow & Fonagy 2006, ) on teachers who bully students based on US schools suggest that that there are two types of such teachers, sadistic ones who envy students brighter than they are and harass and humiliate their classes and a larger group of bully victim teachers who have classrooms that are at times chaotic and undisciplined and then the teacher reacts in a coercive and bullying fashion. Jamaican schools had many sadistic bully teachers. Children were still hungry and traumatized but they often wanted to come to school. The school was no longer an “overheated beehive” but instead became a place in which work was possible and children wanted to succeed.

The next question was whether this qualitative change was reflected in the children’s reports of their school experience and attitudes. The Peer Experiences questionnaire was read out to children in the patois dialect. Results were compared year-on-year using both analysis of variance and non-parametric tests of trend. Kandall’s S test was used to evaluate the statistical significance of the findings when the distribution deviated from normal. This test is a relatively conservative assessment of statistical differences between

populations making no distributional assumptions. Here we will only report highlights from the findings across time indicating the effects of the intervention; full details of the survey measures used and tables of summary statistics and test results are available from the first author on request. In addition public data was available in relation to the exam performance of the school and the school-district.

Perhaps most dramatic was the increase in educational attainment of children between 2005 and 2008. Over a time when no improvement (and a slight deterioration) was noted in most schools within the District, the distribution of examination scores improved substantially from an average score of 30% in 2005 to 46% in 2008. The improvement in the distribution of scores was highly statistically significant ( $S = 540.5$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $Z = 3.6$ ,  $p < 0.0002$ ). Table 3 illustrates that the major improvement was in the increase in high performing pupils and the reduction of the negative tail of the distribution. Whereas in 2005 there was a large group of children who performed extremely poorly, by 2008 the distribution was far closer to what one might expect from a U.S. school in an economically challenged area.

**Table 3 about here**

The impact on victimization amongst boys and girls was significantly different. Overt( Physical) victimization was reduced for boys from a reported prevalence of near 70% in 2005-2006 to just over 30% in 2007 ( $S = 737$ ,  $p <$

0.007). However, relational (interpersonal-psychological) victimization did not decrease amongst boys; it remained around 40% in both years. By contrast, amongst girls, relational victimization was reduced from 70% in 2006 to around 45% in 2007 ( $S = 564, p < 0.007$ ). Overt victimization amongst girls however did not decrease, thus it would appear that in both genders the mode of aggression typical of their gender, benefited most markedly from the intervention. Importantly, students' sense of safety and danger and inclination to take guns or knives or other weapons to school, changed significantly between the two times of testing. The proportion who volunteered that they took a knife or gun, or other weapon to school, decreased from over 40% to just over 20% ( $S = 409, p < 0.03$ ). There was also a significant reduction of student reporting other children taking weapons to school ( $S = 46, p < 0.03$ ). Consistent with this, teacher reports of confiscating a weapon from a student or being intimidated by students, decreased significantly as indicated in the teacher questionnaire ( $F = 6.9, df = 1, 21, p < 0.03$  and  $F = 4.1, df = 1, 21, p < 0.06$  for confiscating weapon and intimidation respectively).

The frequency of physical victimization declined dramatically between 2006 and 2008. Thus the reported prevalence of hitting, kicking, being pushed, grabbed, held or touched and similar experiences declined sharply in the first year of the program and more gently in the second year. The main effect of time was significant ( $F = 4.77, df = 3, 35, p < 0.01$ ). An intriguing gender-by-year interaction effect was observed in terms of reports of helpful bystander responses. There was an increase in boys only of reports of behaviors such as

“feel upset when I see bullying”, “try to stop bullying”, “tell a teacher when I see bullying” ( $F=3.8$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $21$ ,  $p<0.03$ ). The change in girls was not significant but surprisingly showed a trend in the opposite direction over the same time period. We speculate that girls might have felt less obligated to fulfill the role of ‘helpful bystanders’ in cases of physical victimization as boys were more willing to step into this role as the intervention progressed. Correspondingly, ‘aggressive bystanding’ : bystanders who like to see harm to others, but don’t participate directly for fear of blame, decreased for both genders significantly, particularly between 2006 and 2007 ( $F=4.59$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $21$ ,  $p<0.02$ ).

Since the intervention was aimed at states of mind of all teachers and students and the school climate, we were not surprised to observe that children who did not take an active part in the program also manifested substantial benefit. For example, overt victimization was reduced across the three years in grades three to six, from 65% in 2005 to 37% in 2007 ( $S=2,5818$ ,  $p<0.00001$ ). Relational victimization also reduced substantially in this period amongst boys in grades 3-6 ( $S = 1,281$ ,  $p< 0.002$ ). For girls the results were less marked but also clear. There was significant decline in those reporting victimization between 2005 (35%) and 2007 (20%). There was also a significant decrease in relational victimization from 32% to 27%. Both these differences are statistically significant ( $S = 8,602$ ,  $p < 0.02$ , and  $s = 7,178$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Attitudes toward aggression also changed in the younger age group associated with the introduction of the program, in particular a belief that “aggression pays” dramatically declined from an endorsement rate of 75% in

2005 to the endorsement rate of less than 50% by 2007 ( $S = 23,576$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). More specifically, there was a marginally significant reduction in children endorsing the belief that victims of bullying deserved the treatment they received from 41% of the cohort to 33% ( $S = 6689$ ,  $p < 0.06$ ). Self harm, a state of mind characteristic of highly disorganized family and institutional environments, decreased substantially in those in grades 3-6. Thoughts about self harm, reduced from 47% to less than 40% ( $S = 7,019$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Attempt at self-harm, which in 2005 were reported by 23% of children, were reduced to around 15% across the three year of the study ( $S = 636$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ).

A number of items in the school climate survey confirm the general shift in attitudes from a harsh and threatening environment to a more welcoming and accepting setting. An important outcome for the project is improvement in pro-social behavior. For example, children's experience of making friends at school improved very substantially across the three years of the study. In 2005, just over 30% of the children endorsed the statement that "making friends at school is easy". By 2007, over 60% were happy to endorse this statement ( $S = 31,883$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ). Similarly, pro-social engagement with other children extended to greater racial tolerance. In 2005, just over 30% of children felt it was easy to make friends with a lot of races at school; by 2006 – 2007 this readily exceeded 50% ( $S = 20,619$   $p < 0.00001$ ).

## **Discussion**

The figures, impressive as they are, do not convey the quality of the change. It was not simply that young people were better able to make use of the



educational opportunities available to them, but that they felt safer, less likely to be threatened by others, that there were fewer weapons in the school, that they were more likely to intervene when witnessing bullying and less likely to stand by implicitly enjoying the humiliation of another child, or that the frequency of self-harm declined with harm caused to others, or even that the attitudes to relating to others changed in the direction of greater openness. None of these findings convey the change in the social environment the children found themselves in, which we believe was the source of the virtuous cycle that the intervention created. The school changed from an impoverished environment where children who were starving, traumatized and unable to succeed, condemned to a lifetime of living in poverty or success only via illegal and violent pursuits (a common endpoint was a job contracting for murder), changed to become an emotionally rich environment where children felt valued and appreciated and consequently could be more focused in their activities, could enter high school, gain educational skills and go to college. The experience made the teachers and the developers of the program aware that creating a climate for interpersonal understanding creates richness that goes beyond combating society's evils and brings forth secure social collaboration to be valued more highly by all of us, significantly beyond monetary rewards. A good question remains about whether there have been lasting changes in the attachment systems of the children to enable change to also be reflected in the surrounding community. We hope this is so. Evidence in favor is the vast increase in attendance at PTO meetings, a lineup of teachers who want to work there and widely discussed and appreciated

ways in which children and teachers are helping problem homes as part of feeling connected to a special school. Part of our rationalization for a controlled single case study like this was the idea that a good enough model school would attract public attention. This school did that with government interest and a brand new school built in a much more suitable area. This has also promoted healthy competitiveness among parents.

The first three years of this project were funded through research grants. The research component of the project is being completed and several opportunities are being actively pursued to keep the project going through a microeconomic engine using e-commerce. A sister relationship with a U.S. anti-poverty youth program is being sought that will provide a base to raise money through sales of crafts and other fundraising events. The youth in the Jamaica program have created some powerful art products that will be turned into note cards and used to sell to community athletic groups who raise money for their sports teams. Also, a website is being set up so that the beads and note cards can be sold on the Internet. The goal is to create a sustainable and well-managed e-store with products that are made by the children struggling in both the U.S. and Jamaica. The Internet makes this possible with proper oversight. The International Association for Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, a U.S. non-profit organization, will oversee all economic distributions, which will be used exclusively to supply the existing programs.

### **Limitations of the project**

Random assignment of schools to intervention and control conditions was not possible under these circumstances, although fortuitously a very similar matched control school became available. Thus generalisability of the findings is not established. Social factors like the outstanding model school concept did create a model of interest to the government of Jamaica, with a new school placement. The basic ideas created high buy in and followed in a general way the original RCT conducted in the Midwest United States. Hawthorne and other effects seem unlikely in view of the sustained benefit over time and the close correlation of improvement with decreased violence in the school. These results replicated in Australia and other USA cities that adapt the protocol to local needs seem to be much longer lasting and more effective than specific protocols. The most serious challenge is whether we can extend the study to other schools, and promote a low cost self sustaining model that can be implemented in underdeveloped countries. This remains to be researched.

There are many elements of the Jamaican situation which remain unresolved and which if remediated would likely also improve these findings.. As part of the public discussion about banning corporal punishment in schools, one teacher complained that she had wasted seven years of her life because she was unable to inflict physical violence on children (Western Mirror, 2008). The controversial issue of corporal punishment in schools in Jamaica is an example of an outdated model of the management of children based on physical punishment and submission to authority.

On the other hand this project uses a completely nonviolent approach for achieving conflict free schools that are safe havens and in which children feel not only valued but intentional; that their actions can achieve useful and quality of life enhancing results, without great expense or work. This study also showed a marked decrease in prejudice where making friends with different racial groups (tones of skin color, mainly), improved dramatically.

### **Concluding Comment**

Although not yet realized, this research project had as an ultimate goal the creation of community efficacy (Sampson, Roudenbush & Felton, 1997), a social mechanism allowing communities to maintain themselves through respect, mutual problem solving and peaceful, long lasting solutions, to improve the quality of life for all. Clearly the dramatic increase in PTO attendance reflects the beginnings of such a process Community efficacy requires a feeling of belonging to a valued home community that its members want to preserve. The community shares valued customs and rituals about the history and traditions of their home, what Bion would call a +K situation (Bion 1992). From this perspective community knowledge was not intellectual, but the sum of what makes one proud of one's community. Crime, graffiti and unkempt lots degrade that image (-K), while efficacious members take care of their community for the good of all. The essence of this social mechanism implies that community members care about their community collectively, not just for what it can provide for them, and this caring likely emerges from a mentalizing mind, who can keep the wishes of others in mind.

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**Table 2**

CAPSLE ,USA VS. JAMAICA PROJECT

CAPSLE	JAMAICA
Gentle Warrior PE Program: a mentalizing action program	Beading and Crafts : similarly a mentalizing action program
Targeted K-5	Targeted Older Grades 7-9 with trickle down
Positive Climate Campaign	Built a Craft Shed with Message of Positive Vibrations for Peace, Stickers for Composition Books, etc



Teacher Training	Teacher Supplies (Erasable Markers, Erasers etc )
Bruno Mentoring	Grade 7-9 become Helpful Bystanders supported by trained adults
Classroom Management Program	Reduction in Strapping induced passively rather than taught. ie all the teachers who beat children left the school
High Content focus, Manual, Training	Training through psychoanalytic supervision, Content was Minimal

**Table 3**

<b>All Age School GSAT Exam Results 2004-2008</b>				
<b>Percentile</b>	<b>Year</b>			
	2005	2006	2007	2008
1-10%	3.6	0	0	0
11-20%	7.1	3.6	3.2	4.4
21-30%	46.4	21.4	29.0	13.2
31-40%	28.6	25.0	29.0	25.7
41-50%	7.14	25.0	19.4	17.3
51-60%	3.6	14.3	6.5	13.7
61-70%	3.6	10.7	12.9	21.5
71-80%	0	0	0	8
81-90%	0	0	0	0
91-100%	0	0	0	0
Mean	30.4	40.7	38.4	47

Table 1

**Comparison of Rates of Cruel Teasing Based on Appearance  
in 3 Countries\***

Country	Race %	Clothing %	Weight %
Jamaica	50.0	54.0	73.0
Brazil	36.0	33.0	70.0
America	8.0	22.0	43.0

Note. 'Race' is the percentage of students who said kids at school make fun of kids of other colors or races 'most times' or 'always'. 'Clothing' is the percentage of students who said kids who don't wear the right clothes are left out or teased 'most times' or 'always'. 'Weight' is the percentage of students who said kids at school make fun of heavy kids 'most times' or 'always'.

\* research based on a Masters Dissertation thesis Kansas University Dept

Clinical Child Psychology. Paper in Preparation by Brian Noland MS

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\*Invited paper Joseph Sandler research conference, Frankfurt, Germany,

March 6 – 8, 2009

This research was supported by grants from the International Psychoanalytic Association and the American Psychoanalytic Association. Audley Samuels, served as a 3 year project instructor and role model and David Konovitch served as a project manager.