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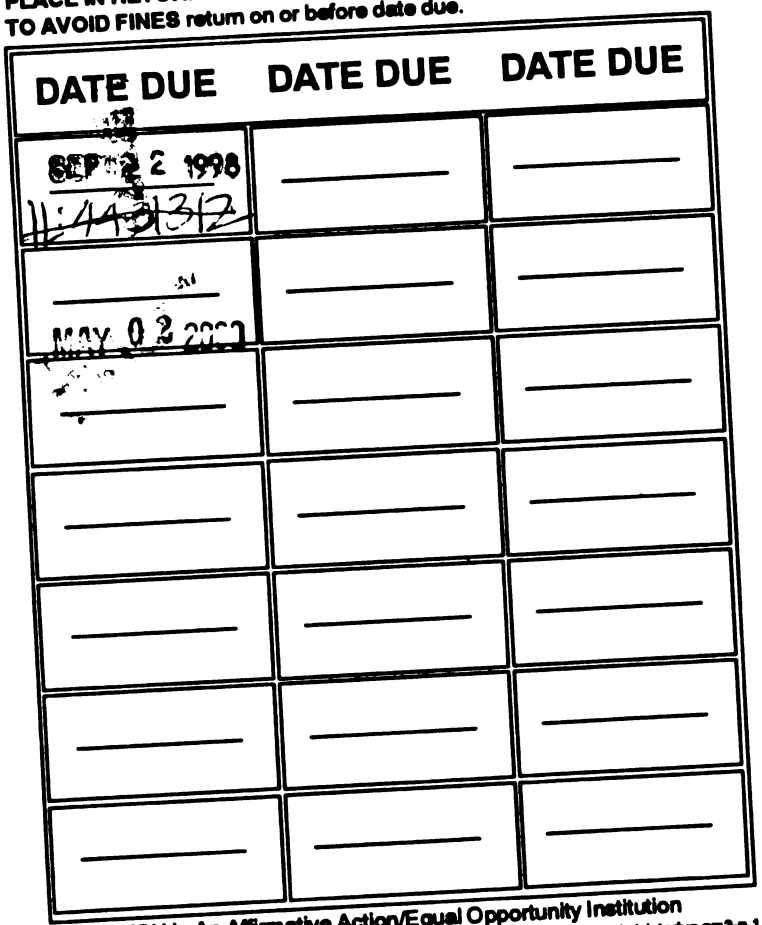

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: EVALUATING ITS EFFECTS ON PERCEIVED SCHOOL SAFETY AND MEASURES OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

By

Clarence Edward Banks II

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ABSTRACT

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Faced with the growing problem of violence in our schools, a "Midwestern" County Office on Violence Reduction, in conjunction with a "Urban" Public School System, implemented a program designed to reduce school violence through training students in conflict resolution.

This study will examine the impact of the conflict resolution curriculum on school safety and school violence. Middle-school children who attended schools which conducted conflict resolution training will be compared to middle-school children who attended a school which did not conduct conflict resolution training. Responses to survey questions were analyzed and evaluated using mean scale scores.

Children who attended schools which presented the conflict resolution curriculum did not respond differently from the control group on scales intended to measure perceived school safety and interpersonal conflict.

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Chapter One:

Violence in Society & School

Violence in our society and in our schools has reached epidemic proportions in the 1990s (Eron & Slaby, 1994). The complex interaction between poverty, racism, drugs and alcohol, the loss of jobs with decent wages in our inner cities, gangs, inadequate handgun regulation, lack of personal opportunity and personal responsibility, disinvestment in our schools and after-school activities, and family violence plays a critical role in our culture of violence (Prothrow-Stith, 1994). According to Eron and Slaby (1994), interpersonal violence is indeed one of the most prevalent, stable, socially transmittable, socially destructive, and problematic health risks Americans face.

American's infatuation with violence can be identified in every arena of our daily lives, from the media, to sports, to politics, to the military, and even in church and school. From the O. J. Simpson trial, to abortion protests, to brutal rap music and talk show themes, there is no avoiding it. Even today's cartoons are violent, and it has

been shown that children who watch them consistently are more aggressive than their peers (Brendtro & Long, 1995). The APA suggests that youth exposure to violence in the media, particularly during early childhood, can have harmful lifelong consequences (CSR, 1995). Numerous studies, including the Surgeon General's Commission report (1972), the National Institute of Mental Health Ten Year Follow-up (1982), and the report of the APA's Committee on Media in Society (1992), confirm that viewing violence increases violence, and that this may be related to the increasing number of violent altercations among America's teenagers (CSR, 1995).

Death by violence has penetrated every segment of American society. At the current rates in the United States, over 25,000 individuals die each year because someone has killed them (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992). Even more startling, is the thought that adolescence and violence have become synonymous with one another. Fingerhut and Kleinman (1990), reported that the homicide rate for young American males was highest among the 21 developed countries investigated, and was more than 40 times higher than the homicide rate for Japan, the country with the lowest homicide rate.

Although it is widespread among all groups of people, death by violence in the United States is more highly

prevalent among young people, minority groups and males. For example, violence is the leading cause of death for young African American males (Eron & Slaby, 1994). In a three year period (1984 to 1987), the homicide rate for African-American males increased 40%, from 60.6 per 100,000 to 84.7 per 100,000. During this same period, the homicide rate for African-American females increased from 14.8 per 100,000 to 17.7 per 100,000 (Centers for Disease and Control, 1990). According to the Center for Disease and Control in Atlanta, a black male born in 1989 has a 1 chance in 27 of dying in a homicide; a white male born in the same year has a 1 chance in 205 of dying in a homicide (Moriarty et al., 1992). It could be argued that the phenomenon of youth violence is unparalleled by any other crisis that America faces today.

Children and adolescents are more at risk to be victims of violence than adults, in virtually every category, including physical abuse, sibling assaults, bullying, sexual abuse, and rape (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Juvenile arrests for murder have increased 85% from 1987 to 1991, with 30% of those arrests involving the murder of another juvenile (Moriarty et al., 1992). James Fox (1996), reports that there are actually two violent crime trends that are occurring in America - one for the young, and one for the mature - and they are moving in opposite directions. For example, from 1990 to 1994, the overall rate for

homicide in America changed very slightly, declining a total of four percent. For this same period, the rate of killing at the hands of adults, ages 25 and over declined 18 percent and that for young adults, ages 18-24 rose barely two percent; however, the rate of murder committed by teenagers, ages 14-17, jumped a tragic 22 percent (Fox, 1996). Fox predicts that by the year 2005, the number of teens that will commit murder, between the ages of 14-17, will increase another 20%, with the largest increase occurring among African-Americans in this age group.

Violence can affect every aspect of an adolescent's life; from their attitude; to the development of relationships; to the amount of respect they have for their parents; to the safety that they feel when they are in school. In a six month period during the 1988-1989 school year, over 400,000 students experienced violent crimes, such as assault, rape, and robbery while they were - <u>at school</u> (National Center for School Safety, 1991). The National Crime Victimization Survey reported that almost one-in-ten students, ages twelve to nineteen years old, were victims of crime in or around their school within a six-month period and 2% were victims of violent crime (Bastian & Taylor, 1991).

Violence is a disruptive presence in American schools and is among the top concerns for administrators and

educators. Nowhere, however, is the magnitude of the concern about violence reflected more urgently than in Goal 6 of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act adopted by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton in March 1994 (Futrell, 1996). Goal 6 states that "by the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning." The supporting narrative for this goal states that "no child or youth should be fearful on the way to school, be afraid while there, or have to cope with the pressures of making unhealthy choices" (U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

Violence can be a hazard and a distraction for many of today's school children. For example, violence which occurs in or near the school, will make it more difficult for students to stay in school, concentrate on the achievement of rigorous standards, reach their maximum potential academically, and excel intellectually. When students and teachers are more concerned about becoming victims of violence than performing their respective duties, students are unable to learn and the teachers are unable to teach (Futrell, 1996).

The issue of violence in schools is not a new phenomenon. An article which appeared in the January 1979 edition of Phi Delta Kappan traces the problem of school violence back to the 1950s. The article, "Discipline in the

Public Schools: A Problem of Perception?," mentions juvenile delinquency, not a lack of discipline, as a major contributing factor to increasing violence in schools. John W. Williams, author of the article, wrote in the 1950s "there seemed to be a marked increase in both the serious and less serious antisocial behavior on the part of our youth" (Williams, 1979).

According to Williams (1979), in 1955, a national study conducted by the National Education Association's Research Division entitled "Discipline in the Public Schools" documented two particularly startling problems: violence committed against teachers and the increased use of narcotics by students. More than twenty years later, the Phi Delta Kappan report bore a striking resemblance to that of the 1950s, except the problem was much worse (Williams, 1979). The major difference between violence in the schools in the 1950s and the 1990s is the presence and use of weapons. Violent acts that use to be carried out with fists and sticks in the 1950s are now being carried out with guns in the 1990s. Today, the possibility that a disagreement among students will be settled with some type of weapon rather than an old-fashioned fistfight has increased significantly (Futrell, 1996).

Factors contributing to school violence are numerous, complex, and for the most part, community related. According

to a comprehensive survey conducted by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (1993), teachers perceive that the major factors contributing to school violence are lack of parental supervision at home (71 percent), lack of family involvement with the school (66 percent), and exposure to violence in the mass media (55 percent). Teachers also believe that parents who teach their children to "fight back" when someone tries to take something from them, or insults them, or assaults them, may contribute to school violence.

Responding to a related questionnaire distributed by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (1993), students (36 percent) concurred that a lack of parental supervision at home is the major factor contributing to violence in schools. However, they (34 percent) cite as a second major factor the presence of gang or group membership or peer group pressure. The studies conducted by Metropolitan Life, concluded that peer group pressure is perhaps the fastest growing and most disturbing cause of acts of violence among youth, whether in school or out (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994).

Violence or the threat of violence has a direct impact on the quality of education provided and on the way teachers and students work together in the classroom. When students perceive that their education is inadequate or inferior (when expectations for them are less than for others in the

class), they often develop a sense of helplessness and frustration (Futrell, 1996). It is this sense of frustration that often turns to violence when there appears to be no viable solution to the problem.

Unquestionably, there needs to be a impetus to action, and a stronger commitment to violence prevention and intervention, in the educational environments of our youth. In school environments where violence is prevalent, teachers are less apt to teach at their full potential, the class assignments are less creative and challenging, and the ethos in the school is less motivating (Kozol, 1991).

Why is violence such a big problem in American schools? What theoretical frameworks can provide a more comprehensive explanation and a better understanding of violence in society and in school? Have existing prevention and intervention programs been effective reducing violence in school environments? These questions will be addressed in the following sections.

Chapter Two:

Why is Violence Prevalent in American Schools

Debra Pepler and Robert Slaby (1994) feel that as the individual child develops and matures, he or she learns how to interpret the surrounding world as hostile or benevolent; how to solve interpersonal problems in pro-social or in antisocial and violent ways; how to manage or mismanage frustration; and how to meet emotional, social, and physical needs through either legal or illegal means. The learning takes place in multiple contexts, in the family, through gangs, from the neighborhood, in schools and in the larger community, each of which are affected by social and cultural forces in the society at large. This section will examine how schools can contribute to and help resolve problems of youth violence.

Children have the right to go to school in a pleasant and safe environment. Unforunately, violence is present in children's schools. When the findings of the Safe School Study Report, "Violent Schools - Safe Schools" were released to Congress in 1978, the National Institute of Education

pointed out some shocking statistics about crime in the nation's elementary and secondary schools:

- Approximately 282,000 students (1.3 percent) are physically attacked in America's secondary schools each **month**.
- About 2.4 million (11 percent) have something stolen from them in a typical month.
- Almost eight percent of urban junior and senior high school students miss at least one day of classes a month because they are afraid to go to school.
- Over 25 percent of all schools are subject to vandalism in a given month.
- Ten percent of schools are burglarized, in a school-year.
- The annual cost of school crime was estimated at around $200 million.

While a study of this magnitude has not been conducted since 1978, there are national, state, and local studies

that will confirm that crime is much more prevalent and much more serious in the 1990s, than it was in the late 1970s. In May of 1991, the National Crime Victimization Survey reported that nearly three million thefts and violent crimes occurred on or near school's campuses every year, which equates to approximately 16,000 incidents per school day. The Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report in May 1991, which estimated that 18 million teenagers were the victims of 1.9 million violent assaults, between 1985 and 1988.

A major school-crime study conducted by the National Crime Victimization Survey in the 1980s revealed that while the school-age population has markedly declined since 1982, the number of violent crimes in and around schools has remained high, ranging from a low of about 420,000 in 1982 and 1986, to a high of almost 465,000 in 1987.

A study on school violence, that was a part of the larger National Student Health Survey (NASHS), was made up of surveys completed by eighth and tenth graders in more than 200 public and private schools in 20 states, found that:

- A weapon was involved in approximately one-third of the crimes against students.
- More than one-third of the 11,000 student respondents reported that

they had been threatened with harm in school.

- More than one-fifth of the adolescent males surveyed admitted to carrying a knife to school at least once that year, and 7 percent carried one daily.
- Nearly one-seventh of the students reported being robbed at school, and the same percentage said that had been assaulted either at school or while riding on the bus.
- Almost one-half of the adolescent male respondents and a quarter of the adolescent females had been in at least one fistfight that school year (Regoli and Hewitt, 1991).

Bartollas (1993), offers two explanations for the increased violence in our schools. First, he believes that it is the community contexts in which these schools reside that is partly responsible for the high levels of crime and disorder. Second, he believes that it is the schools' authoritarian atmosphere and the likelihood of failure by many pupils that creates bored frustrated, dissatisfied, and alienated students.

Moriarty and McDonald (1991) posit that aggression may be caused by the increasing large number of adolescents who have become disenchanted with and alienated from the

decision making process commonly used in secondary schools. They continue by stating that a major consequence of this phenomenon is that student alienation has an insidious influence on the individual's personal investment in the educational process as well as on self-determination and self-responsibility. Thus leaving the individual vulnerable to a variety of adolescent problems including, but not exclusive to, anxiety, stress, inadequacy, decreased self-esteem, and aggression.

The National Research Council Report on Violence (1993) cited four characteristics of school milieus that may contribute to school violence: (1) a relatively high number of students occupy a limited number of space; (2) poor building design features facilitate the commission of violent acts; (3) the imposition of behavioral routines and conformity contribute to the feelings of anger, resentment, and rejection; and (4) when the capacity to avoid confrontations is somewhat reduced. Recent trends have supported the National Research Council's report (1993), indicating that school violence is most prevalent in large, urban schools in areas of lower socioeconomic status, that often experience overcrowding and lack of resources (Elliot, 1994; Nuttal & Kalesnik, 1987). Furthermore, according to comparison studies of school records, schools with higher incident rates of violence tend to have lower levels of

student academic achievement, higher rates of absenteeism, and more school drop-outs (Christie & Toomey, 1990; Commission on Violence and Youth, 1993; & Hellman & Beaton, 1986).

According to Gottfredson (1981), Hirschi (1969), Polk and Schafer (1972), Williams, Moles, and Boesel (1975), the educational and social climate of schools has clear links with theorizing about delinquency and violence. Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) state that, "climate" refers to the hypothetical school-wide predispositions to treat certain kinds of educational goals as important. For example, schools can be characterized by such dimensions as academic competitiveness; school-wide peer influence on college or vocational expectations; or teachers and administrators particular educational orientation.

In a study conducted by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985), school climate was measured to determine its relationship to teacher and student victimizations. The authors found that the school educational and social climate measures were associated with 40% of the variance in teacher victimizations in the junior high schools; 35% of the variance in teacher victimization in the senior high schools; 17% of the variance in student victimizations in the junior high schools; and 12% of the variance in student victimizations, in the senior high schools.

Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) found that their zero-order correlations implied that teacher victimizations in the junior high schools were positively associated with an educational climate in which teachers and principals emphasize job versus college preparation. But they found that this measurement was in the opposite direction for the senior high schools. Teacher victimization was found to be negatively associated with the student population's attachment to school, peer and nonacademic ties, belief in conventional rules, and good race relations. Teacher victimization was also found to be slightly positively associated with a college (rather than a job) orientation among students, and at least for junior high schools, with the measure of delinquent youth culture. Average grades students received were negatively correlated with teacher victimization rates in senior high schools, and the dispersion of grades was positively correlated with teacher victimization. Howard (1978) suggests that in schools with large grade dispersions, the reward structure may be "rigged" for failure for some students, resulting in low stakes in conformity, which may lead to behavior dysfunction.

With respect to student victimizations, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) found lower associations between the student victimization measures and their predictors. Student

victimization was found to be correlated somewhat lower in schools with a student population characterized in the aggregate by attachment to school, high in internal control scores, belief in conventional rules, and good race relations.

Considerably more research is required to identify the school characteristics and the biological and social processes, which contribute to and reduce school disorder and school violence. Currently, school intervention programs are being modeled after family intervention and public health models. These intervention programs are being tailored to reduce dysfunctional interactions and aggressive behavior in the school milieu. According to Deutsch (1993), two key components of an educational program that can be used to encourage the values, attitudes, knowledge, and behavior that foster constructive rather than destructive behavior in schools are: 1) the creation of mediation resolution centers, and 2) the implementation of conflict resolution training programs.

The next section will present the theoretical background for the design of these intervention programs. Following this discussion, the effectiveness of selected intervention programs will be discussed.

Chapter Three:

Theories on Violence

This section will focus on interventions that are intended to reduce aggression, and ultimately violence, in American schools. The theories of social learning and moral development, the framework for which most of these behavior oriented, and conflict resolution programs are founded, will also be discussed.

One of the premises held by social scientists is that violence is not random, uncontrollable, or inevitable. Advocates of this premise suggest that violence is learned, and can be unlearned (e.g., Eron & Slaby, 1994). Perhaps the strongest predictor of an individual's risk of perpetuating violence is a history of having engaged in aggressive behavior as a child (Eron & Slaby, 1994). In fact, by the time a youngster has reached the age of 8, it is possible to predict reasonably well from the extent of his or her aggressive behavior in school how aggressive the youth is likely to become in adolescence and adulthood, including whether he or she will exhibit criminal and antisocial

behavior (Eron, Huesmann, Dubw, Romanoff, & Yarmel, 1987; Farrington, 1994; McCord, 1994).

The learning of aggressive behavior begins early in life, and aggression is learned well by an early age (Eron & Slaby, 1994). The factors that contribute to aggression are varied and plentiful. No one factor by itself is the sole cause of aggression. Violent behavior occurs only when there is a convergence of a number of factors, and even then violence is not inevitable (Eron & Slaby, 1994). For an individual to respond to a particular situation with aggression, the individual must have learned, that this is an acceptable way to respond. In his or her history the individual must have experienced or observed this behavior, and seen it rewarded (Eron & Slaby, 1994).

Violent behavior is not merely triggered by individual characteristics and environmental events but also by the way an individual perceives these events, makes meaning of them, anticipates others' reactions, and chooses to act in these events. From as early as the preschool years and throughout adulthood, highly aggressive or violent individuals have been found to show habits of thought that reflect lower levels of social problem-solving skills and higher endorsement of beliefs and attitudes that support the use of violence (Dodge, 1986; Parke & Slaby, 1983; Slaby and

Guerra, 1988; Slaby & Stringham, in press; Shure & Spivak, 1988).

Highly aggressive children and violent adolescent offenders typically define social problems in hostile ways, adopt hostile goals, seek few additional facts, generate few alternative solutions, anticipate few consequences for aggression, give a higher priority for their aggressive solutions and generally exhibit antisocial attitudes and behaviors. Combined with their deficits in social problem-solving skills, aggressive children and violent adolescent offenders commonly hold the general beliefs that support the use of aggression, such as the beliefs that the use of aggression is legitimate, increases self-esteem, and helps to avoid a negative image (e.g., Guerra & Slaby, 1989; Huesmann & Guerra, 1994; Slaby & Guerra, 1988; Shure & Spivak, 1988). Because the cognitive patterns and the antisocial attitudes that underlie violent behavior appear to be learned early in childhood, are habitual in nature, and yet, are potentially modifiable through direct intervention, treatment programs that change these cognitive patterns and address these antisocial attitudes should lead to relatively enduring changes in violent behavior (Guerra & Slaby, 1990; Kazdin, 1987).

The next section will introduce two of the theories behind the treatment and intervention programs which are

designed to change the attitudes and cognitive patterns that are the precursor to violent behavior: Social learning and Moral Development.

Social Learning

Social learning theory's main emphasis has been to (1) develop an adequate process theory to explain how people learn to acquire their characteristic behaviors and attitudes; (2) predict behavioral choice by the individual in a given situation; (3) develop a reliable, efficient descriptive language, integrated with the process theory, to delineate individual differences in behavior in the same or similar situations; and (4) understand how and under what conditions such attitudes and behaviors are altered (Rotter, 1982). Regarded as a single theory, social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1959, 1963; Bandura, 1973, 1983, 1986) has evolved since it was first proposed to account for aggression. This formulation was based on the premise that "people are not born with pre-formed repertoires of aggressive behavior. They must learn them" (Bandura, 1983).

According to social learning theory, aggressive behavior is acquired and maintained primarily through (a) observational learning, (b) direct experience, and (c) self-regulative influences. New responses occur as unlearned or previously learned responses, and are modified or combined

into more refined or complex behavior. This process may be sped up by direct reinforcement or expected reinforcement, through imitation (Rotter, 1982).

Social learning processes determine which members of a society develop, through direct and vicarious experiences. Aggression is considered the habitual mode of coping with life's aversive situations. Hence these learning processes determine which individuals are likely to respond violently or nonviolently to particular aversive events in their lives. Researchers have identified distinct inhibiting and instigating processes which determine whether aggression is employed as a mode of terminating an aversive event (Stuart, 1981; Bandura, 1979; Berkowitz, 1974). Aversive experiences can instigate aggression if an individual previously has direct or vicarious experiences of positive and negative reinforcement for aggression (Patterson et al., 1975; Bandura, 1979). Adolescents learn from their environment that aggression can be an effective method to get what they want from other people.

Parents may inadvertently increase their children's chances for developing coercive behaviors by negatively reinforcing the children, even though this process my be contrary to the parents' child-rearing goals. According to Turner et al. (1981), a response is negatively reinforced if an aversive event is reduced or terminated following the

aggressive response. These undesired aggressive behaviors are likely to learned by the child and used in subsequent adversive situations.

Moral Development

Morality is rooted in the social condition and the human psyche. It arises from the social condition because people live in groups, and what one person does can affect another (Rest, 1986). The function of morality is to provide basic guidelines for determining how conflicts in human interests are to be settled and for optimizing mutual benefit of people living together in groups (Rest, 1986).

As children develop they come to understand the nature, purpose, and function of social rules and social cooperation. Children initially understand simple forms of cooperation and reasoning, then as they mature, and are introduced to new experiences they gradually develop an understanding for more complicated forms of cooperation and reasoning. For example, face-to-face bargaining and concrete, short-term exchanges evolve into cooperation involving society-wide networks, institutional systems, and the ideals for guiding the creation of cooperative societies. These concepts or realizations are generally schemes that are abstracted from concrete social experience and become the basis for understanding how people cooperate

with each other. These basic schemes of cooperation and reasoning, are the underlying principles in moral development (Thoma & Rest, 1986).

A child whose moral judgment is developing normally will understand the fairness of laws and is more likely to see their stake in the social order. Conversely, a child whose moral judgment is considered to be low, has yet to mature, and is likely to become susceptible to aggressive behavioral tendencies (Rest, 1979).

Social learning and moral development theories are used to evaluate and predict behavior. The underlying premise of both of these theories is that behavior is learned and thus, can be altered. For example, if a child chooses to resolve a situation in a aggressive or violent manner, proponents of these theories could suggest that the child is exhibiting a learned or developed behavior. Subsequently, interventions designed to reduce these aggressive and violent responses would also be grounded in social learning and moral development theories. These behavior interventions would contend that, since aggression and violence are likely learned and developed attitudes and responses, nonaggressive and nonviolent attitudes and responses can also be learned and positively reinforced. The Public Health Model is a good example of one of the behavior intervention ideologies which is available.

The Public Health Model

The Public Health Model attempts to educate and ultimately prevent violence both in and out of school. There are many school-based strategies designed to reduce violence which are structured, developed, and implemented using a Public Health model. Public health practitioners and school personnel have a long-standing alliance in working to protect the health of students (Prothrow-Stith, 1994).

Together these professionals have designed and implemented proactive prevention programs like vision, hearing, and tuberculosis screening and disease vaccination. Prevention has also been a focus in health education classes, where students are taught about fitness, human reproduction, nutrition, and substance abuse (Prothrow-Stith, 1994). In this setting, the public health model is also being used to prevent violence.

According to Prothrow-Stith and Quaday (1996), the public health model to violence prevention is similar to the methods used to stop people from smoking - by using primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention interventions. Prothrow-Stith and Quaday (1996), give the following comparison between preventing smoking and preventing violence, and describe the phases of the public health prevention model.

"Primary prevention programs" encourage a negative view of smoking to keep people from starting to smoke. Violence

prevention programs promote redefining the "hero" and nonviolent problem-solving. These types of violence prevention programs may include mass media messages that realistically portray the effects of violence and reinforce the concept that violence is not a smart way to solve problems.

"Secondary prevention programs" attempt to get people to quit smoking through behavior modification programs of therapy. In violence prevention programs, secondary prevention methods include counseling or mentoring programs for children at risk for violence - for instance, those who have gotten into fights at school or have been suspended from school.

"Tertiary prevention programs" are the last steps for smokers with cancer, offering surgery or chemotherapy as a treatment option. The last step in violence prevention is to offer rehabilitation programs to incarcerated violent offenders.

Prothrow-Stith and Quaday (1996), argue that in violence prevention, as in smoking prevention, early intervention is safer, preferable, and more cost-effective. Furthermore, it is smarter to teach kids not to smoke, or conflict-resolution skills and nonviolent methods of dealing with anger, than to run treatment facilities or perform surgery to remove a lung or a bullet.

The violence-prevention curriculum is presented in ten one-hour presentations, which are intended change the attitudes and the behaviors of school-age individuals. The public health model recognizes that violence has become a major contributor to mortality and morbidity.

The Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents' is designed to raise adolescents' threshold for violence by creating a nonviolent ethos in the classroom. It focuses on extending a student's repertoire of responses to anger. While it acknowledges the existence of societal and institutional violence and institutional racism, students are encouraged to react passively, but to accept their anger and become intentional and creative about their responses to it (Prothrow-Stith, 1994).

Anger is presented as a normal, essential, potentially constructive emotion. "Creative" alternatives to fighting are emphasized. For example, one classroom discussion during one of the sessions focuses on the good and bad results of fighting. The students list the results of each, and invariably the list for the bad results is longer than the list for the good results. Through this method the students begin to recognize the need for alternatives to fighting. This exercise emphasizes that the decision to fight or not fight is a choice and the potential consequences are important to consider when a decision is eventually made.

Any comprehensive violence-prevention program requires the participation of the entire community, including political funding authorities, school boards and commissions, students, teachers, academics, business leaders, the news media, and foundation representatives. Once a program is designed and approved, the school administration must ensure that there is adequate training and implementation (Prothrow-Stith, 1994). The next section will review a number of existing school-based violence prevention programs and there effectiveness.

School-based Intervention Programs

This section will discuss two key components which Deutsch (1993) felt were important for educational intervention programs to implement, in order to encourage the values, attitudes, knowledge, and behavior that foster constructive rather than destructive behavior in schools. These intervention components are: 1) mediation resolution centers, and 2) conflict-resolution programs.

Peer Mediation

In peer mediation programs, students involved in a conflict, agree to have a trained peer mediator help them resolve their disputes. The peer mediation process is

designed to be democratic and avoid blame. The topics covered in peer mediator training vary across programs but can include instruction in problem solving, active listening, communicating, taking command of adversarial situations, identifying points of agreement, and maintaining confidentiality and nonjudgmental stance (OJJDP, 1995).

In terms of risk factors, peer mediation may address early and persistent antisocial behavior and association with peers who are involved in violence and delinquency. Proactive factors addressed include the opportunities to contribute, skills to resolve conflict, and healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior (Howell & Bilchik, 1995).

Preliminary studies of the outcomes of mediation on improving students' anger management skills and decreasing student discipline problems has been encouraging. Indicating that mediation is an effective adjunct to a school's discipline policy (e.g., Tolson, McDonald & Moriarty, 1991). In addition, the ready acceptance of mediation by students as a means of resolving disputes has been demonstrated empirically (Moriarty, Mansfield & Leverence, 1992).

In a 1991 survey, conducted by the New Mexico Department of Education, principals of schools that had implemented mediation programs indicated that the biggest program impact was in increased self-confidence and problem-solving abilities among students (Lantieri et al., 1996). A

complete listing of the categories which were rated by the 66 New Mexico principals, and their "percentage of effective or highly effective responses" is shown in Table 1 (Lantieri et al., 1996).

Table 1.
Peer Mediation:
New Mexico Principals' Rating of Effectiveness

Criteria	Percentage of Effective or Highly Effective Responses
Increased self confidence	93%
Increased problem-solving skills	90%
Improved self-esteem	88%
Developed leadership skills	87%
Improved communication skills	86%
Provided alternative to student violence	82%
Resolved school-based disputes	81%
Promoted active listening	81%
Changed attitude toward conflict	79%
Helped students deal with peer pressure	66%

Conflict Resolution

Similarly, conflict resolution programs are also designed to improve students' anger management, social, problem-solving, logical and moral reasoning skills. The premise of conflict-resolution is based upon the common

belief that youth violence is a result of arguments between acquaintances rather than random violence, drug-related crimes, or gang-related activities (Pallone and Hennessy, 1992; Prothrow-Stith and Spivak, 1992). Conflict resolution seeks to have individuals "unlearn" their aggressive and violent behaviors. Specifically, conflict resolution training typically consists of teaching six skills: 1) alternative solution; 2) consequential thinking; 3) causal thinking; 4) interpersonal sensitivity; 5) means-end thinking; and, 6) perspective taking.

Conflict resolution programs have been found to be effective in improving knowledge of problem-solving skills and informant reports of actual behavior (Goldstein, 1988; Shapiro & Derr, 1987). Furthermore, conflict resolution training programs that emphasize individual coping skills across a wide variety of situations appear to have long lasting effects (Platt and Prout, 1987).

Evaluating Conflict Resolution Programs

Numerous conflict resolution and violence prevention curriculums have been developed in recent years, but very few have been evaluated in controlled studies (OJJDP, 1995). All of the following evaluations used nonequivalent comparison group designs.

Brennan (1992) evaluated a version of the Empowering Children to Survive and Succeed (ECSS) curriculum designed for prekindergarten to third grade students. Curriculum content focused on self-control, self-confidence, speaking and listening, responsibility, relaxation, thinking, problem solving, and cooperation. A trained consultant led instruction in the curriculum (with the participation of the classroom teacher) for one 30-minute session a week. In the evaluation, first and second grade experimental students received the curriculum over 10 weeks, while experimental students in all other grades received the curriculum over 6 weeks. The consultant modeled skills in the classroom, and then students practiced the skills in age-appropriate games and success oriented activities. Lessons ended with class discussion of the skill examined during that lesson. Over the school year nine workshops (three for teachers, three for parents, three for school staff) were presented to introduce ECSS methods and skills. Teachers and parents were encouraged to use program techniques with students, and parents received ECSS handbooks that described program techniques and vocabulary. School administrators monitored teachers' implementation of program methods as part of their regular observation of classroom teaching. Curriculum instruction and workshops were supplemented by training handbooks, worksheets, charts, and stamps that were

distributed to students throughout the school year. In addition, posters highlighting curriculum skills were displayed in the classroom and throughout the school (OJJDP, 1995).

The evaluation used a nonequivalent comparison group design, including an experimental and comparison group for each of five grade levels from prekindergarten group, in which experimental and comparison students attended the same school, comparison classes were drawn from schools with similar demographic patterns and achievement to experimental schools. No information was provided about the characteristics of the students. For some grade levels, experimental and comparison students numbered as few as nine, suggesting that bias may have been introduced by nonresponse attrition (OJJDP, 1995).

Immediately before and after the curriculum period, students were orally interviewed with a 45-item inventory of attitudes and behaviors focusing on self-responsibility, self-control, self-esteem, self-concept, attitudes toward diversity, attitudes toward learning, conflict resolution, problem solving, and learning skills (Brennan, 1992).

Outcome data were aggregated across grade levels. Analysis of covariance results showed that the program was significantly associated with improved overall scores on the outcome inventory after controlling for grade level. There

was a significant grade by intervention interaction, with greater improvements for experimental students, relative to comparison students, in kindergarten, first, and second grades than in the other grades. The global outcome measure included a high proportion of items measuring wide-ranging constructs; thus it is unclear whether the program actually affected risk and protective factors for delinquency and violence (OJJDP, 1995).

The Committee for Children (1988, 1989, 1990, 1992) developed and tested the Second Step violence prevention curriculum, with versions specifically tailored to students in kindergarten, grades one to three, four and five, and six to eight. The curriculum teaches skills in empathy, appropriate social behavior, interpersonal problem solving, and anger management through discussion, modeling, and role-playing. Trained teachers implement the curriculum, which consists of approximately 30 lessons taught one to three times per week over a 3- to 6-month period (the number of lessons and the length of instruction periods varied across implementations and grade levels). The versions for grades 6 to 8, has 13 to 18 lessons taught over 3 to 6 weeks. Evaluations of each version were conducted with students in western Washington State. For each evaluation, the experimental classes of students were matched with

comparison classes of similar grade levels from the same schools on demographic and academic achievement factors. The evaluators administered pretests 1 week before the curriculum began and posttests 1 to 2 weeks after the curriculum ended. Even though the results were somewhat limited due to small sample size in the evaluations, the program evaluators found that relative to comparison students, experimental students improved significantly in their empathy, interpersonal problem solving, anger management, and behavioral social skills (OJJDP, 1995).

Marvel, Morenda, and Cook (1993) evaluated the Fighting Fair conflict resolution program. The curriculum covered the dynamics of conflict, anger, communication, problem solving, anger reduction techniques, mediation, and negotiation. Trained teachers used discussion, brainstorming, role-playing, and storytelling techniques in 30-minute daily lessons over a 7-week period. Teachers infused conflict resolution into language arts and social studies lessons and directed students to use their conflict resolution knowledge in their interpersonal disputes. Three classes of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students were assigned to the experimental group, and three classes of the same grades served as comparisons. All students in both groups attended the same public school with a student population of

primarily low-income, ethnic minority children. Pretest and posttest measures consisted of students' responses to hypothetical social conflict situations (OJJDP, 1995).

The evaluators of the Fighting Fair curriculum found that the experimental students improved significantly more than the comparison students in their pro-social responses to the hypothetical social conflict situations. Teachers also reported incidents of problem behaviors (including aggression and violence) also significantly decreased among experimental students relative to comparison students. Unfortunately, this evaluation had several limitations, including poorly constructed, unvalidated measures; unspecified procedures for assignment of classrooms to experimental conditions; and potential biased teacher reports of student behavior (since teachers also implemented the curriculum) (OJJDP, 1995).

Gainer, Webster, and Champion (1993) developed and evaluated a violence prevention curriculum for students in grades five to nine. The curriculum reviews risk factors for violence (including drug use and sales, alcohol, weapons, anger and arguments, and poverty) and discusses the relationship between drugs and violence. Half the sessions focus on social problem-solving skills. As part of the program students also contract with an adult who is not

involved with drugs, alcohol, or weapons to help them resolve conflicts nonviolently. Experienced instructors (including an attorney, a trauma nurse, an emergency medical technician, and a former drug dealer who was shot and subsequently became a paraplegic) taught different sessions of the curriculum. The curriculum consisted of fifteen 50-minute sessions conducted on consecutive days over 3 weeks for the particular implementation assessed in this evaluation.

The experimental group included all fifth grade students in two elementary schools and students in three seventh grade classes at a junior high school. The comparison group consisted of all fifth and seventh grade students enrolled in the same three schools the year following the intervention. All schools were located in high-crime areas in Washington, D.C., and most students knew someone who had been murdered or assaulted with a gun or a knife. For experimental students pretests were administered 1 to 3 days before the program began and posttests 1 to 2 weeks after the program ended. For both tests students responded to hypothetical social conflict situations and indicated their beliefs about aggression and violence. Comparison students' pre- and posttests were separated by the same amount of time 1 year later.

This study yielded mixed results. Following intervention experimental students significantly increased their knowledge of risk factors for violence and listed more negative consequences to using violence, compared to the control students. Experimental students also were significantly less likely to define social problems in adversarial ways and legitimize violence. However, experimental students were significantly less likely to provide nonviolent solutions in hypothetical conflict situations. There were no differences between groups regarding the desire to have a weapon for protection. Furthermore, following the intervention, experimental students actually perceived significantly less risk of violence associated with drug dealing than did the comparison students (OJJDP, 1995).

Summary

The implementation of mediation resolution centers, and conflict resolution and violence prevention curriculums, have generally been found to be effective in improving students' social skills as measured by verbal responses to hypothetical social conflict situations (OJJDP, 1995).

Preliminary studies of the outcomes of mediation on improving students' anger management skills and decreasing student discipline problems have been encouraging.

Indicating that mediation is an effective adjunct to a school's discipline policy (e.g., Tolson, McDonald & Moriarty, 1991).

In addition, children who have participated in conflict resolution programs have improved significantly in their empathy, interpersonal problem solving, anger management, and behavioral social skills (e.g., Committee for Children, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992).

Improving children's behavioral and interpersonal social skills enhances their ability to solve disputes nonviolently. Furthermore, students with enhanced social skills, learn to understand themselves as individuals, analyze situations, communicate their desires, and respond to different conflicting views (Bey & Turner, 1996). Which are all important elements to decreasing violence in schools.

Violence in schools limits children's ability to attend classes, reach their maximum potential academically, and excel intellectually. By enhancing children's social skills, mediation and conflict resolution programs, give students and teachers an opportunity to perform their respective duties. Students are able to learn and teachers are able to teach.

Though more rigorous research is needed in this area, the preliminary reports would suggest that these programs are effective in reducing aggressive and violent, attitudes and responses in children and adolescents.

This paper is written with the specific intent of examining whether: 1) conflict resolution programs have an effect on middle school children's perceived safety while in school, and 2) whether middle school children who attend a school which presents a conflict-resolution curriculum will report less aggressive responses to hypothetical questions, which relate to interpersonal conflicts (including fighting). The next section will give a description of the conflict resolution program that will be examined.

Chapter Four:

Program Description & Methodology

A commitment to make school a place of peace is one of the ultimate challenges in education and it's not too late for us to help children unlearn aggressive and disruptive behaviors (Bey & Turner, 1996). As mentioned in the previous section, school-based intervention programs that focus on conflict resolution have been found to have a positive effect on children's aggressive and violent attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Brennan, 1992; Committee for Children, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992; Marvel, Morenda, and Cook, 1993; Gainer, Webster, and Champion, 1993). Unfortunately, this research has been inconclusive in its ability to assess conflict resolution's impact on school safety.

Any environment where hostile or aggressive students use weapons or violent behavior to resolve disputes is unsafe (Bey & Turner, 1996). One in every four students, regardless of their school level or achievement, feels that violence has lessened the quality of education and safety in their school (Metropolitan Life, 1993).

The classroom and overall school climate suffers from poor communication when students misunderstand or misperceive the intentions, feelings, needs, or actions of others. It is important for them to share emotions and feelings without using aggression to express anger and frustration. Students lacking the skills in anger management and self-control cause continual behavioral problems with their inappropriate and sometimes violent expressions of emotion.

As it was stated earlier, violence which occurs in or near the school milieu, will make it more difficult for students to stay in school, concentrate on the achievement of rigorous standards, reach their maximum potential academically, and excel intellectually. When students and teachers are more concerned about becoming victims of violence than performing their respective duties, students are unable to learn and the teachers are unable to teach (Futrell, 1996). Furthermore, when students lack conflict resolution and/ or peer mediation skills, contentions and disputes are resolved only for short periods and will recur later (Bey & Turner, 1996). Thus, making it extremely difficult for students to feel secure and safe in their school environment.

Hypotheses

School children who are exposed to conflict resolution curriculums should have a increased perception of safety while attending school; and should be expected to respond with less aggression to hypothetical questions which relate to interpersonal conflicts (including fighting), than students who have attended a school which has not presented a conflict resolution curriculum.

To test these hypotheses, we will examine a data set that was collected by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, at Michigan State University. This project was focused on reducing school violence in an large urban city in the Midwest.

Program Description

A comprehensive violence prevention program, modeled after a public health approach (Prothrow-Stith, 1991; 1994), was used to develop a conflict resolution program. The Midwestern metropolitan County Office of Violence Reduction in conjunction with its public school system, coordinated and implemented the program. The Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, at Michigan State University, was contacted to evaluate the results of this program.

The conflict resolution program that was implemented in the designated schools consisted of weekly one hour sessions

for a period ten weeks. The curriculum used in the training, the Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents (Prothrow-Stith, 1987), was designed to stress that anger and conflicts are normal emotions that are experienced by all people. The curriculum also focused on teaching students that aggression and violence are reactions to anger and conflict that are learned through interacting with other people (e.g., Eron & Salby, 1994). Ultimately, the curriculum aimed to teach students how to alter their reactions to interpersonal conflict through lessons on self-control, anger management, perspective taking, and attitude change (e.g., Guerra & Slaby, 1990; Kazdin, 1987).

Each individual session was divided into two-halves. The first part of the session was suppose to outline the goal(s) to be achieved during the session. The second part of the session was intended to describe the objectives to be accomplished by each of the participants. The topics covered in the program curriculum constitute verbal interaction, role playing, writing assignments centered on violence awareness, discussing homicide-related risk factors, the nature of anger and alternative ways of expressing anger, and the positive and negative consequences associated with fighting (Bynum & Davidson, 1995). The following is a brief synopsis of each session.

Session One

Violence is Everywhere: There is a Lot of Violence in Society

One goal of the first section on Session One aims to determine what information and/or misinformation program participants have regarding violence, the causes of violence, and the effects of violence. In addition, and more specifically, the second goal of the first session seeks to discuss the extent and various forms of violence in society; particularly, violence among acquaintances.

The objectives for the second part of Session One seek to aid participants in learning to recognize the extent of violence in society and to identify and discuss these types of violence.

Session Two

Violence Among Acquittances: Homicide Statistics and Characteristics

The first component of Session Two was to provide statistical data on violence (e.g., homicide) and other characteristics of violence. The second component of the second session seeks to aid program participants in defining statistically "typical" acts of violence, to consider the statistical associations among weapons, alcohol, and

arguments, and to name the major causes of death for young people, between the ages of 15 to 24.

Session Three

Reducing your Risks: Exploring Risk Factors

The goals for the first part of Session Three were to discuss violence-related risk factors, which were introduced in the previous section, and to describe the psychological effects of alcohol and its role in interpersonal violence. The objectives for the second part of Session Three were to help participants identify risk factors of violence, describe the effects of alcohol on the body, and its function interpersonal violence, and to distinguish common precipitants of violence.

Session Four

The Role of Anger: Anger is Normal

The programmatic goals of Session Four were to explain how the emotion of anger is a normal part of life, to describe the physiological changes which take place when someone is angry, and to explain the concept of "fight or flight."

The student objectives for Session Four were to learn to accept anger as a normal and natural part of life; to delineate circumstances which lead to anger; to cite

physiological changes when one becomes angry; and, to understand that anger is an emotional, physiological response to given circumstance.

Session Five

Different Ways Anger is Expressed: There are Healthy and Unhealthy Ways to Express Anger

The major goal of Session Five was to illustrate the various ways to express anger. The major objectives for participants of the conflict resolution training program were to recognize that anger can be used constructively; to find healthy ways to deal with anger; to learn how to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with anger; and, to learn to detect when anger is being controlled, expressed, and channeled.

Session Six

What Do You Gain from Fighting?: There's More to Lose Than to Gain form Fighting

The goals for the first section of Session Six were threefold. The first goal sought to compare the positive and the negative consequences of fighting. The second goal aimed to demonstrate how negative consequences of fighting far outweigh the positive outcomes. The third goal was to

identify emotions and needs (other than anger) related to violence.

The goals for the second section of Session Six were fourfold. First, program participants were to learn to distinguish between a conflict and a fight. Second, participants were to list positive and negative consequences of fighting. Third, youth were to become cognizant of the needs and emotions related to fighting. The fourth goal of the second section was for the program participants to analyze the short and long-term consequences of fighting.

Session Seven

Steps to and Results of Fighting: What Happens Before, During, and After a Fight?

The main objectives for the first part of Session Seven were to show how fights do not simply occur; to illustrate how certain steps precede them; and to analyze certain fight situations. The main objectives for the second part of Session Seven were for participants to understand the role of peer pressure in fight situations; to recognize the increasing level of emotion that occurs in a fight; to become aware of nonverbal indicators during a fight; and to analyze the steps of escalation in a fight (paying close attention to the early stages of a fight).

Session Eight

Preventing Violence

The goals for the first half of Session Eight were to determine ways that violence may be prevented through analysis of a fight; to discuss the difference between prevention and intervention; and to outline prevention methods of violence thought to be effective in a school environment.

The goals for the second half of Session Eight were for program participants to identify violence prevention options to use at school; to distinguish between preventing violence and intervening in a violent situation; to understand and to assess the risks of intervening into a potential violent situation; to recognize the benefits of preventing fights; and to analyze fight situations to determine the optimal points of possible prevention and/ or intervention.

Session Nine

Fighting: Is There Another Way?: What Are The Alternatives

The objective for the first component of Session Nine were to accent the many choices available when confronted with a conflict other than to fight or to run; to identify obstacles to nonviolent resolution of conflicts; and to describe how violence is glamorized in our society.

The objectives for the second half of Session Nine were to identify nonviolent alternatives to fighting; to recognize factors which prevent nonviolent resolutions to situations of conflict; and to discuss how violence is glamorized by the media.

Session Ten

Time to Prevent Fights: Practice Throwing a Curve

The objectives for the first part of Session Ten were to practice skills obtained from the nonviolent conflict resolution program; to encourage empathy with opponents; and to identify alternatives to the fight or flight concept.

The objectives for the second part of Session Ten were for participants to summarize the perspectives of both parties in a fight situation; to use the skills form the program in a role play situation; and to recognize that fighting is only one of the several choices to choose in a conflict situation.

After these ten conflict resolution sessions were designed, one of the subsequent steps was to select four middle schools in the Midwestern metropolitan city to participate in the study. The researchers intended to implement the conflict resolution curriculum in two middle schools (treatment schools) and compare them to two schools

(control schools) which were not selected to receive the conflict resolution training.

The selection criteria for the middle schools was based on three issues. First, each school had to have similar school safety issues, which means each school had relatively the same school discipline problems. Second, the schools must primarily house 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Finally, once a list of potential schools were identified, the head of the Counseling Department for the school system contacted the schools and asked if the schools would be available and interested in participating in a conflict resolution program as well as an accompanying study.

The County Office for Violence Reduction and the public school system chose between 15 schools, with sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. They selected four middle schools with similar demographics, student populations, terms of administering discipline, and rates and patterns of violent or illegal acts. The public school system's Code of Conduct listed violent acts as: possessing a gun, knife, or other lethal weapon; use of a weapon or a dangerous object; battery of an employee; significant destruction of property; sale or distribution of drugs; and battery upon a student.

Information on the incidence and type of violence was obtained from a central computerized data system maintained by the public school system for reporting violations of the

school offense code. These offenses are reported on an individual basis, which account for two general categories of behavior in the offense code. These incidents were coded by the specific offense and data were made available to the evaluation staff regarding the number of incidents in each school during the school year, prior to the start of the conflict resolution training (Bynum & Davidson, 1995).

After the screening process, two middle schools were selected to receive the conflict resolution training - Treatment School 1 and Treatment School 2, and two middle schools were selected to be the control schools - Control School 1 and Control School 2.

Before the conflict resolution curriculum was initiated pretests (wave 1) were taken to obtain a description of the prevalence of violence in the lives of the middle school youth, to determine their attitudes toward school, and to determine how safe middle school children feel while attending school. The researchers distributed surveys and conducted interviews to collect this data. A brief description of each is given in the following sections.

Student Surveys

The first group of individuals was composed of all students in the particular school. One of the critical components of this program consisted of attempts to alter

the school environment and provide students with a safe atmosphere in which students would be able to learn. Thus, a school climate survey with a particular focus upon safety issues was administered to the entire school (Bynum & Davidson, 1995).

The student survey was intended to measure students' opinions about school, school climate, and attitudes towards resolving conflicts. The measures about school and school climate were developed from instruments constructed by Clifford and Davis (1991). The opinions about school items focus more on the individual (how the student feels about attending school, peer perception, and teacher perception), while the school climate items inquired about the overall school (the degree to which the teachers and other students promote a positive learning environment) (Bynum & Davidson, 1995).

The other measures included in the student survey incorporated more detailed items of school environment (adopted from Gottfredson, 1986). These areas measured perceived safety, respect for students, how students feel they are being treated at school, and the perception of the fairness of school rules. The final portion of the student survey includes several items concerning observed juvenile delinquency, self-reported delinquency and self-reported victimization (Bynum & Davidson, 1995).

Student Interviews

A sample of fifty students from each of the four schools were randomly selected to be interviewed. This interview supplemented the student survey by asking more specific questions about school attitude, perceptions of school safety at school and going to and from school, and fights they had observed or participated in at school. Furthermore, the interviews focused upon the knowledge retention and utilization of skills developed during the conflict resolution training. The students were also given a series of vignettes in which they were asked to describe how they would respond to particular situations. This portion of the interview was designed to assess problem definition (hostile vs. nonhostile), goal selection, number of facts requested, number of solutions generated, effectiveness of the second best solution, and the number of consequences generated (Bynum & Davidson, 1995).

In addition to the student surveys and student interviews, program components and activities were also observed and evaluated. This was performed to sensitize the evaluation staff to the program operation and to the characteristics of the school environment. The observations focused on the content of the conflict resolution training and how the students responded to the training (Bynum & Davidson, 1995).

Data were also collected at the completion of the ten week curriculum (wave 2) and during a one-year follow period (wave 3), using the methods and techniques previously described.

The next section will examine the data collected from these student surveys, and attempt to determine if there is empirical support to infer that students who are exposed to a conflict resolution curriculum have learned alternative non-violent methods of resolving conflicts and if the students feel the climate of the school has been altered to promote a safer environment.

Any environment where hostile or aggressive students use weapons or violent behavior to resolve disputes is unsafe (Bey & Turner, 1996). Consequently, when students and teachers are more concerned about becoming victims of violence than performing their respective duties, students are unable to learn and the teachers are unable to teach (Futrell, 1996).

Violence or the threat of violence in our schools, has a direct impact on the quality of education provided and on the way teachers and students work together in the classroom. When students perceive that their education is inadequate or inferior, or when expectations for them are less than for others in the class, they often develop a

sense of helplessness and frustration (Futrell, 1996). Unfairly limiting the educational opportunities for our children.

Chapter Five:

Results

The data for this evaluation were collected in three waves. Wave 1 data were collected before the conflict resolution training was implemented in the experimental schools, and consisted of 1,459 completed surveys. Treatment School 1 represented 23% (n=332) of the wave 1, Treatment School 2 represented 33% (n=487), Control School 1 represented 27% (n=395), and Control School 2 represented 17% (n=245). In addition, males represented 40.6% (n=593) of the respondents, while females represented 48.9% (n=713) of the respondents (10.5% of the respondents didnot report their gender, see table 2).

Table 2.
Description of survey sample by gender
Wave 1

	Males	Females	Missing	Total
	593	713	153	1459
Percentage	40.6%	48.9%	10.5%	100.0%

Of those respondents who reported their grade in school 34.4% (n=498) were in the 6th grade, 36.3% (n=526) were in

the 7th grade, and 29.3% (n=424) were in the 8th grade (see table 3).

Table 3.
Description of survey sample by
Grade in School
Wave 1

	6th	7th	8th	Total[1]
Treatment School 1	111	110	105	326
Treatment School 2	178	177	131	486
Control School 1	89	166	139	394
Control School 2	120	73	49	242
Total	498	526	424	1448
Percentage	34.4%	36.3%	29.3%	100.0%

The age of the respondents for wave 1 ranged from 9 years-old to 17 years-old, with 96.4% (n=1373) reporting their age between 11 years-old and 14 years-old.

Wave 2 were collected at the end of the school year which contained the conflict-resolution curriculum, and consisted of 1,092 completed surveys. Treatment school 1 represented 23.9% (n=261) of wave 2, Treatment School 2, 25% (n=273), Control School 1, 26.6% (n=291), and Control School 2, 24.5% (n=267). Of the 1092 completed surveys, 1012 reported gender. Table 4 indicates that the male respondents

[1] Does not total 1459 due to missing cases.

totaled 41% (n=441), and female respondents totaled 52.3% (n=571).

Table 4.
Description of survey sample by gender
Wave 2

	Males	Females	Missing	Total
	441	571	80	1092
Percentage	40.4%	52.3%	7.3%	100.0%

In wave 2, 1062 respondents reported their grade in school, 32.2% (n=342) were in the 6th grade, 37.7% (n=400) were in the 7th grade, and 30.1% (n=320) were in the 8th grade (see table 5).

Table 5.
Description of survey sample by
Grade in School
Wave 2

	6th	7th	8th	Total[1]
Treatment School 1	83	94	84	261
Treatment School 2	92	114	67	273
Control School 1	70	120	89	279
Control School 2	97	72	80	249
Total	342	400	320	1062
Percentage	32.2%	37.7%	30.1%	100.0%

1 Does not total 1092 due to missing cases.

The age of the respondents for wave 2 ranged from 11 years-old to 16 years-old, with 95.6 (n=986) reporting their age between 11 years-old and 14 years-old.

Finally, the data for wave 3 were collected one-year after the conflict resolution training was completed, and consisted of 1,035 completed surveys. Of these 1,035 surveys Treatment School 1 comprised 26.3% (n=272), Treatment School 2, 39.0% (n=404), and Control School 2, 34.6% (n=358). Control School 1 did not participate in wave 3. In wave 3, of the 917 respondents that reported their gender 41.6% (n=431) were male, and 47.0% (n=486) were female (see table 6).

Table 6.
Description of survey sample by gender
Wave 3

	Males	Females	Missing	Total
	431	486	118	1035
Percentage	41.6%	47.0%	11.4%	100.0%

Of the 1,035 respondents in wave 3, 31.5% (n=306) were in the 6th grade, 35.8% (n=347) were in the 7th grade, and 32.7% (n=317) were in the 8th grade (see table 7).

Table 7.
Description of survey sample by Grade in School
Wave 3

	6th	7th	8th	Total[1]
Treatment School 1	69	110	78	257
Treatment School 2	120	112	133	365
Control School 1[2]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	117	125	106	348
Total	306	347	317	970
Percentage	31.5%	35.8%	32.7%	100.0%

Wave 3 had 951 respondents report their age, the age of the respondents ranged from 9 years-old to 17 years-old, with 94.8% (n=902) reporting their age between 11 years-old and 14 years-old.

Evaluation Process

The survey data were used to create a cross-sectional analysis of mean scale scores, to investigate and compare the effects of the conflict resolution curriculum on middle school children's perceived safety while attending school and their responses to questions relating to interpersonal conflicts (including fighting). Each participant was asked to respond to a series of questions related to school environment, school attitude, interpersonal conflicts, and school safety using a Likert-type scale. Although the

[1] Does not total 1035 due to missing cases.
[2] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

surveys and the interviews explored a range attitudes and behaviors, only those survey questions which pertain to students' perception of safety and their responses to questions relating to interpersonal conflicts will be presented in this analysis.

Each of the four research schools received an individual mean score for each question, in each wave (except for Control School 1, which did not participate in wave 3). These individual mean scores were then recalculated (using SPSS), to obtain a combined mean score for the children who attended the middle schools which presented the conflict resolution curriculum (Treatment School 1 and 2), and for the children who attended the middle schools which were the control schools (Control School 1 and 2).

The combined mean scores will be used to compare the responses of those students who attended the "Treatment Schools", to the responses of the those students who attended the "Control Schools". The following results are presented in order of hypothesis.

Hypothesis One

School children who attend a school which presents a conflict resolution curriculum will have an increased perception of safety while attending school.

The combined mean scale scores were produced using "Treatment condition" (whether or not the conflict resolution curriculum was presented at the middle school) as the independent variable and "students' perceived safety while attending" school as the dependent variable. Five questions from the survey were used to examine this relationship: (1) Do you always feel safe in the school cafeteria; (2) Do you feel safe on the way to school and when going home after school; (3) Do you feel afraid to go into the restrooms at school; (4) Are the teachers afraid of some students; and (5) Do you always feel safe at school?

The combined mean scores from these questions were used to compare Treatment Schools 1 and 2, to Control Schools 1 and 2 at three periods of time: pre-program intervention (Wave 1), post-program intervention (Wave 2), and one year following the completion of the program intervention (Wave 3). With the combined mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 5.00, the respondents' perception of safety in school was determined to be high when the combined mean scores approached 5.00, and low when the combined mean scores approached 1.00.

For question 1, "do you always feel safe in the school cafeteria", table 8 indicates that there are no reported differences between the treatment intervention groups, for any of the data collection periods.

For question 2, "Do you feel safe on the way to school and when going home after school", table 9 indicates that there are no reported differences between the treatment intervention groups, for any of the data collection periods.

This trend continues for the remaining three questions. There were no differences between the treatment intervention groups, at any period of data collection, for question 3) "Are you afraid to go into the restrooms at school"; 4) "Are the teachers afraid of some students"; or 5) "Do you always feel safe at school". These analyses are presented in tables 10-12.

Table 8.
Mean Scores for School Safety Issues
Question: I always feel safe in the school cafeteria?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	N
Treatment School 1	3.37	1.31	329
Treatment School 2	3.42	1.30	478
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.40	1.30	807
Control School 1	3.48	1.34	393
Control School 2	3.24	1.39	244
Combined Control School Scores	3.39	1.36	637

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.16	1.29	255
Treatment School 2	3.15	1.35	268
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.16	1.32	523
Control School 1	3.03	1.33	289
Control School 2	2.94	1.41	263
Combined Control School Scores	2.99	1.37	552

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.19	1.35	263
Treatment School 2	3.20	1.37	393
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.19	1.36	656
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.95	1.34	349
Combined Control School Scores	2.95	1.34	349

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 9.
Question: I feel safe on the way to school and when going home after school?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.16	1.40	329
Treatment School 2	3.26	1.41	482
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.22	1.41	811
Control School 1	3.05	1.49	392
Control School 2	3.07	1.45	243
Combined Control School Scores	3.39	1.36	637

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.03	1.39	251
Treatment School 2	2.93	1.40	264
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.98	1.39	515
Control School 1	3.07	1.41	284
Control School 2	3.08	1.40	263
Combined Control School Scores	3.07	1.41	547

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.12	1.42	266
Treatment School 2	3.17	1.49	398
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.15	1.46	664
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	3.11	1.43	355
Combined Control School Scores	3.11	1.43	355

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 10.
Question: I am afraid to go into restrooms at school?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	4.08	1.12	332
Treatment School 2	3.87	1.27	487
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.95	1.22	819
Control School 1	4.03	1.25	395
Control School 2	4.11	1.18	245
Combined Control School Scores	4.06	1.22	640

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	4.00	1.16	261
Treatment School 2	3.79	1.34	273
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.89	1.26	534
Control School 1	4.00	1.31	291
Control School 2	3.79	1.33	267
Combined Control School Scores	3.90	1.33	558

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	4.06	1.17	268
Treatment School 2	4.06	1.18	398
Combined Treatment School Scores	4.06	1.18	666
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	4.01	1.21	353
Combined Control School Scores	4.01	1.21	353

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 11.
Question: Teachers are afraid of some students?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.00	1.41	328
Treatment School 2	2.46	1.33	483
Combined Treatment Schools Score	2.68	1.39	811
Control School 1	2.64	1.35	394
Control School 2	2.42	1.35	244
Combined Control Schools Score	2.56	1.36	638

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.89	1.37	250
Treatment School 2	2.40	1.32	256
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.64	1.36	506
Control School 1	2.58	1.35	287
Control School 2	2.70	1.39	261
Combined Control School Scores	2.64	1.37	548

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.95	1.44	271
Treatment School 2	2.27	1.32	393
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.55	1.41	664
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.46	1.37	348
Combined Control School Scores	2.46	1.37	348

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 12.
Question: I always feel safe at school?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.66	1.34	328
Treatment School 2	2.51	1.36	477
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.57	1.35	805
Control School 1	2.39	1.31	388
Control School 2	2.29	1.28	242
Combined Control School Scores	2.35	1.30	630

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.52	1.28	250
Treatment School 2	2.52	1.32	266
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.52	1.30	516
Control School 1	2.43	1.28	281
Control School 2	2.22	1.25	260
Combined Control School Scores	2.33	1.27	541

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.60	1.28	269
Treatment School 2	2.32	1.31	394
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.43	1.30	663
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.19	1.25	345
Combined Control School Scores	2.19	1.25	345

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

For hypothesis one, school children who attend a school which presents a conflict resolution curriculum will have an increased perception of safety while attending school, the data did not differ substantially across treatment intervention groups (Treatment Schools or Control Schools) for any of the periods of data collection (pre-program, post-program, or one year follow-up).

In summary, there were no reported differences for middle school students' perceived safety while attending school, between the treatment intervention groups.

Hypothesis Two

Middle school children who attend a school which presents a conflict-resolution curriculum should be expected to report less aggressive responses to questions which relate to interpersonal conflicts (including fighting).

Similar to the process used to analyze hypothesis one, combined mean scale scores were produced using "treatment condition" as the independent variable and "student responses to questions relating to aggression and interpersonal conflict" as the dependent variable. Seven questions from the survey were used to examine this relationship: 1) You should stop other people from getting into fights; 2) Can you talk your way out of a fight; 3) It is better to talk than to fight; 4) You have to fight so

other students don't think you are weak; 5) It is okay to hit someone who makes fun of you; 6) It is okay to walk away from a fight; and 7) Fighting is the only way to solve problems.

With the combined mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 5.00, responses are considered less aggressive when the combined mean scores approach 1.00, and more aggressive when the combined mean scores approach 5.00.

For question 1, "You should stop other people from getting into fights", table 13 indicates that there are no differences between the treatment intervention groups, for any data collection period.

For question 2, "Can you talk your way out of a fight", the analysis in tables 14, shows that there are no differences between the treatment groups, for any data collection period.

For question 3, "Is it better to talk than to fight", the analysis in tables 15, again indicates that there are no differences between the treatment groups, for any data collection period.

Similar the analysis for completed for the previos hypotheis, this trend continues for the remaining four questions. There were no differences between the treatment intervention groups, at any period of data collection, for

question 4) "Do you have to fight so other students don't think you are weak"; 5) "Is it okay to hit someone who makes fun of you"; 6) "Is it okay to walk away from a fight"; or 7) "Is fighting the only way to solve problems" These analyses are presented in tables 16-19.

Table 13.
Question: You should try to stop people from getting into fights?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.30	1.23	331
Treatment School 2	2.59	1.39	486
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.47	1.33	817
Control School 1	2.53	1.37	395
Control School 2	2.87	1.35	245
Combined Control School Scores	2.66	1.37	640

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.59	1.30	256
Treatment School 2	2.73	1.40	264
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.66	1.35	520
Control School 1	2.57	1.35	279
Control School 2	3.13	1.35	258
Combined Control School Scores	2.84	1.38	537

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.32	1.30	268
Treatment School 2	2.64	1.45	398
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.51	1.40	666
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.84	1.47	350
Combined Control School Scores	2.84	1.47	350

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 14.
Question: You can talk your way out of a fight?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.77	1.37	326
Treatment School 2	2.70	1.36	482
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.73	1.37	808
Control School 1	2.83	1.43	388
Control School 2	2.96	1.38	242
Combined Control School Scores	2.88	1.41	630

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.84	1.30	255
Treatment School 2	2.83	1.39	264
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.84	1.35	519
Control School 1	3.00	1.37	281
Control School 2	2.93	1.38	261
Combined Control School Scores	2.96	1.37	542

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.73	1.38	269
Treatment School 2	2.88	1.38	392
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.82	1.38	661
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	3.17	1.44	343
Combined Control School Scores	3.17	1.44	343

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 15.
Question: It's better to talk to someone than to fight?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.24	1.27	327
Treatment School 2	2.25	1.32	480
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.24	1.30	807
Control School 1	2.32	1.33	388
Control School 2	2.46	1.42	242
Combined Control School Scores	2.37	1.37	630

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.29	1.16	254
Treatment School 2	2.25	1.29	267
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.27	1.23	521
Control School 1	2.33	1.31	288
Control School 2	2.60	1.37	262
Combined Control School Scores	2.46	1.35	550

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.03	1.16	269
Treatment School 2	2.37	1.42	394
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.23	1.33	663
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.48	1.34	350
Combined Control School Scores	2.48	1.34	350

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 16.
Question: You have to fight so other students don't think you are weak?

Wave 1	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.51	1.38	325
Treatment School 2	2.62	1.48	480
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.58	1.44	805
Control School 1	2.37	1.36	391
Control School 2	2.70	1.45	241
Combined Control School Scores	2.50	1.40	632

Wave 2	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.81	1.36	256
Treatment School 2	2.65	1.45	268
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.73	1.41	524
Control School 1	2.50	1.40	287
Control School 2	2.72	1.43	261
Combined Control School Scores	2.61	1.42	548

Wave 3	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.42	1.34	269
Treatment School 2	2.66	1.47	396
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.56	1.43	665
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.74	1.43	352
Combined Control School Scores	2.74	1.43	352

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 17.
Question: It is okay to hit someone who makes fun of you?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.43	1.26	330
Treatment School 2	2.37	1.29	486
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.39	1.28	816
Control School 1	2.29	1.23	395
Control School 2	2.55	1.38	244
Combined Control School Scores	2.39	1.29	639

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	3.37	1.24	256
Treatment School 2	3.55	1.31	264
Combined Treatment School Scores	3.46	1.28	520
Control School 1	3.42	1.31	286
Control School 2	3.23	1.39	257
Combined Control School Scores	2.84	1.38	537

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.40	1.22	269
Treatment School 2	2.47	1.36	401
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.44	1.30	670
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.62	1.36	351
Combined Control School Scores	2.62	1.36	351

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 18.
Question: It is okay to walk away from a fight?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.06	1.15	328
Treatment School 2	2.07	1.19	476
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.06	1.17	804
Control School 1	2.12	1.21	385
Control School 2	2.35	1.37	240
Combined Control School Scores	2.21	1.28	625

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.22	1.15	255
Treatment School 2	2.23	1.21	262
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.22	1.18	517
Control School 1	2.39	1.37	284
Control School 2	2.54	1.41	263
Combined Control School Scores	2.46	1.39	547

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.12	1.19	268
Treatment School 2	2.35	1.41	391
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.25	1.33	659
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.39	1.34	348
Combined Control School Scores	2.39	1.34	348

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

Table 19.
Question: Fighting is the only way to solve problems?

Wave 1

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	1.88	1.00	327
Treatment School 2	2.01	485	1.14
Combined Treatment School Scores	1.96	1.08	812
Control School 1	2.02	1.11	393
Control School 2	2.12	1.25	245
Combined Control School Scores	2.06	1.17	638

Wave 2

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	2.23	1.22	252
Treatment School 2	2.21	1.21	263
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.22	1.22	515
Control School 1	2.27	1.20	287
Control School 2	2.37	1.36	256
Combined Control School Scores	2.32	1.28	543

Wave 3

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
Treatment School 1	1.88	1.01	269
Treatment School 2	2.08	1.21	398
Combined Treatment School Scores	2.00	1.14	667
Control School 1[1]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Control School 2	2.19	1.25	351
Combined Control School Scores	2.19	1.25	351

[1] Control School 1 did not participate in Wave 3.

For hypothesis two, there were no differences found between treatment groups. Middle school children who attended a school which presents a conflict-resolution curriculum didnot respond differently, than the control group, to questions related to interpersonal conflicts.

Although the data analysis didnot produce any conclusive outcomes for hypothesis one or hypothesis two, the analysis did produce some interesting outcomes in other areas. After the responses of the student surveys were analyzed for wave 3, it was discovered that 13.6% (n=123) of the respondents still reported that "fighting was the only wave to solve problems". To determine if there were any differences between the students who indicated that fighting was the only way to solve their problems and the other students respondents, an alternate analysis was conducted.

Do students who fight to solve their problems have a more difficult time interacting with other students? Do these students attempt to communicate with others to solve disputes? Is it more difficult for these students to forgive someone? Do students who indicate that fighting is the only way to solve their problems lack the social skills which would allow them to: (1) understand themselves as individuals, (2) analyze situations, (3) communicate their

desires, and (4) respond to different conflicting views nonviolently?

Of the respondents who indicated that "fighting is the only way to solve problems", 58.5% (n=72) were male, and 41.5% (n=51) were female. Their age ranged between 9- and 17 years-of-age, with 90% (n=111) between 12- and 14 years-of age. This population was distributed evenly across grade-in-school, with 28.8% (n=38) in 6th grade, 40.2% (n=53) in 7th grade, and 31.1% (n=41) in 8th grade.

To gain a better understanding of the students who reported that "fighting is the only way to solve problems" , survey problem-solving scenarios, which the respondent would decide if the scenario would be "very hard", "hard", "easy", or "very easy", were examined. The percentage of the respondents who gave a response to the statement "fighting the only way to solve problems" are listed for each scale in Table 20.

Table 20 illustrates that students who indicated that "fighting was the only way to solve problems", find it much harder to: (a) ask a kid why he or she has been telling rumors about them; (b) tell a person to stop insulting them; (c) make up with a friend after an argument; (d) talk about a problem they are having; (e) ignore a stranger that has

purposely bumped into them; and (f) give into someone to avoid a fight.

These are the students who need to improve their interpersonal problem solving, anger management, and behavioral social skills, because they are the most "at risk" to succumb to violence (e.g., Guerra & Slaby, 1990; Kazdin, 1987). Hopefully, future violence-reducing interventions will help these individuals develop the social skills to resolve disputes nonviolently. This will increase their chances to succeed not only in school, but in life.

Table 20.
Analysis of Hypothetical Scenarios for "fighting is the only way to solve problems?"

Fighting is the ONLY way to solve problems?				
One of the kids in your school has been telling rumors about your boyfriend/ girlfriend. Asking this kid why he did this to you is:	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
Yes	9.6% (n=13)	21.3% (n=29)	30.1% (n=41)	39.0% (n=53)
NO	8.3% (n=72)	15.7% (n=136)	33.2% (n=287)	42.8% (n=370)
You are hanging out with a bunch of your friends. A new kid starts insulting you. Telling this person to stop is:				
Yes	18.8% (n=25)	7.5% (n=10)	30.8% (n=41)	42.9% (n=57)
NO	7.9% (n=69)	13.8% (n=120)	36.5% (n=318)	41.9% (n=365)
You and a friend have an argument. To make up with that friend is:				
Yes	20.7% (n=28)	31.9% (n=43)	28.9% (n=39)	18.5% (n=25)
NO	13.4% (n=115)	31.3% (n=269)	38.8% (n=333)	16.5% (n=142)
For you to talk about a problem is:				
Yes	20.6% (n=27)	25.2% (n=33)	32.8% (n=43)	21.4% (n=28)
NO	12.4% (n=106)	32.2% (n=276)	37.4% (n=320)	18.0% (n=154)
A stranger, about your age, is giving you the eye and purposely bumps into you on the street. For you to ignore this stranger is:				
Yes	41.6% (n=57)	26.3% (n=36)	19.7% (n=27)	12.4% (n=17)
No	31.0% (n=271)	30.8% (n=269)	24.6% (n=215)	13.6% (n=119)
For you to give in to someone else to avoid a fight is:				
Yes	35.9% (n=47)	26.0% (n=34)	20.6% (n=27)	17.6% (n=23)
NO	30.5% (n=255)	34.3% (n=287)	23.1% (n=193)	12.2% (n=102)

Summary of Results

The combined mean scale scores did not yield any differences between the treatment groups in hypothesis one or in hypothesis two. Students who attended a school which

presented the conflict resolution curriculum and the students who attended the control schools, responded similarly to questions regarding interpersonal conflict and the perceptions of school safety.

Furthermore, one year after the conflict resolution curriculum was completed (wave 3) 13.6% of the entire population (treatment schools and control schools) continued to report that the only way to solve their problems was to fight. This population also indicated that they found it more difficult to handle situations which involved conflict (see table 20).

The next section will discuss the results of this analysis as well as each individual's continuing obligation to reduce violence in school.

Chapter Six:

Discussion

The results of this study do not appear to lend support to the notion that conflict resolution in school will reduce violence or increase the perception of safety in middle school children. Though there were no observed differences in items measuring perceived school safety and interpersonal measures of conflict, between the students who attended a school which presented the conflict resolution curriculum and the students who did not, previous research has shown that this type of intervention is effective. The apparent lack of efficacy of the intervention reviewed in this forum may be attributed to a number of factors.

First, it is important to consider the program's conceptualization. If a program is not conceptualized using a theory which is directly related to the targeted or desired behavior modification the futility of the program may be in question from its conception. Although the present study does not lend support to the hypothesized model, previous research has suggested that conflict resolution

programs which were grounded in social learning and moral development can reduce aggressive and violent behaviors in school children (e.g., (Patterson et al., 1975; Bandura, 1979; Rest, 1979; Platt and Prout, 1987; Brennan, 1992; Marvel et al., 1993). Therefore it is not believed that the concepts which underlie the present research are responsible for the lack of support for the intervention presented.

The second factor which should be considered when searching for explanations to the apparent lack of efficacy of the research intervention, is program implementation. Failure to properly implement the program can have adverse effects on the integrity, longevity, and effectiveness of the desired intervention. Implementation deficiencies, can occur for a variety of reasons: a) the program staff and the school staff may not be in complete agreement on the program's objectives; b) the individuals or agencies which sponsor the program may not provide the level of support necessary for the program to be successful; c) there may be inconsistent delivery of the curriculum to the program participants; d) the information presented to the program participants may be inconsistent and irrelevant; e) the objectives of the program may seem ambiguous to the program population; and f) the conditions of the area surrounding the school may make it difficult for the program

participants to support, exhibit, and reinforce the desired behavior.

The current study may have been hindered by a number of these implementation deficiencies, but it was certainly undermined by the lack of consistency in the program's delivery. The facilitators of the conflict resolution curriculum were absent on a number of occasions during the ten-week training period. Consistency in program delivery is essential if program participants are expected to digest and understand the program's objectives. Furthermore, multiple absences by facilitators may also cause program participants to question the importance of the information being delivered, also limiting the effect of the conflict resolution curriculum.

Finally, when searching for reasons for the lack of efficacy of an intervention, any additional factors which can directly or indirectly influence the outcomes of the research experiment, but were not part of the research model should be examined. In this research study a lack of resources prevented this model from: (1) following individual program participants throughout the three waves of this research study. Because the researchers were unable to follow the program participants throughout the three waves of the research project, they were unable to develop

profiles depicting how certain individuals had changed over time. Examining the individual differences among program participants in this research study may have been a more effective method of determining the efficacy of the program. Especially, when one considers that group means tend to mask individual differences; (2) measuring the influence of peer groups on the program participants' responses. Travis Hirschi (1969) theorizes that the relationship that exists between an individual and his or her peers influences subsequent attachments, commitments, and involvement with others. Controlling for peer group interaction may yield outcomes which are more supportive of the non-violent intervention examined in this analysis; (3) measuring the influence of parental attitudes on the program participants' responses. Parents are the initial source of social and moral development for children. A child's attachment to its parents is the most important variable insulating that child from becoming involved in delinquent and violent behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Again, controlling for parental attitudes in this research study may have produced results which supported the efficacy of the intervention in this analysis; and (4) assessing the level of conflict in the participating middle-schools, as a result of existing student disorders (i.e., emotional, behavioral, or learning disabilities, etc.). Students with disabilities may have a more difficult

time analyzing conflict situations and communicating with others. This may make them more susceptible to conflict situations that could lead to aggressive or violent behavior. Identifying and controlling for student disorders and disabilities which cause conflict, may also produce results which support the efficacy of the intervention in this analysis.

Improving the Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution

The stages of a conflict resolution model should include: 1) awareness, 2) self-preparation, 3) conflict management, and 4) negotiation (Jackson & Hines, 1995). At the awareness stage, an individual or group is conscious "of the negative emotional states in conflict." The key to the self-preparation stage is separating the people from the problem and determining the desired outcomes expected from settling the conflict. At the conflict management stage, negative emotions are defused to enable involved parties to clarify and understand similarities and differences. Finally, in the negotiation stage, disputing parties "achieve a mutually agreed-on outcome with respect to their differences" (Jackson & Hines, 1995).

To assure that the program is implemented properly student training should have the undivided support of the administration. Administrators should attend all student

training sessions so they will have firsthand knowledge of what transpired during the sessions. This will also convey to the students that the administration values and supports students resolving other students conflicts (Jackson & Hines, 1995).

Adults trainers must also trained with the necessary skills before they interact with the student-body. Adult trainers should thoroughly understand the goals, the processes, and the objectives of the program before interacting and training with students (Jackson & Hines, 1995).

Selecting students to resolve other students conflicts should done using a cross-section of participants from the student population. This student group should be mixed by age, grade, race, and sex. Both formal and informal, positive and negative students leaders should be included. Having a cross-sectional group of students to resolve conflicts will legitimize the program throughout the student population, and increase the effectiveness of the program.

Teacher participation in the initial stages of the program should be voluntary. Teachers who do not readily embrace the idea of responsible student involvement could undermine the program before it begins (Jackson & Hines, 1995).

Training should incorporate "fun" activities with difficult and challenging ones. Activities should be centered around team building, skill development, and the creation of concrete, written action plans that indicate the personal commitment of each individual.

While specific circumstances and resources will influence the development and implementation of particular conflict resolution programs, these guidelines will be a useful tool for school administrators who are contemplating the addition of a conflict resolution program as a violence-reducing intervention.

An effective conflict resolution curriculum should demonstrate that the school is a social system in which all parts are interdependent. When problems and conflicts arise in this complex social system, to produce long-lasting and effective solutions the causes of those problems and conflicts must be addressed. Furthermore, administrators and teachers should remember that students who are actively involved in resolving other students conflicts and problems feel a sense of investment and responsibility in school (Moriarty and McDonald, 1991). Consequently, students who participate and play responsible roles in school, excel academically, socially and emotionally (Jackson & Hines, 1995).

Summary

Although the findings of this analysis do not appear to support the non-violent intervention investigated in this study, previous research has shown that this type of intervention can be effective. Conflict resolution curricula have been shown empirically to significantly improve school children's empathy, anger management, interpersonal problem-solving skills and behavioral social skills (OJJDP, 1995; Goldstein, 1988; Shapiro & Derr, 1987). Furthermore, conflict resolution training programs that emphasize individual coping skills across a wide variety of situations appear to have long lasting effects (Platt and Prout, 1987).

Conflict resolution helps children learn to understand themselves as individuals, analyze situations, communicate their desires, and respond to different and conflicting views. In addition, students unaware of ways to solve disputes nonviolently will find conflict prevention strategies helpful in getting along with others. (Bey & Turner, 1996).

When children learn how to assert their own needs and opinions without trampling on the rights of other people, when they learn to express their angry feelings without losing control or hurting other people, they have mastered

skills that enhance their lives and the life of the community (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

Although evidence to support conflict resolutions impact on school safety was unavailable, it is widely believed that school intervention programs which are designed to reduce interpersonal conflicts by addressing students' social, problem-solving, and anger management skills, also provide students with safe and stimulating environments in which they can learn (e.g., Moriarty & MacDonald, 1991; Metropolitan Life, 1993; Bey & Turner, 1996; Futrell, 1996).

Though continued research needs to be conducted in this area it is just as important for programs which help children solve conflicts nonviolently, to be designed and implemented. School administrators must remember that a comprehensive violence-prevention program cannot be "parachuted" into a school. Building an effective program takes time and must be driven from the leadership within the school system (Lantieri et al., 1996).

An effective non-violent intervention program requires the participation of the entire community, including political funding authorities, school boards and commissions, students, teachers, business leaders, the news media, and foundation representatives. Most importantly, once a program is designed and approved, the school

administration must ensure that there is adequate training and implementation for the program to be effective.

The risk factors which threaten a child's ability to succeed in school and avoid aggressive behavior are known and promising interventions are available (Goldstein & Conoley, 1997). It is the responsibility of the entire community to ensure that these non-violent interventions are designed, implemented, and are effective.

School administrators, public health professionals, school teachers, social researchers, and parents can use the following excerpt from Bey and Turner (1996), to begin planning and designing nonviolent and peaceful, school and community interventions. These interventions will ultimately increase the safety in our schools, reduce the level of violence on our streets, and improve the quality of education for our children:

> In planning for peaceable schools, the principal, the faculty, and the students will need to develop a definition for the word peace that is acceptable to everyone and matches the school's intent to infuse peace throughout the educational process. If no one definition can be developed to meet all expectations, then a general

interpretation can be used. For example, "Peace is to prevent violence and to promote safety, social harmony, cooperation, and justice.

Appendix:

Student Survey

Student Survey

Grade in school: (Circle One) 6th 7th 8th Male / Female (Circle One) Age _____

Please circle the response which best represents the way you feel.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Your teachers really care about you and want you to do well.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. Teachers go out of their way to help students.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. The teachers and principals don't want you in their school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. The teachers in this school always try to help students.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. This school has too many rules.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. The rules in this school are unfair.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. It's better to talk to someone than to fight.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. You have to fight so other students don't think you are weak.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. You can talk your way out of a fight.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. It is okay to hit someone who makes fun of you.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. You should try to stop people from getting into a fight.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. Fighting is the only way to solve problems.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. It is okay to walk away from a fight.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14. The teachers are afraid of some students.	SA	A	N	D	SD
15. I always feel safe at school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16. I am afraid to go into the restrooms at school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17. I feel safe on the way to school and when going home after school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18. People sell drugs around this school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
19. The school is in gang territories.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20. I always feel safe in the school cafeteria.	SA	A	N	D	SD

Please circle the answer which best represents the way you feel.

1. A stranger, about your age, is giving you the eye and purposely bumps into you on the street. Ignoring this stranger is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
2. One of the kids in your school has been telling rumors about your boyfriend/girlfriend. Asking this kid why he or she is telling rumors about you is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
3. You are hanging out with a bunch of your friends. A new kid starts insulting you. Telling this person to stop is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
4. You're pretty sure that one of your classmates is trying to steal your boyfriend/girlfriend. Ignoring this person is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
5. Someone in your school stole your jacket. Telling the principal or a teacher about it is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy

6. You and a friend are arguing about what to do after school. Giving in on your plans is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
7. Talking about a problem is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
8. After you and a friend have an argument, it is _____for you to make up with that friend.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
9. Doing things as well as your friends do is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy
10. Giving in to someone else to avoid a fight is _____for you.	Very Hard	Hard	Easy	Very Easy

Since Easter Break (the beginning of April), how many times <u>have you seen:</u>

1. A fight between students at school.	0	1	2	3	4+
2. A student threaten a teacher.	0	1	2	3	4+
3. A student do something to make a teacher angry.	0	1	2	3	4+
4. A student destroy school property.	0	1	2	3	4+
5. A teacher help a student.	0	1	2	3	4+
6. A student bring a weapon to school.	0	1	2	3	4+
7. The police at school to take someone out of school.	0	1	2	3	4+
8. A student with drugs or alcohol in school.	0	1	2	3	4+
9. A teacher push or hit a student.	0	1	2	3	4+
10. A student bring a gun to school.	0	1	2	3	4+

Since Easter Break (the beginning of April), how many times <u>have you:</u>

1. Been in a fist fight.	0	1	2	3	4+
2. Talked your way out of a fight.	0	1	2	3	4+
3. Hit someone who made fun of you.	0	1	2	3	4+
4. Messed up school property.	0	1	2	3	4+
5. Been sent to the principal's office for bad behavior.	0	1	2	3	4+
6. Carried a gun or a knife to school.	0	1	2	3	4+
7. Stopped people from fighting each other.	0	1	2	3	4+
8. Threatened to hurt someone.	0	1	2	3	4+
9. Been suspended or excluded from school.	0	1	2	3	4+
10. Had someone physically assault or hurt you at school.	0	1	2	3	4+
11. Had someone take something from you using physical force.	0	1	2	3	4+

A) Did you take the Michigan State survey in April? Yes No

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