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A STUDY OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL CLIMATE
AS COMPARED WITHIN A CONFLICT RESOLUTION GROUP
AND A TRADITIONAL GROUP

by
Dawn D. Kelly-Pearson

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan College
1996

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved

6/26/96

Abstract

Dawn D. Kelly-Pearson
A Study of Students' Attitudes Toward School Climate
as Compared Within a Conflict Resolution Group
and a Traditional Group
1996

Dr. J. Klanderma
Seminar in School Psychology

The purpose of this study is to evaluate students' attitudes toward school climate. One group received Conflict Resolution training and the other group received no training. The program, SCRC, Students Creative Response to Conflict was designed to empower students by giving them the tools to confront and resolve problems that develop on a daily basis. The program focuses on five major areas: affirmation, communication, conflict resolution, cooperation, and bias awareness/appreciation of differences.

The sample group was drawn from four fourth grade classrooms. Each group consisted of thirty-six subjects. There were 61% males and 39% were females. Further, 64.6% were Caucasian, 31.7% were African Americans, and 3.7% were Spanish. Subjects were from a school district classified urban but located in a rural area. They were diversified in background and socio-economic status.

The study was designed as a pretest/posttest questionnaire that was analyzed using a T-test for Paired Samples. The results indicated that there was no significant change in attitude for the trained group, but there was a significant change toward a more negative attitude for the untrained group.

Mini-Abstract

Dawn D. Kelly-Pearson
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and a Traditional Group
1996

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The goal was to evaluate students' attitudes toward school climate through a conflict resolution program and a traditional classroom. The results were analyzed using a T-test for Paired Samples on both groups' pretest and posttest mean scores. There was no significant change in attitude for the conflict resolution group. However, the traditional group, that received no training, had a significant change toward a more negative attitude.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

NEED

There is an obvious need for students and teachers to develop more constructive ways of resolving conflict. So often violence is seen as a quick fix to a problem. However, teachers are more aware than most of the problems that exist within the classrooms. Bad feelings, lack of trust, and unresolved conflicts among students only interfere with learning.

Students' ideas for managing conflict seem to come primarily from television shows and movies. Many students attempt to manage their conflicts either through the use of destructive strategies such as physical or verbal violence or by appealing to their teachers (Johnson et.al, 1992, p.90)

Ikram (1992) is in agreement with Johnson et.al. (1992) concerning the failure of adults in teaching appropriate conflict resolution strategies to today's children.

Children have not typically been informed about the nature of conflict, except in a historical sense of how conflict has often led to revolution and war.

This narrow perspective does little to give them a sense of seriousness on conflict, and does not tend to make it relevant to their lives (Ikram, 1994, p. 44).

Schools have begun to realize the need for teachers, administrators, and support staff training in problem solving. Students can not learn how to resolve problems, if the remaining school environment is acting as peacemakers and dictators. Teachers need to establish classrooms conducive to learning. Equality among students and teachers promote a more trusting class. Students must feel apart of the overall community and take an active role in classroom decisions, no matter how minor. Empowering students to think and resolve conflicts in a productive manner is essential to maintaining a high level of learning.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to evaluate students' attitudes towards school climate. Four fourth grade classes will participate in this study. Two classes will represent a regular class, while the other classes will be trained in Conflict Resolution.

HYPOTHESIS

It is hypothesized that the classrooms receiving Conflict Resolution Training will develop a more positive attitude toward their school climate, while the classrooms not participating in the program will develop a more negative attitude. Teaching the students tolerance, affirmation, cooperation, and communication skills through activities will improve problem solving techniques and students' attitudes toward school climate.

THEORY

Conflict Resolution has been present in an educational setting as early as the middle to late 1960's. There was originally two orientations quite distinct from each other. First, the "peace and justices movement" which had a broad view, such as global peace and community violence (Van Slyck, M.R., & Stern, M. 1991). The other orientation developed in the field of academic educational psychology which focused on cooperative activities (Van Slyck, M.R., & Stern, M., 1991). Cooperative activities are designed to promote higher level skills in communication, social development, and team work. These two practices still exist within the school setting today.

Deutsch (1949) was one of the pioneers in implementing cooperative learning and conflict resolution with children in the school system. He hypothesized that cooperative experiences produced positive feeling within groups as a result of success following group cooperation. This model of conflict resolution, using a cooperative goal structure, was developed by Deutsch (1973) and later refined by his student, David Johnson (Johnson & Johnson, 1979).

Conflict resolution came into the educational setting in a more organized manner in the mid 1980's. It began as special conferences geared at informing educators and developed into an organization presently known as NAME, National Association of Mediation in Education. NAME serves as a major resource center, clearinghouse, and focal point for activity in this area (Duffy, Grosch, Olczak, 1991).

Maxwell (1989) reported that there were four major developments that promoted these early programs: The New York City School's Quaker Project teaching non-violence to children, the establishment of

neighborhood justice centers during the Carter administration, the founding of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), and the introduction of the National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME).

The program, CCRC, Children's Creative Response to Conflict, began in 1972 in the New York Public Schools. Since that time, it has expanded into twenty-one other cities nationwide. The program not only gives training sessions to students, teachers, and parents, but it also provides teachers with resource materials that can be implemented daily.

The CCRC program was developed for children grades k-8. It focuses on four main areas, affirmation, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Teachers can incorporate activities easily though out the day. Teachers are also able to decide on the area that the class may be weak in and work on developing that specific area. The program allows for flexibility within the classroom.

The following quotation, from *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet*, was written by Priscilla Prutzman and other trainers for CCRC and gives an overview of why conflict resolution was needed and the effect the training hopes to have on children.

Violence in our society is pervasive. In the schools, where tension builds up and conflicts go unresolved, assaults on children, teachers, and property are commonplace. Educational institutions which should provide a positive environment for resisting the drift toward violence are seldom effective in dealing with the causes of antisocial behavior. They often retreat to measures of security or take hostile actions against the offenders.

Yet the very attempt to stamp out violence by methods which are themselves violent towards children in conflict

only confirms the notion that violence is an acceptable, if not preferable, method of solving problems. Such methods are dehumanizing and fail to provide children with positive alternatives to violent patterns of behavior. Our experience shows that children--especially young children--will learn far more from the ways we respond to aggression and conflict than they will learn from our words. We see the teaching of moral behavior primarily as a matter of how we *act* rather than of what we say. What we say is important, but even more important is that it corresponds to what we do.

The basic philosophy of the Children's Creative Response to Conflict program is to create an atmosphere among children and adults which is warm, affirming, and supportive. Only in such an atmosphere is it possible for children to deal with each other and conflict in a humane and constructive way.

CCRC attempts to treat the whole child instead of just the symptoms. Children's perceptions lie deep in their upbringing. So often adults model behaviors that are undesirable, such as competitiveness, intolerance towards differences, and put-downs. Children learn these behaviors and quite often act on them in a school setting.

CCRC believes in giving the children the tool, fun tools, to solve problems. Children learn through actions so the best way to promote creative responses is through practice. Practice allows children to actively participate in resolving issues that face children daily.

SCRC, Students Creative Response to Conflict, took CCRC's program one step further by introducing the concept of Bias Awareness/Appreciation of Differences. After receiving training from

CCRC and applying it in a school settings, they realized the high level of intolerance for diversity that existed within the school setting.

SCRC approaches students' preconceived notions in a number of ways. Every session begins with setting an Agenda. The facilitator reads the schedule and allows students to respond to the activities. If the majority of students do not wish to participate in a certain activity, then the agenda can be altered. Allowing students to put their input in, creates a sense of ownership or belonging. After the Agenda has been stated and reviewed, the students form a circle. The Gathering is the next step. The purpose of the gathering is to introduce students and share interests. All students are given an opportunity to speak, however, students whom do not wish to speak have the right to pass. Also during this activity, students are encouraged to share problems and concerns. When problems and concerns are addressed, students brainstorm for ideas and choose their own solutions. Children are more likely to adhere to their own rules, then to rules forced upon them. The Gathering's main purpose is to create a sense of community within the class. It is also important to note that there are four ground rules that everyone must agree upon in order to conduct a Gathering constructively. The four ground rules are as follows:

1. One person speaks at a time.
2. Allow the person to finish and avoid interrupting.
3. Use pull-ups and avoid put-downs.
4. Respect all people.

There will be times when students will need to be reminded of the rules, but that is all right. After the Gathering, the students participate in an activity or two. The activities focus on the four main areas, affirmation,

communication, tolerance for differences, and conflict resolution. The teacher models all desired behaviors and participates through out the process. The teacher is seen as an equal partner in classroom.

DEFINITIONS

- > **Agenda Setting** - It is a posted schedule that the teacher shares with the group and allows for input.
- > **Cooperation** - Children learn to work together and trust, help, and share with each other.
- > **Communication** - Children learn to observe carefully, communicate clearly, and listen sensitively.
- > **Community** - Children develop a sense of trust and belonging to a group.
- > **Conflict Resolution** - Children learn the skills of responding creatively to conflict in a supportive, caring community.
- > **Pull-up** - Children learn to encourage and support each other by saying positive things.
- > **Put-down** - Children learn that negative comments hurt other children's feelings and cause distrust and anger.
- > **The Right to Pass** - Children learn that even though they are part of the community, they still have the right to pass in a situation that makes them uncomfortable. This is reassuring to shy children.
- > **Tolerance** - Children learn to respect and appreciate people's differences and to understand prejudice and

how it works.

ASSUMPTIONS

Some assumptions can be made concerning the study. First, teaching styles of four teachers may effect the study. However, the four teachers chosen for the study have similar teaching styles. Next, the test was administered at the same time and each teacher gave precisely the same directions. Finally, the subject groupings were heterogeneous.

LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to a fourth grade with teachers who have received Creative Conflict Resolution Training. It is also represented by a subjects drawn from a school classified as urban but in a rural setting. Time limitations also limit the long term assumptions. Since the students received a pre-test and a post-test within a three month period, it is hard to assume that the student's attitudes toward school climate will continue to improve or remain consistent over the years.

OVERVIEW

The previous pages have introduced the basic topic of the thesis: Conflict Resolution. As one proceeds to read chapter 2, there will be an in-depth look into the recent research and literature on conflict resolution within a classroom situation. The literature review is designed to broaden one's understanding, prior to examining the study. In Chapter 3, a break down of the research that has been completed. The material clearly describes the sample groups, the test used, and the design used to assess the study. The Fourth Chapter contains a complex analysis of the results

obtained during the testing period. The analysis will explain the significance found during the testing and interpret the results.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Youth violence has increased in alarming rates in schools, neighborhoods, and on the streets. In an article related to violence, Attorney General Reno states, "Youth violence is the greatest single crime problem in America today" (Turney, 1994 p. 143). Considering the rise in youth violence, it is no wonder why educators are searching for new methods to combat violence within the school setting.

Everyday in America 9 children are murdered, 307 children will be arrested for violent crimes, more than 5,000 youths will be victims of crime, 1,300 teenagers will have babies, and more than 1 million latchkey children come home to houses in which there is a gun (Daleo, p. 3). These are frightening facts facing many children today.

In another article written by Emilie Coulter, School Violence: An Alarming Trend reports that almost 8% of junior and senior high school students miss at least one day of school a month because they are afraid to go. Even more upsetting is that each month, about 282,000 students are physically attacked in America's secondary schools. Coulter (1994) further states that in a study of 8th and 10th grade students, 34% of the students reported that someone threatened to hurt them within the year. She also

found that approximately 5,200 secondary school teachers are attacked each month.

Violence against another is not the only frightening reality. Suicide amongst our children rank 3rd in the leading cause of death. It is reported that every 90 minutes a young person commits suicide, and every 90 seconds a child attempts suicide. Yet, some believe that even these significant statistics are understated. Researchers estimate that as much as 10% of suicides go unreported and the number of adolescents who commit suicide may even be two to three times greater than what is reported (Meade, Lynch & Fuller, 1995, p. 28).

As a result to the increase in youth violence, schools and communities are developing and implementing a variety of proactive programs geared at reducing violence. "One can only wonder about the potential of a society that has been trained and experienced in solving conflict with a non-confrontational, non-violent, consensus building approach" (Singer, 1991, p. 72).

It is important to remember that methods that are effective on the streets may not apply to the school setting. Conflicts that develop out on the streets are due to macho egos, competition for status, access to drugs, significant amounts of money, and individuals who have little interaction with each other (Johnson, David-Johnson, Roger, 1995, p. 65). Johnson, David-Johnson, Roger (1995) also stated that schools are based more on a cooperative setting where children interact with each other all year. They focus on problem-solving, decision-making, and sharing resources within a community setting. It is important that violence prevention programs set realistic goals and implementors realize that outside forces cannot always be controlled.

Some educators feel that teaching conflict resolution is the parents responsibility. Yet, many adults have poor conflict resolution skills; therefore it is unlikely that children will learn at home. "If, as a society, we want a more cooperative response to conflict, schools will have to play a large part in the re-socialization efforts by integrating these important social skills into the curriculum from kindergarten to high-school" (Miedsian, 1991, p. 10).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION - DEFINITION AND REVIEW OF PROCESS

Conflict occurs constantly throughout the day. Students argue over who they are going to sit next to at lunch to who will pick up the pencil on the floor. Conflict does not necessarily have to be negative interaction, it can be done in a constructive manner that is positive. Teaching children to resolve problems through constructive means rather than violence is one aspect of conflict resolution.

In the late 1940's, Morton Deutsch developed one of the best theoretical concepts for cooperative, competitive, and individualistic situations. Deutsch (1949, 1962), stated three ways that the tension system of different people may be interrelated: cooperative, competitive, and individualistic. A cooperative social situation is one in which the individuals works positively together to obtain their goals. It is essential for an individual to help others obtain goals in order to achieve his/her goal. In a competitive situation, individuals are linked in their goal but only one person can reach the goal, while the others experience failure. Finally, an individualistic situation is not linked to other participants. The individual sets goals that

are designed to enhance only his/her accomplishments with no influence on the outcome of others' achievements.

Deutsch (1993) further emphasizes the importance of teaching cooperation and conflict resolution skills to children in school.

Families and schools are the two most important institutions that influence developing children's dispositions to hate and to love. Although the influence of the family comes earlier and is often more profound, there is good reason to believe that children's subsequent experiences in schools can modify or strengthen their earlier acquired dispositions (Deutsch, 1993, p. 510).

Deutsch (1993) reports that in the past schools have emphasized competition amongst students. Students have competed for attention, grades, status, admission into prestigious schools, etc. This type of atmosphere has only increased conflict. However, Deutsch has acknowledged the fact that in recent years educators have begun to teach students through cooperative activities. Teachers and administrators have also recognized the importance of constructive conflict resolution. He cites four components that have surfaced within education: cooperative learning, conflict resolution training, the use of constructive controversy and the implementation of dispute resolution center in schools.

Most conflict resolution programs attempt to instill knowledge, skills and attitudes that emphasize peaceful strategies in dealing with disputes. He lists thirteen elements that are frequently used in these training programs:

1. Use of cooperative problem solving strategies

to find a mutually agreed upon solution.

2. Skills taught to express anger appropriately.
3. Facing conflict as opposed to avoidance which leads to anxiety and persistence of the problem.
4. Mutual respect for self and others.
5. Understanding and acceptance of individual cultural differences.
6. Seek for common ground, distinguish between opposing interests and positions.
7. Identify common interests.
8. Define the problem and brain storm solutions that may be mutually agreed upon.
9. Speak clearly and actively listen to both points of view.
10. Be aware of one's own misinterpretations, bias and stereotyped thinking that may interfere with communication and problem solving.
11. Develop strategies to deal with conflicts with those who are more powerful, or who refuse to engage in conflict resolution.
12. Know yourself and your predisposition in responding to conflict.
13. Maintain your moral integrity and consider the other as a moral individual entitled to fair treatment.

(Deutsch, 1973)

Deutsch (1993) believes the above elements provide the basis for various conflict resolution programs within our schools.

Children's Creative Responds to Conflict (CCRC) is an approach to classroom management. It presents teachers with many activities to incorporate into their weekly schedules that focuses on affirmation, cooperation, communication, bias awareness/appreciation of differences, and creative conflict management.

CCRC's basic philosophy is to establish a creative environment where children and adults feel a sense of warmth, affirmation, and support. For it is only in this type of atmosphere that children and adults can deal with each other in a manner that is humane and constructive (Prutzman, Stern, Burger, & Bodenhamer, 1988)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of studies reviewed in this section focus not only on conflict resolution training but also the development of peer-mediation programs. Conflict Resolution is a foundation that many schools implement at the start and then build from there.

Maruyama (1992) refers to Lewin's for some solutions to the current "educational crisis." Schools reflect not only academic growth but personal experience and environmental backgrounds. Lewin, (1935), acknowledges the importance of a student's right to make choices and set personal goals. Allowing students to take an active role encourages children to strive and attain them. Students need this "hand on" approach in order to take responsibility for their own learning. Cooperative learning and conflict management are examples of how students can be encouraged

to learn from each other and from their own initiative (Deutsch, 1949). Maruyama (1992) also emphasized the importance of linking schools with the community to increase educational effectiveness. Lewinian (1951) principals indicate that learning should be active and engaging, allowing children the access to explore issues in their own ways.

As society becomes more aware and concerned about interpersonal violence, child abuse, drugs, alcohol, teenage sexual behavior, pregnancy, and sexually communicable diseases, it becomes increasingly apparent that children must learn to regulate their own behavior and be able to make decision regarding their own lives (Maxwell, 1989, p.152).

Deutsch (1988) and the staff of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCRC) conducted a study examining the effects of cooperative learning and conflict resolution training upon a population of Alternative High School (AHS) students in New York City. The schools enrolled approximately 180 students and 14 teachers at each of its four campuses. Three of the campuses were involved in the study. The students were generally individuals who were not of the maturity level of other students their age and were unable to maintain an appropriate pace needed in a traditional school setting. The AHS provided students with a smaller, more individualized environment that was capable of meeting its students' needs in order to complete high school. The make up of the student population was 56.9% African American, 40.5% Hispanic, 2.2% White, .4% Asian, and .1% Native American. Approximately, 50.5% were females and 49.5% were males. One third of the females were teenage parents and the average age for all

participants was 17. These students generally achieved below minimum standards, as measured by Regents Competency Tests in reading, writing, and math. Forty percent enrolled would graduate, thirty percent would drop out, and fifteen percent would transfer to other schools.

The AHS campuses involved in the research were separated into three groups: Campus A, received conflict resolution training, Campus C, received training in cooperative learning, and Campus B, received training in both. Mediation and negotiation skills were taught using role play, group activities and discussion groups. Students also practiced student mediation in school.

Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were used to gather information on the following variables: 1) self-esteem, 2) control over one's fate, 3) mental and physical health, 4) family, friends, and work support, 5) victimization experienced, 6) problem solving orientation, 7) academic achievement, 8) work readiness, 9) perceived amount of crime in school and 10) perceived social climate.

The pretest and posttest questionnaire was administered prior to training and at the end of the first and second school years after training.

Deutsch (1993) reported that the groups benefited from cooperative learning and/or conflict resolution training. Students improved in managing their own conflicts, increased self esteem, lowered their rate of victimization, anxiety, and depression. There was also a greater sense of control over their fates, and higher academic performance. Unfortunately, no conclusions could be drawn concerning the effects of the conflict resolution training as compared with the cooperative learning training. This is due to the significant differences in instruction on each campus.

A Summary of Significant Findings was presented by Metis Associates, Inc. concerning the program, Resolving Conflict Creatively (RCCP) in 1988-1989. The program began in 1985 in Community School District 15, Brooklyn and is now offered in more than fourteen school in the district as well as the High School Division, and one hundred twenty school (Metis Associates, Inc., 1990). The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the four principal parts of the program. They assessed the implementation of the various components, the impact of the program on participating students, teachers, and administrators, the impact the mediation program, which began in 1987, had on students and school climate, and to make recommendations for improving the program.

The program focuses on conflict resolution and intergroup relations. The objectives of RCCP included:

- > showing young people nonviolent alternatives for dealing with conflict
- > teaching children skills to make nonviolent alternatives to conflict real in their own lives
- > increasing students' understanding and appreciation of their own culture and cultures different from their own
- > showing children that they can play a powerful role in creating a more peaceful world (Metis Associates, Inc., 1990, p. 3)

The program was evaluated through teacher surveys, administrator surveys, student achievement tests, and peer mediation instruments. The teacher survey was given to the two hundred teachers who participated in 1988-1989 school year. The survey dealt with training, amount of

materials, support for consultants, and implementation. The administrator survey examined administrative goals and expectations of the program and their perceptions of the impact of the program. The student achievement test was a twenty-item test assessing the students' knowledge of the RCCP curriculum. The test was given during June to a sample of one hundred seventy-six fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students from District 15. A control group of two hundred nineteen fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students who had not participated in the program also were administered the test. The final form of assessment was the peer mediation instruments which consisted of a teacher and student surveys, and a student mediator survey, pertaining to individual experiences with the mediation and the extent to which the program had affected class/school climate.

Metis Associates, Inc. reported that overall RCCP was implemented with very few problems. The administration viewed the program positively and were optimistic of the program's future. The administrators did cite logistical difficulty due to insufficient preparation time to facilitate scheduling and programming of activities.

Between 66 and 78 percent of the teachers felt the program had a positive impact on students. Teachers indicated that there was less put-downs and fewer fights. Instead there was a more caring behavior and increased cooperation. Students began to engage in pull-ups and there was a greater willingness to resolve problems.

The student achievement test also yielded significant statistical data. The students trained in conflict resolution scored higher on the test than the control group. Their comprehension and ability to define conflict was greater, plus they had a better grasp of key words, such as "active listener" and "mediator".

The peer mediation program also had positive results from administrators, teachers, and students. For example, 85% of the students who used the mediators felt that it had been helpful.

Another study was conducted in the Mountain Home School District, No. 193 in Idaho. Roush and Hall (1993) conducted a pilot study in 1990 involving teaching conflict resolution strategies and peer mediation to elementary and junior high school children. The study included thirty-eight fourth graders, fifty-five fifth graders, fifty-two sixth graders, and eight junior high eighth grade students.

The elementary school children were taught six lessons on conflict resolution and playground mediation. The elementary students' knowledge of conflict resolution, using a curriculum based measurement, and their self esteem using the Culture-Free Self Esteem Inventory, were measured before training and after one month of peer mediation experience. Just as in the previous studies reviewed, the results indicated that the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders' knowledge of peaceful conflict resolution concepts had increased significantly. However, there was no significant difference in the student's self esteem before and after one month of mediation. The authors of this study attribute this finding to the short period of time (one month) allotted before the posttest for self esteem was given.

Eight junior high school students in this research were given the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale at the beginning and at the end of the semester, after they received ninety hours of conflict resolutions instruction and mediation training. Unlike their elementary school counterparts, there was a significant increase in the self-concept of these children.

As with most other studies on this topic, there was also plenty of anecdotal evidence to support the success of this project. The principals, teachers, and mediators themselves reported positive changes in attitudes toward conflict.

The Social Science Education Consortium (1987) conducted an interesting study comparing two pilot mediation programs. One program included a conflict resolution curriculum, the other program implemented both a conflict resolution curriculum and a peer mediation program. The objectives for both programs were to decrease incidents of violence, to teach students conflict resolution skills, to effect students' attitudes toward conflict in a positive manner, and to prevent behaviors that lead to delinquency.

The results of both the qualitative and quantitative data revealed that the project goals were achieved only in the school that implemented both peer mediation and conflict resolution programs.

It is unclear what the reasons were for the individual mediation program's failure in the above study. One of the oldest and largest programs in the country, project SMART has implemented a peer mediation program that typically has four or five mediations a day in each of its nine high schools. Reports indicate that suspensions and detentions for fighting dropped by more than 65% in four of the schools during the first year of programming (Singer, 1991).

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

SUBJECTS

Participants in the research were selected based on their teacher's teaching styles and Conflict Resolution Training. Two classes had teachers who received training in Students Creative Responds to Conflict (SCRC). The program consisted of five six hour sessions and the participants received materials to use in their curriculum. The other two teachers received no training. All four teachers chosen had similar teaching styles.

The subjects were fourth grade students ranging in age from nine years old to eleven years old. There were thirty-six subjects who received conflict resolution training and thirty-six subjects in the control group. The percentage of males was 61% and females was 39%. It was further divided by 64.6% Caucasian, 31.7% African American, and 3.7% Spanish.

Subjects were drawn from a school district classified urban but located in a rural area. They were diversified in background and socio-economic status. Many of the students were on welfare and live in a low-income apartment complex. Other students were from lower to upper middle class

families that reside on farms, housing developments, or individual plots of land.

Students were academically grouped heterogenously within the classrooms. Each classroom contained students with special needs, such as B.A.S.E., resource room, remedial reading and speech. There were also students in each room that participate in the Gifted and Talented Program.

The only students excluded from the study were students whose parents did not consent or students who were in special education classes. Since the study was run in a school setting, parental consent had to be obtained in order to use the students questionnaire. A letter was sent home to the parents (Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the study and an overview of what the students' participation would entail. As for special education students, they only joined the class for special areas and lunch. They had no other class interaction and did not receive conflict resolution training.

DESIGN

The study is designed as a pretest posttest. Teachers who were chosen to participate in the study used their class as subjects.

The independent variable was whether or not a class received Conflict Resolution training. Two teachers spent two to three days a week training students in an open community setting. The other two teachers ran their rooms in a traditional manner.

The pretest, posttest questionnaire served as the dependent variable to assess students' changes in attitudes toward school climate.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

The independent variable was whether or not students received conflict resolution in their classrooms. Two teachers received training using the SCRC program. The workshop consisted of five, six hour sessions. Manuals were also provided to assist the teachers. Each manual contained activities related to the five central themes.

The two teachers with SCRC training implemented the program with their students two to three times a week for a half hour each session. The program provided a specific outline to help direct the learning. SCRC begun by setting an agenda and discussing the purpose of the session. Students were able to change the agenda if the majority felt the purpose was unnecessary or uncomfortable. Following the agenda was the gathering. The gathering was a time to share information about oneself and to voice any concerns or ideas. After the gathering, students participated in activities and discussions focusing on the sessions topic. An evaluation followed the lesson. Finally, there was a closing activity, such as a song or group hug. It was important to note that teachers participated in all activities and that students had the right to pass at time.

The teachers in the experimental group served as experimenters. They worked closely together and planned weekly their activities.

The program was monitored by a pretest posttest questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes toward school climate.

MEASUREMENTS (DEPENDENT VARIABLE)

The dependent variable was a pretest posttest questionnaire on students' attitude toward school climate. The questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed by Julie A. Lam, Ph.D. and prepared with assistance from a

Faculty Research Grant at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in October 1989. The questionnaire was an ordinal measurement. Students responded to thirteen questions about their school. The responses were strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, and strongly disagree and were ranked 1 for strongly agree to 4 for strongly disagree.

One way to compare pretest and posttest scores for the trained group and then the untrained group of subjects was to determine the mean score for each group before the training and again after the training. One was looking for changes in the mean score in the direction indicating a positive or negative impact depending on the group. The pretest questionnaire scores provided a baseline of data for the two groups to which to compare the post-test scores.

TESTABLE HYPOTHESIS

First Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis : No difference will be found on the measure used to evaluate students' attitudes toward school climate between the trained group's pretest and posttest mean scores.

$$H_0: M1-M2 < 0$$

Legend: $M1$ = trained group pretest mean; $M2$ = trained group posttest mean.

Alternate Hypothesis: The trained group mean score on the measure of students' attitudes toward school climate on the posttest will be less than the pretest.

$$H_0: M1-M2 > 0$$

Legend: $M1$ = trained group pretest mean; $M2$ = trained group posttest

Second Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis: No difference will be found on the measure used to evaluate students' attitudes toward school climate between the untrained group's pretest and posttest mean scores.

Ho: $M1 - M2 < 0$

Legend: M1 = untrained group pretest mean; M2 = untrained group posttest mean

Alternate Hypothesis: The untrained group mean score on the measure of students' attitudes toward school climate on the posttest will exceed that of the pretest.

Ho: $M1 - M2 \geq 0$

Legend: M1 = untrained group pretest mean; M2 = untrained group posttest mean

ANALYSIS

Students' attitude toward school climate was evaluated for significance through a *t*-Test for Paired Samples. The *t*-Test compared the mean scores of the pretest and posttest for the trained group and non-trained group to determine any significant differences on the thirteen items questionnaire.

SUMMARY

Two groups, SCRC trained group and non-trained group, participated in the study. Both took a pretest at the beginning of the semester prior to the one group receiving training. After the one group received training a posttest was administered to both groups again. A *t*-test for Paired Samples was used to compare the findings and determine if the trained

group and untrained group showed a significant change in students' attitudes toward school from the pretest to the posttest.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

It is hypothesized that the classroom receiving Conflict Resolution Training would have a better attitude toward school climate, than the classroom that did not participate in the program. The students receiving training in the program would decrease their overall mean scores from pretest to posttest. However, the students that did not participate in the program would either remain the same or increase on their overall mean scores from pretest to posttest. A T-test for Paired Samples was used to analyze the data from both groups pretest and posttest questionnaire.

The first T-test for Paired Samples compared the mean scores of the pre/post tests for the trained group, Table 4.1. The paired sample had a 2-tail Significance of .840, therefore the first part of the hypothesis was to accept the Null Hypothesis. The first Null Hypothesis states that no difference would be found on the measure used to evaluate students' attitudes toward

school climate between the trained groups' pretest and posttest overall mean scores. Ho: $M1 - M2 < 0$ was accepted.

Table 4.1 T-test for Paired Samples for the Trained Group

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POSTTEST	36	.383	.021	23.5556	4.801	.800
PRETEST				23.7222	3.969	.661

Paired Differences						
Mean	SD	SE of Mean	T-value	df	2-tail Sig	
-.1667	4.919	.820	-.20	35	.840	
95% CI (-1.831, 1.498)						

The second T-test for Paired Samples compared the untrained groups pretest and posttest mean scores. The paired samples in this test had a 2-tail Significance of .000. In this case, the second Null Hypothesis was rejected. The Alternate Hypothesis states that the untrained group's mean score on the measure of students' attitudes toward school climate on the posttest would exceed that of the pretest. Therefore, the Ho: $M1 - M2 \geq 0$ was the accepted hypothesis.

Table 4.2 T- test for Paired Sample for the Untrained Group

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POSTTEST	36	.263	.121	31.6389	5.483	.914
PRETEST				26.2222	4.752	.792

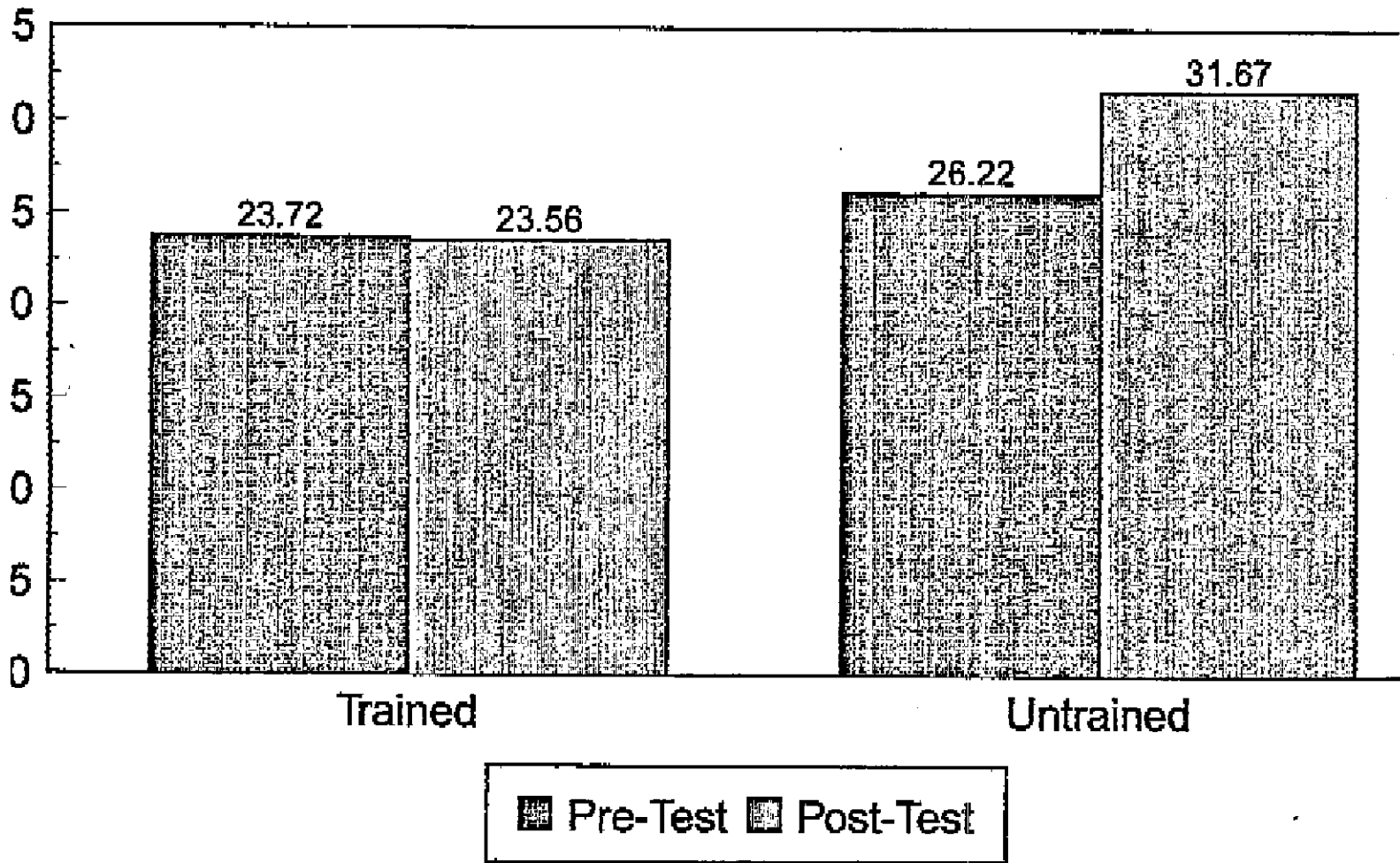
Paired Differences						
Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig	
5.4167	6.240	1.040	5.21	35	.000	
95% CI (3.305, 7.528)						

On page 31, Chart 4.1 compared the mean scores of the pretest and posttest of the two groups. The trained group did not have a significant change in attitude toward school climate. Their mean score decreased .16 overall. The untrained group did however have a significant change in mean scores from the pretest to the posttest. The students in the untrained group had a negative change in attitude toward school climate, since their mean score increased 5.45 points.

Chart 4.1

Conflict Resolution

Mean Scores of Pre-Tests and Post-Tests



Students in both groups had similar perceptions of school climate on the pretest, as noted on Chart 4.2, page 33. There were some discrepancies, such as, question 3, 4, and 6. The trained group had a more positive attitude concerning students' ability to take part in solving their own problems and how seriously teachers take students' concerns. Areas with higher mean averages represent student negative perception, such as both groups felt students need assistance from adults to solve their problems and that teachers spent too much time disciplining students.

After approximately eight months of training the one group of students, another questionnaire was given to both groups. In Chart 4.3, on page 34, the line graph shows posttest mean scores on individual items for both groups. In the posttest items analysis, students trained in the SCRC program remained more positive overall than the untrained group. The trained group had little notable change, except on item 7 and 12. They now appeared to have a much more positive attitude toward student problem solving and the amount of time teachers spent disciplining students. Although there was little change in the trained groups attitude toward school climate, there was a significant change in the untrained group. Students attitudes toward school climate in the untrained group had become more negative over the seven month period.

Chart 4.2

Pre-Test Mean Responses by Item

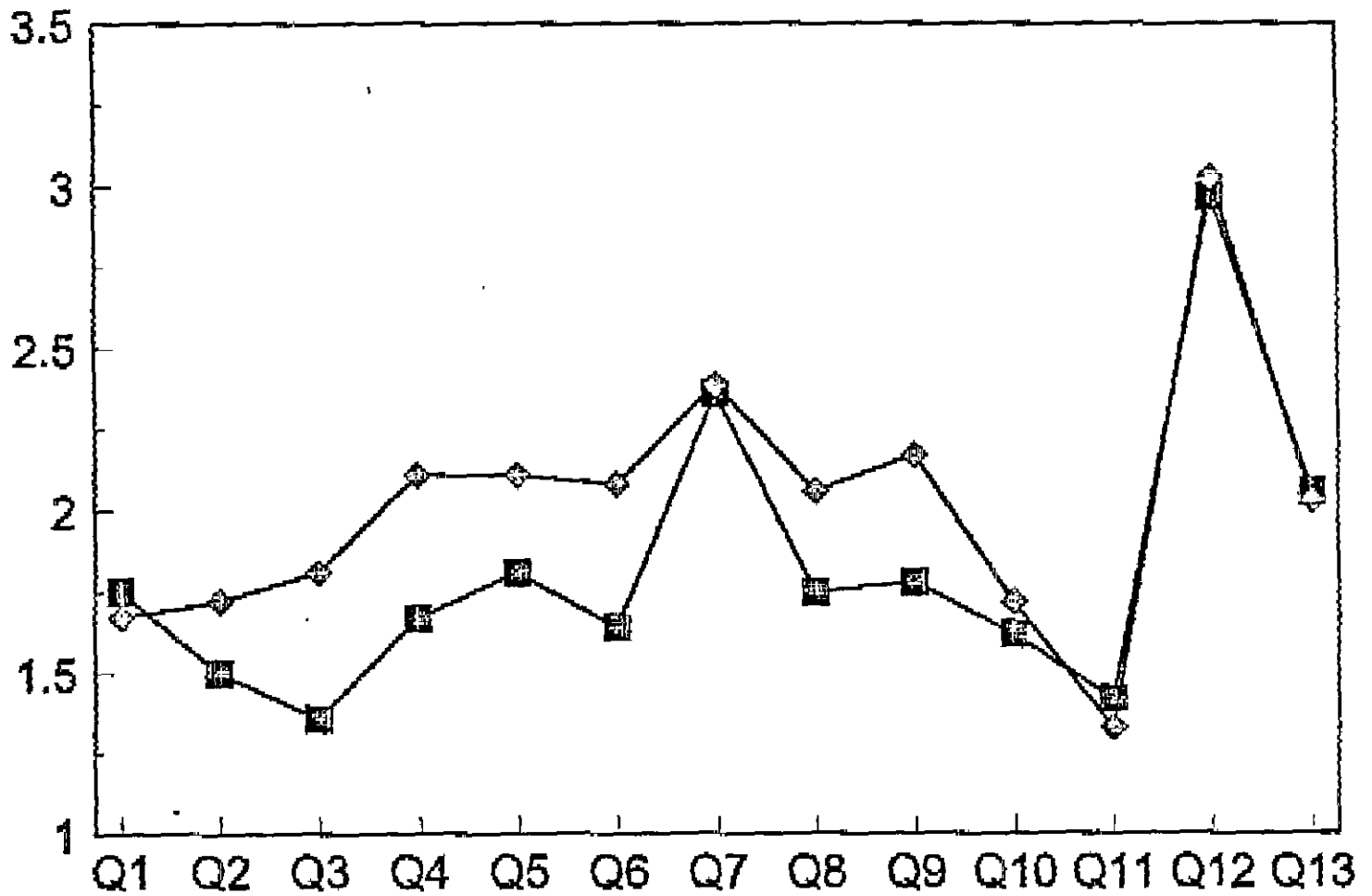
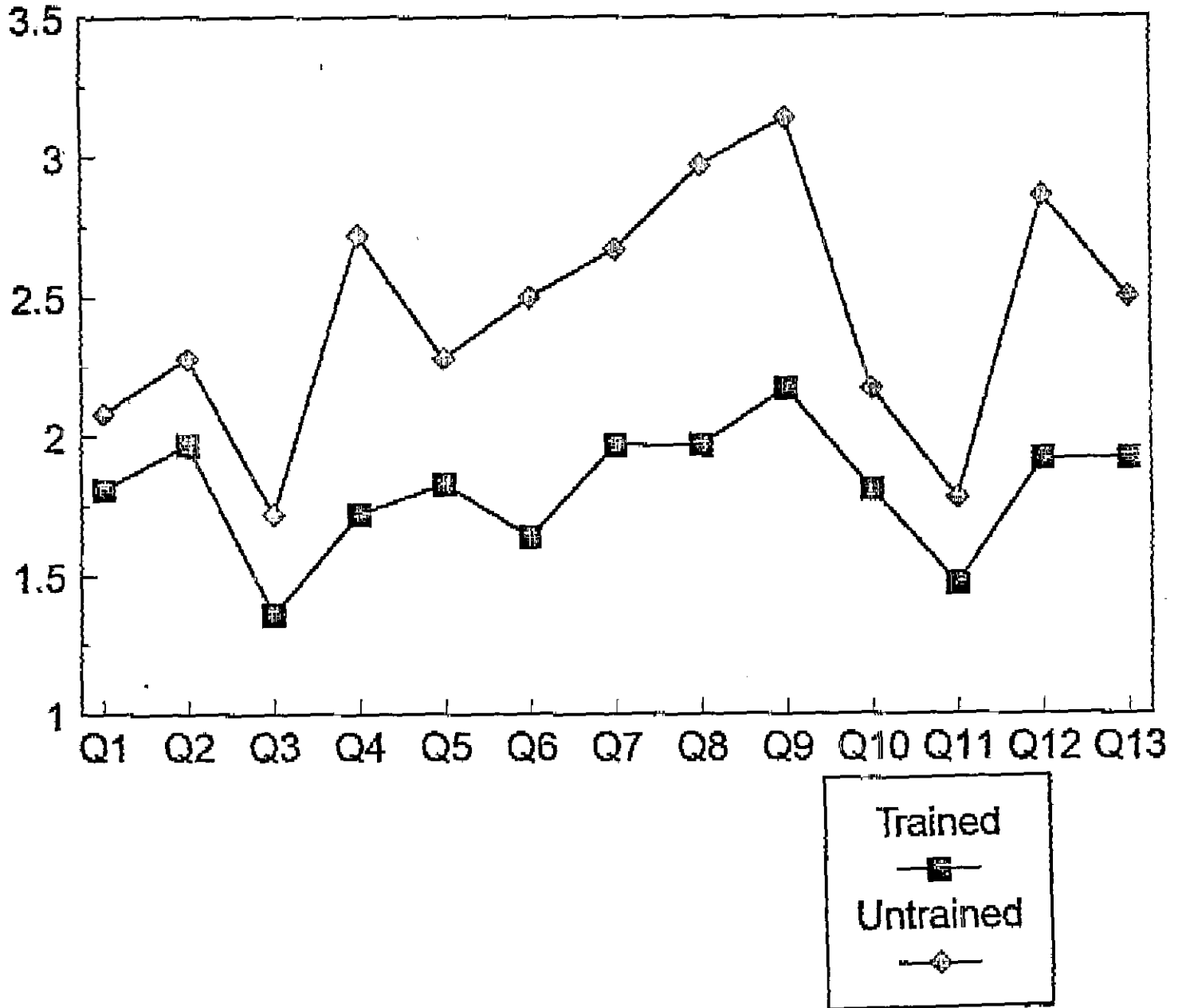


Chart 4.3

Post-Test Mean Responses by Item



SUMMARY

The results indicate that there was no significant change in the trained group's attitude toward school climate from pretest to posttest. The Null Hypothesis was accepted in the first hypothesis. However, the analysis run on the untrained group did demonstrate a significant change in attitude from the pretest to the posttest questionnaire. The general attitude of the students in the untrained group increased in a more negative viewpoint. In the second hypothesis, the Alternate Hypothesis was accepted.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

The basic topic of the thesis is Conflict Resolution. Over the years there has been an increase in violence amongst our youth. Children are reacting to conflict by striking out against each other with violence. Schools are especially feeling the tension amongst their pupils and realize the need to empower their students to resolve problems in a constructive way. Administrators and teachers no longer wish to model an environment that acts as peacemakers and dictators. Instead, their goal is to develop programs that are conducive to learning and promote a more trusting classroom. Students must feel apart of the overall community and take an active role in classroom decisions.

One way to achieve these goals is a program that was established in 1972 in the New York Public Schools. The program, CCRC, Children's Creative

Response to Conflict, trains not only students and teachers but also administrators. Teachers are provided with knowledge and tools needed to implement the program in their classrooms. It is this program that was used to train the two classes in the study. The other two classes did not participate nor did their teachers in the training and implementation of the program.

To determine students' attitude toward school climate a pretest and posttest questionnaire was administered in September and then again the beginning of May. During the seven months, students in the trained group participate in classroom activities that were developed to promote affirmation, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. The students and teacher participated in all gatherings and activities equally. Sessions were held three to five times a week depending on time restrictions.

At the end of the seven month period, the pretest and posttest scores were calculated to determine the average scores on each test per group. A T-test for Paired Samples was then used to compare the findings and determine if the trained group and untrained group showed a significant change in students' attitudes toward school climate from the pretest to the posttest.

CONCLUSION

The following were the conclusions drawn from the analysis of results:

1. The first Null Hypothesis stated that no difference would be found on the measure used to evaluate students' attitudes toward school climate between the trained group's pretest and posttest mean scores. Since the 2-tailed significance level was only .840, the Null Hypothesis was accepted.
2. The second Null Hypothesis stated that no difference would be found on the measure used to evaluate students' attitudes toward school climate between the untrained group's pretest and posttest mean scores. The 2-tail significance level was .000, therefore, the Null Hypothesis was rejected. The alternate Hypothesis, which stated the untrained group mean score on the posttest measure of students' attitude toward school climate would exceed that of the pretest measure, was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study showed the impact that the Conflict Resolution Program had on the participants. Unfortunately the data analyzed did not show a significant change in attitude over a given amount of time in the trained group. One factor that may have played a role was the fact that the fourth grade students who participated in the study were not familiar with their new environment. The school district used in the study has four schools that house K-3 and two schools that house 4-6. The fourth grade students began on September with very positive attitudes and with little knowledge of the differences in behavior between 5-9 year olds and 10-13 year olds. Since their pretests were relatively lower to begin with, it was difficult to anticipate any relevant drop in mean scores. However, it is interesting to note that although the trained group remained basically consistent, the untrained group became more negative in their attitudes. There was a significant change over the year and when compared to the posttest of the trained group, large discrepancies on the majority of items existed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. A study using subjects that have become adjusted to their surrounding may yield more accurate results on the impact of programs geared at resolving conflict and improving students' attitudes toward school climate.
2. Comparing attitudes toward school climate in districts that have implemented Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation school wide with districts that are still being run in a traditional manner.

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Appendix A

Dear Parents,

Winslow Twp. School District has spent the last year training teachers in Conflict Resolution. I, Ms. Kelly-Pearson, participated in this program. I am also working toward my masters in School Psychology. As part of my education, I am to research an area that I am interested in and present my findings. My research deals with students' attitudes toward school climate and how Conflict Resolution training effects the outcome. The study is based on a pre-test post-test questionnaire on school climate. Four classes were chosen, two classes will receive the training and the other two classes without training. All the participants are confidential. Only the statistical data will be presented in my thesis.

If you would prefer not to have your child participate in the study, please sign and return the bottom portion.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kelly-Pearson

Please be advised that I would prefer that my child **not** participate in the project.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Child's Name _____ Teacher _____

Appendix B

SCHOOL CLIMATE QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey asks you to tell us about your school. For every statement below, please let us know whether you “strongly agree,” “agree somewhat,” or “strongly disagree.” Circle the response that best describes how you feel about your school.

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
1. Students have pride in our school.	1	2	3	4
2. Students have a lot of school spirit.	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers take students concerns seriously.	1	2	3	4
4. Students take part in solving their own problems in school and in the classroom.	1	2	3	4
5. Students cooperate with one another at school.	1	2	3	4
6. Students from different backgrounds and cultures respect each other at school.	1	2	3	4
7. Teachers spend too much time disciplining students.	1	2	3	4
8. Students are generally happy with the present discipline system.	1	2	3	4
without getting into fights.	1	2	3	4
10. Students in our school really like the school.	1	2	3	4
11. Teachers listen to both sides of the story when there is a conflict between students.	1	2	3	4
12. Students can't really solve their own problems at school. They need help from an adult.	1	2	3	4
13. There are a lot of fights among students in our school.	1	2	3	4